



Barnsole Bulletin



TERM 3 | WEEK 6 | Friday 13th February 2026

Dear Parents & Carers,

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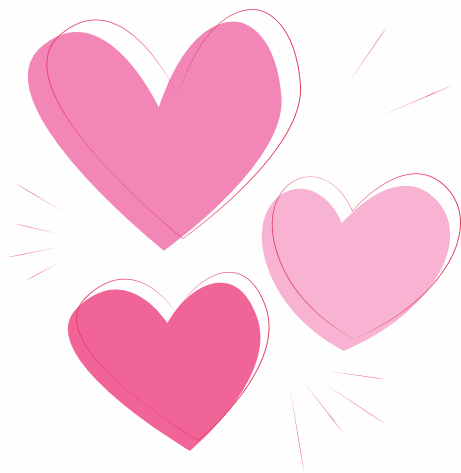
Today, we held a Non-Uniform Day and asked families to donate a food item to help us stock our new Foodbank. The response from you has been absolutely phenomenal! Thank you so much for your kindness and generosity. As you can see from the photo, our Foodbank is already off to a fantastic start. We have made the decision to create our own school Foodbank to support families who may need a little extra help after we learned that Gillingham Street Angels has closed and their foodbank would no longer be available here in Gillingham. As a school, we felt it was important to step in and ensure that support remains available within our community. More information about how the Foodbank will operate will be shared with you in the coming weeks.

With next week being the February half-term holiday, I would like to wish all our families a wonderful and well-deserved break. We look forward to welcoming the children back to school on Monday 23rd February.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Best wishes,

Mr J Smales
Headteacher



House Points (Overall Total for the Academic Year)



2234

Invicta

2007

Medway

1454

Gordon

1504

Adams





If you have concerns about a child in school, please contact one of the Safeguarding team:

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Jonathan Smales (Headteacher)

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Liz Kramer (Deputy Headteacher)

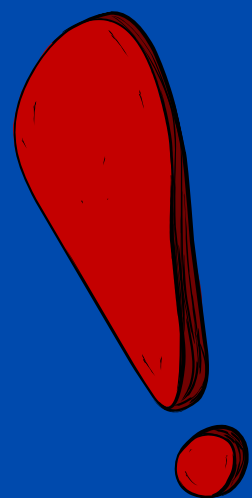
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Nicole Barber (Assistant Headteacher)

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Stephanie Tollervey (Assistant Headteacher)

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Michelle Kagan (FLO)

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Helen Rixon (Office Manager)

If you are concerned about a child outside of school, either after school, at the weekends or during a school holiday, you can contact the following to report your concerns:



Helpful Contact Numbers

Medway Children Services – 01634 334466

Out of Hours Duty Team Medway – 03000 414141

NSPC – 0800 800 500

Police – 101

[Medway.gov.uk/mscb/](https://www.medway.gov.uk/mscb/)

Nursery

This week we have been looking at space. The children have enjoyed pretending to fly in a rocket to the moon on the command deck in the home corner.



Year R

We have had a fantastic and busy term! We have enjoyed lots of fun at Welly Wednesday and we've been working really hard on our Phonics through sensory fun. We can't wait for more fun and learning when we return from half term. Enjoy a good rest and we will see you after the February Half Term!



Year 1

Year One has been full of exciting learning and new experiences! We loved our special assembly from a Science Boffin, where we watched amazing experiments and learned fascinating facts about science. In PE, we had a fantastic time learning pirate dances, moving like swashbuckling sailors and practicing our best "ahoy!" moves. We have also been working very hard on our writing, practicing forming our letters carefully and building our sentences with confidence. It has been a busy and brilliant couple of weeks of learning!



Year 2

Year 2 demonstrated some fantastic oracy skills during English this week. We have been reading the book 'At the Beach - Postcards from Crabby Spit.' After experiencing their 'day at the beach' the children took part in some roleplay activities. They became the characters from the story and were talking about what they were doing in the photos. The descriptions they were giving were fantastic. We can't wait to see how they use these ideas in their writing.



Year 3

In Year 3, we have learned lots of new and exciting things. We made diorama volcanoes and learned about how volcanoes work. We also received our Chromebooks and learned how to log in and access all of our learning links so we are ready to use them in class next term. We took part in a Science Boffins assembly, where we explored science in a fun and interesting way.



