April 2025

St. Mary's CofE Primary School

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'Within the love of God, working together, growing together, for all to flourish.'

Upcoming Events

Thursday 8th May – VE Day in school

Wb 2nd June – Morpurgo swimming

Wb 9th June and Wb 16th June – Dahl swimming

Thursday 19th June – Sports Day (Reserve date – Thursday 3rd July)

Rights Respecting Focus -

ARTICLE 12 - Respect for the views of the child

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.

We hope that you all managed to have a restful Easter holiday and that you managed to get out and enjoy the sun when it was shining!

The final term of the school year has now begun and we are all looking forward to a busy term with lots of things happening. Please make sure you add all of the dates listed to your diary and when we get more confirmed dates to tell you about, we will of course, let you know.

Keep in Touch

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Easter Service

Can we thank everyone who was able to come along and share in our Easter Service at the end of last term. We appreciate that it is not possible for everyone to come to church due to other commitments, but we do like seeing everyone for our church services and I know that we all appreciate your support. Thank you for all of the positive comments following the service especially about the fantastic singing by everyone. Our children really do like to sing!

Christian Value

This term we will be focussing on a new Christian Value in school. The new value that we will be thinking about will be 'TRUST'. The following link will take you to our Christian Values page on our school website where you can see the values across the year and also the stories that we link to these values to help the children learn about their meaning.

1.

https://stmarys-brixton.devon.sch.uk/our-christian-values/

VE Day 80th Anniversary – Thursday 8th May

VE Day, or Victory in Europe Day, is a day of celebration commemorating the end of World War II in Europe. It was on May 8, 1945, that Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that fighting against Nazi Germany had ceased. This event, while marking the end of the war in Europe, did not signify the end of the war globally, as Japan was still at war.

This year celebrates the 80th anniversary of this important day and we would like to mark the celebration with a special day in school.

VE day in 1945 was a day of great celebration across the whole country and so we would like to have our own celebration.

- We would like to invite children to come to school dressed for a tea party. Maybe some might like to dress like children of that era.

- There will be activities in school to learn more about the day and what it must have felt like after the years of war across Europe.

- We would also like to invite you to bring a picnic lunch to eat on the field with your child(ren) if you are able to make it. Just as it was a community celebration 80 years ago, we would like to bring our school community together for lunchtime. Arrive anytime from 11.45am to set up ready for lunch at 12.00pm.

Sun Safe

Hopefully the sun will make an appearance more this term and so we would like to remind everyone about the importance of sun safety, with the following tips:

Water bottles: please make sure that your child has a water bottle every day. These need to be refreshed daily and named.

Hats: we would like to see the children with hats to wear in hot weather.

Sun protection: once-a-day sun lotions are ideal for school use. These can be applied at home before school and they avoid the need to add more sun lotion during the school day. If your child does bring sun lotion into school, they need to be able to apply it themselves. It should also be in a container labelled with their name/class.

Although we love the fact that we have generous children, who would happily share their sun lotion, we do need to be careful with sharing as some children may have sensitive skin or allergies to certain creams. Your support with helping your child to stay sun safe is much appreciated.

Mental Health

Many children of today love video games and these can have great benefits such as cognitive stimulation and social interaction with their friends. However, excessive or problematic gaming can negatively impact a child's mental health, potentially leading to issues such as increased aggression, poor sleep and social isolation.

Managing your child's gaming habits at home can be a tricky challenge for many parents, and it's okay to feel unsure at times. The key is finding a balance that works for your family. Setting limits on screen time, using parental controls, and even playing games together can help foster healthy habits. It's important to be consistent but also understanding, as gaming can be a fun and engaging activity for children.

To support you in navigating this area, we recommend watching a short video from the leading children's mental health charity, Place2Be, which offers great tips and advice on supporting your child's gaming habits. You can watch it here:

https://shorturl.at/lAvOy

Mobile Phones

In a similar way, another issue that concerns many parents is that of mobile phones and whether children should have access to smart phones and if so, at what age. Children feel a lot of peer pressure to ask for a phone and smart phones especially, can raise issues around online safety that you should be aware of.

We would encourage all parents & carers, to make sure they monitor their child's online use as well as having conversations with children about what the rules are for your family so that you can check what they have access to.

We work hard in school to help children learn more about online safety and they are very good at identifying the dangers and what to do if they are worried about anything they see online. See the end of the newsletter for further information about the issues of making friends online.

Here are a couple of useful websites for you to look at for further information.

