



Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers,

We have had another busy week at school and are currently preparing for the Christmas events we have coming up over the next couple of weeks. Please make sure you check the diary dates to keep up to date with what is happening this term.

Online Safety

In an ever changing world of technology, it is really important to speak to your child at home about being safe online and ensuring that they are only accessing age appropriate content. We have been made aware that many children in school are using WhatsApp at home. This app has age restrictions and children in primary schools should not be using it. We have regular lessons about online safety in school and about being responsible online as well as what online bullying means. Sending unkind messages to others is not acceptable. Please can we ask that you monitor what your children are accessing at home online. There are also chat functions on many online games where children can either speak to others or message them. These also need monitoring carefully to ensure they are only communicating with known people and in a sensible way.

If you need any help or advice about online safety please speak to your child's class teacher, our Home School Support Worker—Mrs Wood or visit <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>.

OPAL

This week we had our first OPAL assembly and first OPAL lunchtime. It has been a great success and the children are looking forward to the OPAL journey ahead as this develops.

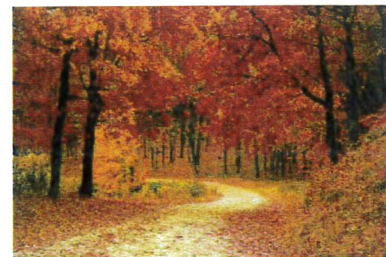
Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Robson
Headteacher

PROUD MOMENT

It has been lovely to see all the children playing together and demonstrating their amazing teamwork skills outside on the playground at lunchtime. We have seen some amazing structures created from building blocks, dance routines performed on our stage and ball skills being developed. Well done Riverside!



Term 2 24-25

Week 4

Friday 29th November

Attendance

The classes with the best attendance this week are:

Otters (Y3)

Eagles (Y6)

Hedgehogs (YR)

WELL DONE!



Upcoming Events

**3.12.24 New Reception Intake
Tours at 1:30pm and 2pm**

**4.12.24 Year 2 trip to the Guildhall
Museum and Year 6 at Rochester
Cathedral Carol Concert**

**6.12.24 Christmas Fayre 3pm—
4:30pm**

11.12.24 Reception Nativity 2pm

**12.12.24 Dress for Christmas and
Christmas Dinner Day**

**17.12.24 KS1 Christmas Panto at
2pm**

**18.12.24 KS1 Christmas Panto at
2pm**



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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

WHATSAPP

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

...MSG ME...

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

With more than two billion active users, WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service. Its end-to-end encryption only allows messages to be viewed by the sender and any recipients: not even WhatsApp itself can read them. The UK's Online Safety Bill proposes to end such encryption on private messaging, but for the time being, this controversial feature remains.

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it a lucrative hunting ground for scammers. Recent examples include posing as the target's child, requesting a money transfer because of a spurious 'emergency' – plus a scam where fraudsters trigger a verification message by attempting to log in to your account, then (posing as WhatsApp) call or text to ask you to repeat the code back to them, giving them access.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

To start a chat, someone only needs the mobile number of the WhatsApp user that they want to message. Therefore, if a child has ever given their number out to someone they don't know, that person could then contact them via WhatsApp. It's also possible that the child might be added to a group chat or community (by one of their friends, for example) containing other people that they don't know.

CHAT LOCK

In 2023, WhatsApp introduced a feature that lets users keep their chats in a separate 'locked chats' folder, saved behind their phone's passcode, fingerprint or face ID authentication. They subsequently developed an additional feature – 'Secret Code' – where users set a unique password for their locked chats. Unfortunately, this function creates the potential for young people to hide conversations and content they suspect their parents wouldn't approve of (such as age-inappropriate material).

COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS

A community is a collection of related groups on WhatsApp. They can consist of thousands of users. Communities can often be used by scammers to target large groups, hoping someone clicks on their link or responds to their requests. In communities and groups, there are multiple ongoing conversations, which results in pressure to respond. Members – even if they are not each other's contacts – will be able to see any messages sent into the group.

'VIEW ONCE' CONTENT

The ability to send images or messages that can only be viewed once has led to some WhatsApp users sharing inappropriate material or abusive texts, knowing that the recipient can't re-open them later to use as evidence of misconduct. People used to be able to screenshot this disappearing content – but a recently added WhatsApp feature now blocks this, citing protection of privacy.

FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp's connectivity and ease of use allows news to be shared rapidly – whether it's true or not. To combat the spread of misinformation, messages forwarded more than five times on the app now display a "Forwarded many times" label and a double arrow icon. This makes users aware that the message they've just received is far from an original... and might not be entirely factual, either.

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, which can be helpful for friends meeting up or parents checking that their child is safe while out, for example. However, anyone in a user's contacts list or in a mutual group chat can also track their location – potentially letting strangers identify a child's home address or journeys that they make regularly.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage children to treat unexpected messages with caution: get them to consider whether it sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change a child's WhatsApp settings to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval. You can give permission to 'My Contacts' or 'My Contacts Except...'. Additionally, if a child needs to use 'live location', emphasise that they should enable this function for only as long as they need – and then turn it off.

DISCUSS GROUP CHATS

Make children aware that there could be members of a group that they don't know well and that words can be misinterpreted. Encourage them to leave a good impression, to avoid joining in if conversations turn towards bullying, and to respond to such situations in an appropriate way. Make sure they know that it's OK to leave a group chat if it makes them uncomfortable – or for any reason, in fact.

THINK BEFORE SHARING

Help children understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy – and all too common – for content that a user posts to be shared more widely, even publicly on social media. Encourage children to consider how an impulsive message or forwarding might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Check in with the child about how they're using WhatsApp, making sure they know you only have their safety at heart. If you spot a 'Locked Chats' folder, you might want to talk about the sort of content they've stored in there, who they're talking to, and why they want to keep these chats hidden. Also, if children send any 'view once' content, it could be helpful to ask them why.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



...HEY
OS #WakeUp
Wednesday

The National College

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