Year 4

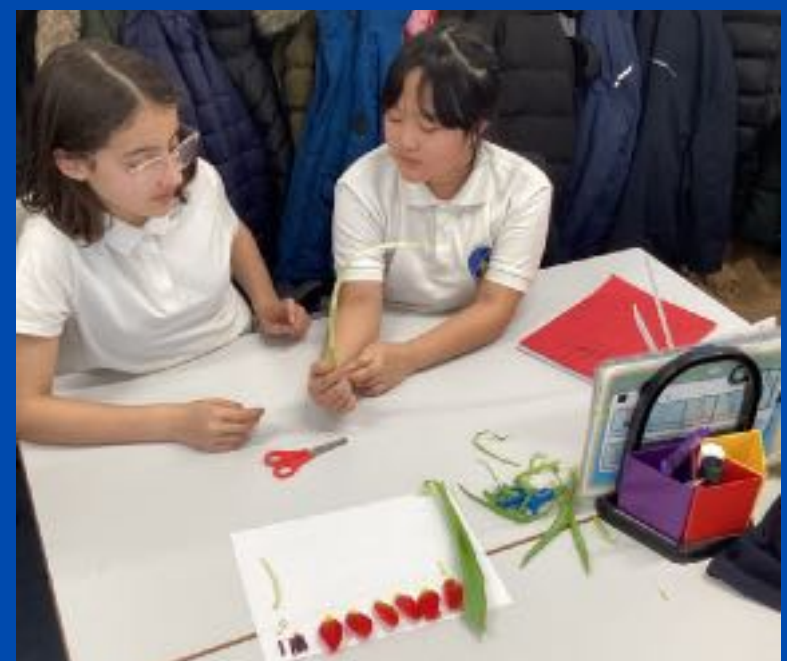
This week in Year 4, our English lessons have been all about survival! We have been pretending to be Bear Grylls, with some children sitting in the hot seat and answering questions using their best survival advice. They explained how to build shelters, how to avoid poisonous food, and how to make a fire and stay safe outdoors.

In Science, we have been learning how to read a thermometer. We explored freezing and boiling points by placing thermometers in water at different temperatures and observing the results.



Year 5

This term in Geography, Year 5 have been exploring the journey from field to fork through our topic Sow, Grow and Farm. We have been learning about how food is produced, the different types of farming in the UK and around the world, and why farming is so important to our daily lives. As part of our learning, we became plant scientists! We carefully took apart a plant and identified each part, including the roots, stem, leaves and flowers. We discussed the important job each part does — from absorbing water and nutrients to making food through photosynthesis. It was fantastic to see the children using scientific vocabulary so confidently and handling the plants with such care. Year 5 have shown great curiosity and enthusiasm, asking thoughtful questions about how crops grow and how farmers look after their land. We are very proud of their teamwork and their growing knowledge!



Year 6

Year 6 have been continuing their science learning on the topic of light. Using torches, they investigated how shadows are formed and explored how changing the distance between the light source and an object can affect the size of the shadow. Throughout the investigation, pupils demonstrated a range of scientific skills, including careful measuring and presenting their results clearly in graphs. In PE, Year 6 are continuing to develop their parkour skills. They have been using a range of equipment to practise travelling in different ways, including jumping, rolling and balancing, while improving their coordination, control and confidence.



KS2 Satellite

Today our KS2 Satellite Class put their English skills into real life action!

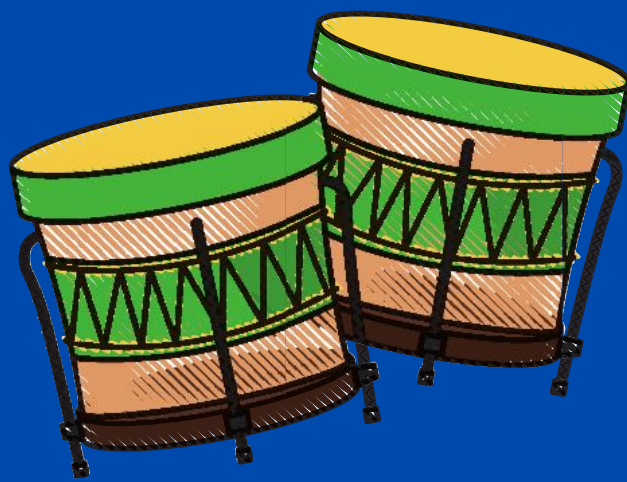
As part of their learning, the children wrote postcards home and then took a trip to the post office to buy their stamps. They confidently asked for the stamps themselves, handed over their money and made sure they had the correct change.

Afterwards, we walked to the post box and they posted them together.

Now the big question is... whose postcard will arrive home first?