UK Safer Internet Centre www.saferinternet.org.uk https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers/phones

internet matters.org https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/mobile-phone-safety-checklist/

NSPCC https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/

24th April 2025 - Ofcom have also just published further information on what they are proposing to help protect children online. Here is the link to see what changes are going to be put in place from July this year.

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/protecting-children/new-rules-for-a-safer-generation-of-children-online

And finally … Dates for the Diary

Thursday 8th May	VE Day in school
Wb Monday 12th May	KS2 SATs Week
Wb Monday 2nd June	Morpurgo swimming week
Wb Monday 9th June	Dahl swimming – week 1
Wb Monday 16th June	Dahl swimming – week 2
Thursday 19th June	Sports Day
Thursday 3rd July	Reserve Sports Day (if needed)

FURTHER DATES WILL BE PUBLISHED ONCE THEY ARE CONFIRMED.

Don't forget that school term dates for the rest of this year and next year, can be found on the school website, especially if you are looking to book holidays and need to know when the school is closed.

https://stmarys-brixton.devon.sch.uk/parent-zone/calendar/

Adrian Clements

Head of School

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com. **Trigger Warning:** This guide contains mention of suicide, which may be distressing for some readers.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about MAKING FRIENDS ONLINE

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

In today's digital world, it's increasingly common for children to form friendships with people they've never met in person. While online connections can offer children a sense of belonging, they also carry significant risks. Around 19% of children aged 10 to 15 in England and Wales have chatted online with someone they've never met face to face. This guide offers expert advice for parents and educators on helping children navigate online friendships safely.

ONLINE GROOMING THREATS

Predators can use games, chat apps or social media platforms to build relationships with children and gain their trust. This may quickly develop into grooming or exploitation. Between April 2017 and March 2023, UK police recorded nearly 34,000 online grooming offences – an 82% increase in just five years.

EXPOSURE TO INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Children may encounter distressing or explicit material while interacting with online contacts – especially via TikTok, Instagram or Snapchat. This is evidenced in a survey by the Children's Commissioner for England, which found that 45% of children aged 8 to 17 had seen content online that made them feel uncomfortable, worried or upset.

PRIVACY AND DATA RISKS

Children and young people often overshare personal details – such as where they live or go to school – without understanding the consequences. In fact, 4.4% of 10 to 15-year-olds in the UK have met up in real life with someone they'd only spoken to online.

COMPROMISED PERSONAL SAFETY

Meeting an online 'friend' in real life risks placing a child in serious danger. From abduction to coercion, the consequences can be devastating. Reports of children being harmed after such meetings are becoming increasingly common in the UK, highlighting the need for safeguarding intervention.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

Online harm – such as cyberbullying, grooming or exposure to disturbing content – can lead to long-term emotional issues, including anxiety, depression and PTSD. 'Sextortion' gangs, who threaten to release sexual information about a person unless they pay them money, have reportedly targeted children as young as 11, leaving them traumatised and ashamed.

LONG-TERM REPERCUSSIONS

Children exposed to harmful online relationships early on may develop unhealthy beliefs about relationships, consent, or self-worth. In a recent case, a 26-year-old posed as a girl on Snapchat to befriend children aged 10 to 16, manipulating them into sexual activity and causing profound emotional distress. One 12-year-old tragically died by suicide, highlighting the long-term psychological harm online friendships with strangers can cause.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TEACH SAFE ONLINE HABITS

Help children understand how to use privacy settings, protect their personal information, spot fake profiles, and report anything suspicious or concerning, like pressure tactics. Encourage them to think critically about what they share – and whom they're talking to.

ENCOURAGE REAL-WORLD CONNECTIONS

Support children in building friendships through school, clubs, hobbies and activities in the real world. Strong offline relationships help reduce children's reliance on online platforms for social interaction, and can help them develop resilience and social confidence.

KEEP CONVERSATIONS OPEN

Let children know they can talk to you about their online life. Avoid reacting with anger or judgement, as this may prevent them from opening up in the future. A child who feels listened to is more likely to disclose problems before they escalate.

USE PARENTAL CONTROLS

Parental control settings on devices, games and apps can help manage screen time, filter out inappropriate content, and monitor activity. While no system is perfect, they provide a valuable layer of protection as children explore digital spaces.

Meet Our Expert

Gabriella Russo is a safeguarding consultant with over 30 years' experience in supporting children, families, and adults across education, local authority, and mental health settings – both in the UK (including at Parliamentary level) and internationally.

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