SAMBA



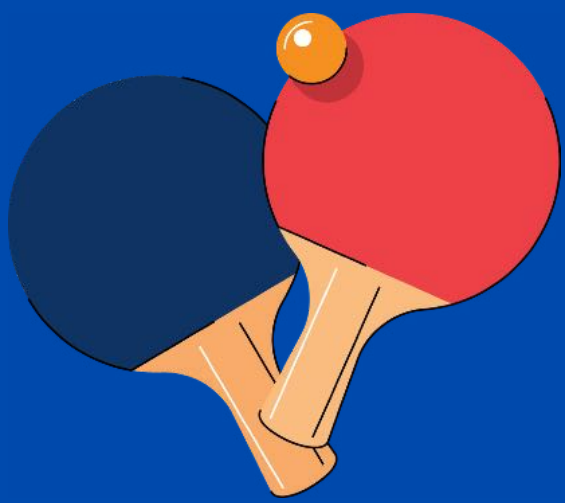
SAMBA

Last Wednesday we were transported to Brazil with three Samba performances across our school.

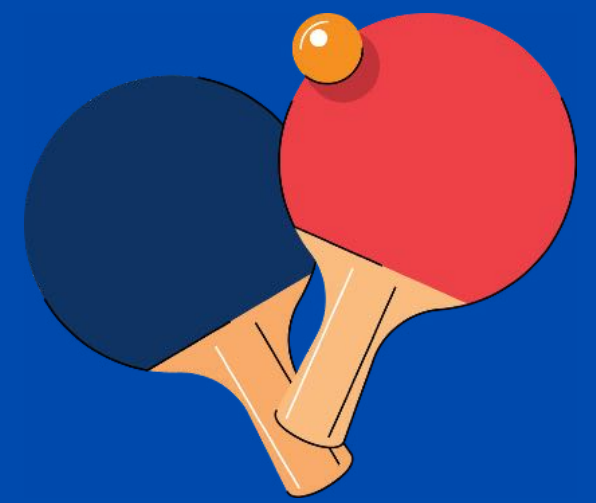
Year 10 students from The Hundred of Hoo School played various percussion instruments to form a Samba Band.

Each of the performances included audience participation and the musicians were very impressed with our children's sense of rhythm and timing – let alone their behaviour and excellent questions. Certainly had our feet tapping and enjoying SAMBA!!





MYG TABLE TENNIS TOURNAMENT



Well done to the Table Tennis Team who competed in the Mini Youth Games last week. The children played brilliantly and some great matches were won. Overall the team came 6th out of 30 schools – an incredible achievement.

Results:

Draw v Cliffe Woods 3-3

Win v St Margaret's 4-2

Draw v St Mary's 3-3

Win v Horstead 4-2

Win v Warren Wood 4-2

Win v Parkwood 6-0

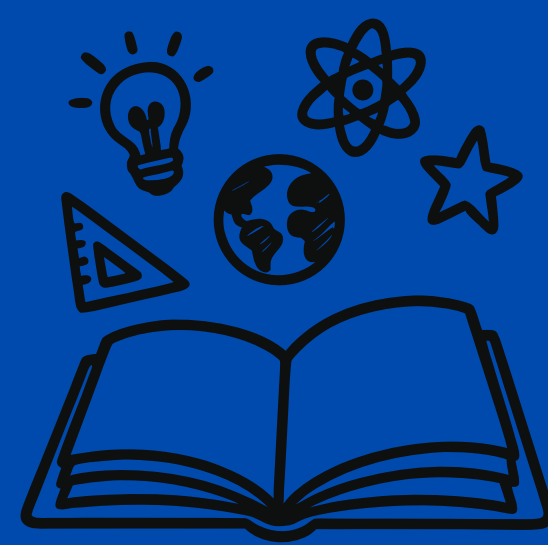
Draw v Byron 3-3

W v Burnt Oak 4-2





SCIENCE BOFFINS ASSEMBLY



We had the science boffins this term to give us an experience of what it's like to be a scientist!

We learnt how electricity is passed through objects even ourselves to light up a bulb. We found out how to make slime and Finished it off with fire!!!

We could even hear children say "I love science!!!" So watch out there will be scientists in the future coming from Barnsole!



SCHOOL COUNCIL

The School Council met for the first time this week. We talked about how we can make Barnsole even better and decided to introduce some new playground games. We learned and practised two new games called Detective and Sharky Sharky. If you'd like to try a new game, ask a School Council member to show you. It's going to be a great year! Miss Howard & the School Council!



WORLD BOOK DAY - THURSDAY 5TH MARCH

We are excited to celebrate World Book Day on Thursday 5th March. On this special day, we invite all pupils to dress up as a character from a book of their choice. Whether they go all out with a full costume or simply add a few creative accessories, the magic is in their hands! All children will also receive their £1 book voucher on the day to spend on a special World Book Day title.

We are looking forward to sharing lots of exciting updates, including a bingo challenge, library visits, author visits and our upcoming book fair. Please look out for a separate letter coming home soon with further details.



TIME TO PLAY!



Did you know that the first three years of your child's life lay the foundations for everything that follows?

Looking for something fun to do with your little one? Join us for a relaxed and engaging session of songs, rhymes and early learning activities for under 4s. Led by a qualified nursery teacher, these sessions are open to everyone in the community and are a lovely way to learn, play and connect.

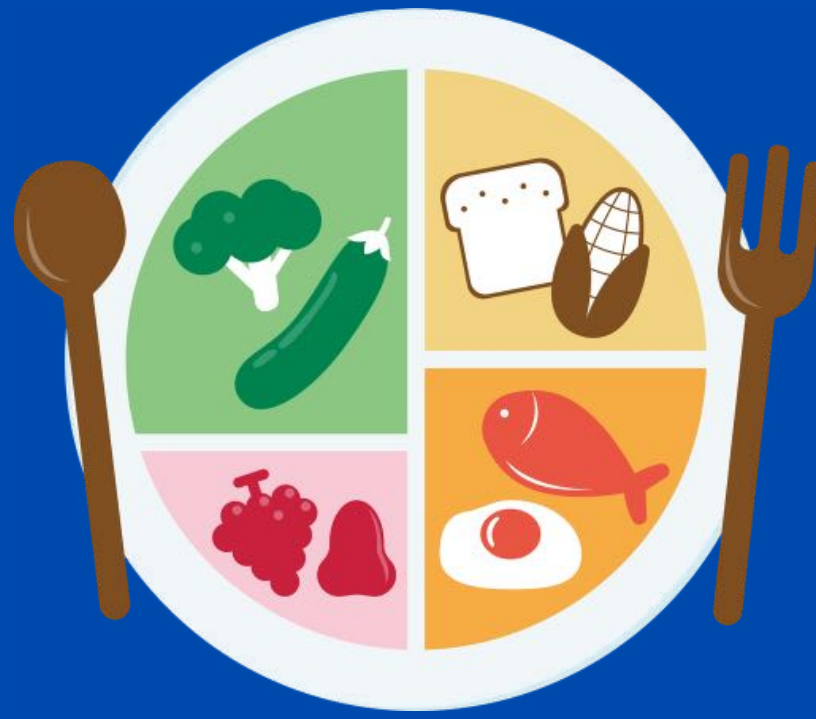
FREE

Coming soon on a
Thursday
morning. More
information to
follow



If you have any baby toys, play mats or bouncers you no longer need, we would greatly appreciate your donation.

HEALTHY LUNCHBOX TIPS FOR PARENTS



Providing a balanced lunch helps children stay focused, energetic, and ready to learn throughout the school day. When packing your child's lunchbox, try to aim to include a variety of foods from the main food groups to support their growth and wellbeing.

There is also the option of ordering a free hot meal each day for your child in Reception and KS1 or a paid hot meal in KS2.

What a Balanced Lunchbox Looks Like:

- Starchy Foods

These give children the energy they need to learn and play. Good options include wholemeal bread or rolls, wraps, rice, pasta, or crackers.

- Protein

Protein supports growth and keeps children feeling full for longer. Try lean meats, eggs, hummus, tofu, beans, or cheese.

- Dairy or Dairy Alternatives

These foods help support strong bones and teeth. Include plain or low-sugar yoghurt, cheese, or plant-based alternatives where appropriate.

- Fruit and Vegetables

Aim for at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables each day. Fresh, chopped options all count.

- A Healthy Drink

Water is the best choice for staying hydrated. Please avoid sugary drinks.

A lunchbox that includes a mix of these foods helps children get the nutrients they need to thrive at school. Thank you for supporting healthy eating habits at home and at school!

Parent Information – Uniform Reminder



School Uniform

Please can we remind parents of our school uniform policy. Please take the time to read this on our school website.

Jewellery & Hair Accessories

Earrings – plain Studs only

Hair bands or hair ties should be plain colours and small

No necklaces, bracelets or any other item of jewellery is allowed

Items of Religious Significance

Children from the Sikh community are allowed to wear a kara, which is a steel or iron bracelet. As part of the Sikh faith, the kara must not be removed.

Head coverings (hijab) should be plain navy blue or black without any embellishments, patterns or additional decorations.

PE Days

For PE Days, children should be wearing black shorts, leggings or tracksuit bottoms. T-shirt in the colour of your child's house team or a plain white t-shirt and Black trainers (no bright ones).

On the days that the children have PE they can come to school already their PE kit. It is essential that all items of clothing are clearly marked with your child's name, including coats and PE kit.

NO SMOKING OR VAPING POLICY



Please note that there is a no smoking/vaping on the school site. This includes outside areas, such as the playground, car park and outside the school gates.



FRIENDS OF BARNSOLE

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2026

♥ FEBRUARY ♥

06/02 : Year 1&2 Disco
12/02 : CommuniTea

🌸 MARCH 🌸

05/03 : CommuniTea
12/03 : Mothers Day
Shop
27/03 : Family Bingo

🥚 APRIL 🥚

02/04 : CommuniTea
23/04 : Bake Sale

🏰 MAY 🏰

Class tea towel
07/05 : CommuniTea
15/05 : Inflatables
afternoon

🎵 JUNE 🎵

11/06 : CommuniTea
18/06 : Fathers Day
Shop

🎪 JULY 🎪

09/07 : CommuniTea
10/07 : Donation tag
day
15/7 : Summer Fair

CommuniTea

Join us for a relaxed tea & coffee morning once a month right after drop-off.

A chance to meet, chat and connect with other parents in our school community.

Babies and pre-school children are very welcome.

If you can bring a mug, that would be great!

We'd love to see you there!

Thursday 12th February

Thursday 5th March

Thursday 2nd April

Thursday 7th May

Thursday 11th June

Thursday 9th July

Free to attend!



STAY UP TO DATE WITH ALL EVENT DETAILS ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE



facebook.com/friendsbarnsole



friends@barnsole-maritime.org

DISCOVER 100's OF FREE ACTIVITIES DURING THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS



**READY WHEN YOU ARE!
GO.MEDWAY.GOV.UK**



MedwayGo
FREE ACTIVITIES DURING
SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

**A BETTER
MEDWAY**
Easier ways to be heard

Medway
Serving You

8:30AM - 4PM
8AM EARLY
DROP OFF
fees apply

BROMPTON ACADEMY

FEBRUARY 2026

MULTI-ACTIVITY AND SPORTS CAMP

DAYS	THEMES
MONDAY 16 TH	Bouncy Castle & Football Penalty Shootout Inflatable
TUESDAY 17 TH	Pancake Making Day
WEDNESDAY 18 TH	Winter Olympics - Kurling, Snowball, Dodgeball, Bobsleigh Push & Speed Skating & Snowball Fight
THURSDAY 19 TH	Laser Tag & New Gymnastic Spring Boards
FRIDAY 20 TH	Valentine's Arts & Crafts

**CONTACT
US!**

07378 951411 www.strivepeandsport.co.uk
[f](#) [i](#) [t](#) [@strivepeandsport](#)



FEBRUARY 2026 Timetable

All sessions delivered live online via zoom. 90 minutes long

£24 each or FREE with School Membership

Book online at facefamilyadvice.co.uk

Recordings available for 48 hours (excluding Free Talk)

Autism - Improving Communication	2 Feb 10am
Improving Family Communication	2 Feb 7pm
Supporting A Child with ADHD	3 Feb 10am
Understanding Addictive Behaviour	3 Feb 7pm
Anxiety Based School Avoidance	9 Feb 10am
Anxiety Explained	16 Feb 10am
Cannabis and Ketamine Awareness	16 Feb 7pm
What is ACT?	17 Feb 10am
Introduction to OCD	17 Feb 7pm
FREE - Reducing the Harm from Screens	19 Feb 7-8pm
Understanding the Teenage Brain	23 Feb 10am
Raising Self-Esteem	23 Feb 7pm
Decreasing Depression	24 Feb 10am
Supporting Healthy Sleep	24 Feb 7pm
Understanding Anger	9 Mar 7pm
Facing Defiance	10 Mar 7pm

Medway SENDIASS

January - March 2026 Information Sessions

Medway Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Information, Advice and Support service (SENDIASS) have a number of information sessions this year, so please come along and see us if you require information or advice.

No need to book, just turn up.

Please note, if you require support in relation to EHCP applications or appeals, please contact the service separately as these sessions are not suitable.

**Strood Children and
Family Hub**
27th January - 12.30
until 14.30

**Chatham Children
and Family Hub**
24th February -
10.00 until 12.00

**Gillingham &
Twydall Children
and Family Hub**
25th March - 10.00
until 12.00

medwaysendiass@family-action.org.uk

01634 566303

www.medway-sendiass.org.uk

SENDIASS
hosted by



FREE

Online Music Technology Sessions

- Open to pupils in Year 5 - 13
- Tuesdays 5:30pm - 6:30pm
- Term time only

SIGN UP NOW

www.medwaymusicassociation.co.uk



TERM TIME ONLY

JOIN OUR SATURDAY MUSIC CENTRE

AGES 5 - 18

EVERYONE WELCOME

COMPLETE BEGINNERS TO
ADVANCED MUSICIANS

RAINHAM MARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL



DISCOVER MORE

www.medwaymusicassociation.co.uk

AVAILABLE HELP FOR WRAPAROUND CHILDCARE

Up to 85% of costs can be claimed through
Universal Credit

WHY THIS MATTERS

Wraparound Childcare - such as breakfast clubs and after-school care helps parents manage work and family life.

If you receive **Universal Credit**, you may be eligible for significant financial support.

THE BENEFITS ARE

- Claim up to 85% of childcare costs when using Ofsted registered providers
- Payments are made directly to you after costs are incurred

HOW TO APPLY

1. Log in to your Universal Credit account
2. Submit evidence of childcare costs (invoices or receipts)
3. Receive reimbursement after payment

MedwayGo offers Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) for school aged children during the main school holidays. Activities are free for those eligible for benefit related free school meals, as well as children with SEND and children in care for more information use the following link: <https://go.medway.gov.uk/>

TAX-FREE CHILDCARE CAN ALSO BE USED FOR WRAPAROUND CHILDCARE

- Get £2 from the government for every £8 you pay into your childcare account
- Up to £2,000 per child (or £4,000 if your child is disabled)

NEED HELP?

Visit:

www.gov.uk/universal-credit
www.gov.uk/tax-freechildcare
<https://beststartinlife.org.uk>

Don't miss out - access available & affordable childcare today



Are you looking for
**before and after
school childcare**
that works for you?

Wraparound childcare is childcare that wraps around the school day. It typically runs from 8am-6pm during term time, either on a school site or another local setting.

- ✓ Safe and supportive environments
- ✓ Fun, engaging activities
- ✓ Convenient local locations
- ✓ Affordable sessions paid directly to your school
- ✓ Financial support available in some cases



Find out more

Find the support you need as a busy parent or carer of a primary school age child.

Visit: Medway.gov.uk/WraparoundChildcare or speak to your child's school.



Online FREE talk by Jane Keyworth

Anxiety Based School Avoidance

March 26th 7-8pm



Book online

www.facefamilyadvice.co.uk

go to PARENTS - Live Talks page

All 16 parent talks **FREE** with our School Membership





Class Attendance for the year so far ...

Infants

Saturn - 96%
Neptune - 94%
Mercury - 94%
Comet - 92%
Venus - 90%
Jupiter - 90%
Moonbeams - 90%
Mars - 88%



Juniors

Oberon - 95%
Titan - 95%
Apollo - 95%
Phoenix - 95%
Icarus - 95%
Aquarius - 95%
Dragon - 94%
Juno - 93%
Pegasus - 92%
Capricorn - 91%
Polaris - 91%
Orion - 89%
Aquila - 89%

Dates for the Diary

Friday 13 th February	Spring Term 1 ends
HALF TERM	Monday 16 th February-Friday 20 th February
Monday 23 rd February	SCHOOL RETURNS
Thursday 5 th March	CommuniTea - Join us to meet, chat and connect with other parents in our school community (younger children welcome) (9am-10am) KS1 Hall
Thursday 5 th March	World Book Day <i>Further information to follow</i>
Friday 6 th March	Yr 1 Disco <i>Further information to follow</i>
Wednesday 11 th & Thursday 12 th March	Mother Days Event <i>Further information to follow</i>
Thursday 11 th March-Wednesday 18 th March	Scholastic Book Fair <i>Further information to follow</i>
Friday 27 th March	Family Bing <i>Further information to follow</i>
Friday 13 th March	Red Nose Day <i>Further information to follow</i>
Friday 20 th March	INSET DAY
Wednesday 25 th March	Parents Consultation Meetings 3.30pm-5.30pm <i>Further information to follow</i>
Wednesday 1 st April	Parents Consultation Meetings 3.30pm-5.30pm <i>Further information to follow</i>

Dates for the Diary

Thursday 2 nd April	CommuniTea - Join us to meet, chat and connect with other parents in our school community (younger children welcome) <i>(9am-10am) KS1 Hall</i>
Thursday 2nd April	Spring Term 2 ends
Friday 3rd April-Friday 17th April	Easter Holidays
Monday 20th April	SCHOOL RETURNS
Thursday 23 rd April	Bake Sale
Monday 4th May	May Bank Holiday
Thursday 7 th May	CommuniTea - Join us to meet, chat and connect with other parents in our school community (younger children welcome) <i>(9am-10am) KS1 Hall</i>
Monday 11 th May-Thursday 14 th May	Yr 6 SATs Week
Friday 15 th May	Inflatables afternoon (3.30pm-5pm) <i>Further information to follow</i>
Monday 25th May-Friday 29th May	May Half Term
Monday 1 st June	School Returns
Thursday 11th June	CommuniTea - Join us to meet, chat and connect with other parents in our school community (younger children welcome) <i>(9am-10am) KS1 Hall</i>
Thursday 18 th & Friday 19 th June	Fathers Day Event <i>Further information to follow</i>
Wednesday 8 th July	Summer Fayre
Thursday 9 th July	CommuniTea - Join us to meet, chat and connect with other parents in our school community (younger children welcome) <i>(9am-10am) KS1 Hall</i>
Friday 10 th July	Donation Tag day
Wednesday 15 th July	Summer Fair Infant Site
Tuesday 21st July	End of School Year

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Talking about mental health to children is sometimes hard. To the point that we can put off talking about it. This guide is designed to help you confidently talk about mental health, so they feel comfortable talking about their own worries and any stigma before it begins.

10 Conversation Starters for



raising the subject, how much to hear about problems or raise overwhelming subjects that we perceive our child is too young or not ready for. But rather than keeping children in the comfort of talking about their own worries and any stigma before it begins.

1 LISTEN

This sounds obvious, but it is not something we are always great at. Active listening is where we listen without interrupting or making judgements and shows interest in what is being said. If your child feels listened to in the 'smallest of problems' they will become confident that you will listen when the 'biggest of problems' arise.

2 ASK TWICE

The campaign from time to change is great. <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/support-ask-twice-campaign>. Be tenacious about your child's wellbeing. Children instinctively know when your questions and support come from a place of wanting to help and care.



Are you sure?

3 THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A STUPID QUESTION

This advice also relates to the first point. If your child can ask you any questions about the smallest of things and you listen and answer without shaming or belittling, then they will have more confidence to ask the biggest of questions.



4 BE OPEN AND HONEST

Children appreciate honesty, particularly if you are having to share information or talk about a difficult subject. For example, you may be talking about death or loss; 'It's very sad that Nana has died' or 'I feel sad that Nana has died'. How you talk about a subject will differ depending on their age and developmental maturity. Talking about death to a younger child for example will be different to that of an older teen, as their experience and understanding of death is different.

5 KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Assess the severity of the mental health difficulty you are noticing. Is the difficulty making it hard for your child to function regularly throughout everyday life? How frequently is your child affected, how long does it last and how persistent is it? Are they having problems controlling the difficulty? Talk to your child about your concerns and that it is likely they will need further support beyond family and friends.



6 TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH NATURALLY

Speak about mental health as part of everyday life, so that talking about our feelings and those of others is normalised. If the usual 'are you ok?' is not creating an opportunity for dialogue then say something like 'I know when something like that has happened to me I felt like this... is that how you are feeling or are you feeling something else?'

7 EMPATHISE

'It makes sense that you would feel this way, it is understandable'. Children often worry about things that we, as adults, might see as trivial or silly. However, for them at their age and stage it is a big concern and they need our kindness and care when they show their vulnerability and share their worries.



8 HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL SAFE

Teens particularly feel that by talking about their worries or concerns that this will make things worse. Reassure your child that you will discuss a plan of action together and what may or may not need to happen next. If they are a younger child, it is likely you will need to lead the conversation and explain next steps.



9 MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Be mindful of the language you use at home to describe and talk about mental health. Stigma often arises from misconceptions and a choice of language which is harmful. Using the word 'mental', 'man-up' or other such words in a derogatory way won't encourage your child to talk about their mental health for fear of being belittled.



10 IT IS OK TO SAY 'I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT'

Adults do not have all the answers but often children think they do. It is ok to acknowledge that what your child is experiencing is not something you have come across before or know anything about, but that you will work it out together and seek help together.



Meet our expert

This guide has been written by Anna Bateman. Anna is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department of Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.



Sources of Information and Support

Your GP

Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/v>
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>
<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/parenting-tips/2016/november/a-simple-guide-to-active-listening-for-parents/>
<https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health>



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

YOUTUBE

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Almost anyone with an internet connection knows YouTube. The Google-owned site lets anyone upload videos to be shared around the world, and as a result, it's an incredible resource with instant free access to material covering every conceivable topic. But with over 500 hours of video uploaded every minute, not all of it will be appropriate for young eyes.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

YouTube is free and can be accessed via numerous devices, even without creating a YouTube account. Some content is flagged as 'age-restricted' (requiring the user to be logged into an account with a verified age of 18), but children can still view some mildly inappropriate content. This can include profanity and violence, which some young users may find upsetting.

CONNECT WITH STRANGERS

YouTube recommends videos related to what the user has previously watched on their account, aiming to provide content that will interest them. This is intended to be helpful but it can also lead to binge-watching and screen addiction – especially if 'auto-play' is active. Users without an account are shown popular videos from the last 24 hours, which might not always be suitable for children.

RADICALISATION

YouTube's algorithm tends to promote content that's getting the most traffic – a lot of which can be quite extreme. This can be fine for harmless topics, but YouTube isn't regulated like television, and that means that conspiracy theories, fake news and hateful ideologies can occasionally surface to warp impressionable minds all too easily. Remember – the more they watch, the more they'll be recommended.

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

YouTube is a social media platform which allows people to interact with other (usually unknown) users. Account holders can leave comments on any video they have access to, as well as message other users directly. Connecting with strangers online can potentially lead to children being exposed to adult language, cyberbullying and – in the worst cases – online predators. If a child is creating content themselves, this can increase the likelihood of them becoming a target.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

YouTube is teeming with trends and challenges, some of which are fun to watch and join in with. Children often find these immensely entertaining and might want to try them out. Most challenges tend to be safe, but many others may cause physical or emotional harm children who watch or copy them. The painful 'salt and ice challenge' – where people use these two ingredients to burn their skin – is just one of many examples.

SNEAKY SCAMMERS

The comments sections of popular content creators regularly have scammers posing as that influencer, attempting to lure users into clicking on their phishing links. Scammers impersonate YouTubers by adopting their names and profile images, and often offer cash gifts or 'get rich quick' schemes. Children may not realise that these users aren't who they claim to be.

Advice for Parents & Educators

APPLY RESTRICTED MODE

For older children, Restricted Mode is an optional setting that prevents YouTube from showing inappropriate material (such as drug and alcohol abuse, graphic violence, and sexual content) to underage viewers. To prevent children from chancing across age-inappropriate content on the platform, we would recommend enabling Restricted Mode on each device that they use to access YouTube. It's worth also turning the auto-play feature off, to prevent YouTube's algorithm automatically recommending something inappropriate.

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CENSORED

TRY GOOGLE FAMILY

Creating a Google Family account allows parents and carers to monitor what their child is watching, uploading, and sharing with other users. It will also display their recently watched videos, searches, and recommended videos. In general, a Google Family account gives a parent or carer oversight of how their child uses sites like YouTube and helps to ensure that they are only accessing appropriate content.

MONITOR ENGAGEMENT

YouTube is the online viewing platform of choice for billions of people, many of them under 18. Younger children will watch different content to older ones, of course. You may want to keep an eye on how children interact with this material – and, if applicable, with content creators – to understand what they're interested in. Remember that creators often share content outside of YouTube, so don't ignore their web presence elsewhere!

CONSIDER YOUTUBE KIDS

It's possible to sidestep most inappropriate content completely via Google's own YouTube Kids app for Android handsets and iPhone. This lets you filter content by "preschool" (4 and under), "younger" (ages 5 to 8) and "older" (ages 9 to 12). This isn't a perfect substitute for personal supervision, as the app's filtering system is automated, and Google can't manually review all videos.

CHECK PRIVACY SETTINGS

YouTube gives users the option of uploading videos as 'private' or 'unlisted' – so they could be shared exclusively with family and friends, for example. Comments on videos can also be disabled and channels that a child is subscribed to can be hidden. If the child is only uploading videos set as 'private', they are far less likely to receive direct messages from strangers.

LIMIT SPENDING

Although YouTube is free, it does offer some in-app purchases. For example, users can rent and buy TV shows and movies to watch. If you'd like to avoid children purchasing content online, limit their access to online payment methods. Many parents have discovered the hard way that a child happily consuming a paid-for series quickly leads to an unexpected bill!

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist who has written for the likes of Wired, TechRadar, Tom's Guide, The Evening Standard and The New Statesman.



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