

Parental Communication & Engagement



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Message from Headteacher

This week has definitely been one of celebration with so much success and achievement taking place across the school!

On Tuesday, we held our very special 'Roll of Honour Presentation' where 5 students from the Class of 2023 were invited back into school in order to see their names appear on our very special Roll of Honour Board!

No sooner had this event finished, our RS Debate team returned to school triumphant as 8 Year 10 GCSE Religious Studies students were involved in a Dudley interschool debating event which they of course won! Students showcased their argumentation and debate skills maturely and respectfully against other schools and both of our teams were able to secure a win. Henry, Benjamin TF, Benjamin H and Haydon all argued that marriage is still relevant in modern day society. Lauren, Isabella, Taylah and Emily all argued that religion still has a long way to go in relation to modern feminism and the oppression of women. Mr Mac was extremely impressed with the speaking and listening skills of our students during the debates. Well done!



On Friday, I got to present our Learner of the Month Award with Mrs Mescam to Efrem in 8AY for his hard work and dedication in German which was fantastic!



National Apprenticeship Week is taking place next week. Please see our Careers Newsletter for more details on apprenticeships.

Best wishes.

Mrs Sutton
Headteacher

Key Letters/Information Sent Out Recently

The vast majority of all letters are now emailed home and we use electronic reply slips as much as possible. The criterion for 'selected student only' opportunities are based on various factors depending on the trip and its focus. Unfortunately, we are unable to allow every student the opportunity to be involved with every activity which we understand sometimes causes disappointment. If you require more details about the selection process for any opportunity please contact the event organiser.

- School Production Week Schedule Letter;
- School Production Photo Permission Letter;
- Careers Newsletter - February 2024;
- The Scholars Programme Letter **Selected Year 7 & 8 students only;*
- Graduation Event Letter **Selected Year 9 & 10 students only.*

Events/Reminders

- National Apprenticeship Week - W/C Monday 5 February 2024;
- Summer German Trip 2024 3rd Payment Due (£130) - Monday 5 February 2024;
- The Scholars Programme Response Deadline - Monday 5 February 2024;
- Safer Internet Day - Tuesday 6 February 2024;
- School Production of 'We Will Rock You' - Wednesday 7 February 2024 to Friday 9 February 2024;
- PSHE - Wednesday 7 February 2024;

- Graduation Event Trip Response Deadline - Friday 9 February 2024.

Updates

IMPORTANT - Please see the below message from Dudley Council Health Protection Team:

You may have seen recent media reports of rising measles cases across the West Midlands and the Black Country. The most effective way to prevent measles infection, and the possible serious complications it can cause, is by having 2 doses of MMR vaccine. 2 doses of MMR provide 99% protection against measles that is lifelong. It also protects against mumps and rubella. It is safe and effective, and a porcine gelatine free vaccine is available, if this is preferred.

The rise in measles cases is due to declining childhood immunisation rates, including the MMR, nationally over the past 10 years. The higher the immunisation rates, the less opportunity there is for measles infection to circulate, which helps to protect those who are vulnerable due to being unable to receive MMR vaccination (including babies under 1-year old, pregnant women if unvaccinated, and the severely immunocompromised).

It is not too late for children and adults to catch up on the MMR vaccine if they haven't received 2 doses at the recommended ages of 1 year (1st dose) and 3 years and 4 months (2nd dose). Your GP surgery can be contacted to arrange an appointment. If you are unsure whether your child is immunised with 2 doses of MMR vaccine, you can check their 'red book', which is their personal health record. Children who have not had any MMR vaccines may have to stay away from school for up to 21 days if they are identified as a close contact of a confirmed measles case.

Please see the NHS webpages on measles and MMR vaccine for more information, and the below link for local pop-up vaccination clinics for MMR: <https://blackcountry.icb.nhs.uk/your-health/health-advice/measles#clinic>

We Will Rock You

Our School Production of 'We Will Rock You' will take place from Wednesday 7 to Friday 9 February 2024 at 7.30pm. Tickets are on sale NOW at [Seaty - A simple box office platform](#) It's going to be amazing!!



At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many issues which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit nationalonlinecollege.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about PERSUASIVE DESIGN ONLINE

'Persuasive design' refers to the techniques that companies employ to influence our thoughts and behaviours when we're on the internet. These approaches can be spotted on websites, in apps and even as part of some video games. Persuasive design means that this content has been deliberately presented in a way that's intended to encourage you to spend your time or money (or both). These methods often prove highly effective at keeping people engaged and invested for longer than we might expect.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

POTENTIAL ADDICTION

In the digital world, persuasive design can make certain activities more addictive and harder to walk away from: some people may begin to feel anxious or irritated without access to their device or their favourite app, for example. It can also often leave users feeling isolated, as – if they spend most of their time on social media – they may start to find it difficult to talk to other people in real life.

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Scrolling online or gaming without regular breaks is proven to be harmful to our mental health. The constant bombardment of news stories (many of them negative), images and influencers' posts can create sensations of unease, uncertainty and FOMO (fear of missing out). Young people can get so immersed in this environment that they become less likely to spot misleading posts.

PROLONGED SCROLLING

Social media can draw any of us – regardless of age – into a continuous pattern of refreshing our screen, following posts and links down rabbit holes or reading countless comments made by others. This aimless scrolling can eat up time which could have been spent on more productive activities. It could also lead younger users into areas of the online world which aren't age appropriate.

SENSORY OVERLOAD

Repetitively scrolling, clicking on links or playing games can create an unending stream of new information and visual stimuli. Put it this way: social media isn't exactly renowned as a carefree, chilled-out environment. Such overstimulation can become too much for young people to handle, resulting in sensory overload and causing them to feel stressed, overwhelmed and exhausted.

COSTLY ADDITIONS

Video games sometimes display offers for downloadable content or loot boxes which can be bought with real money. While these 'microtransactions' temptingly promise to improve a player's gaming experience, most of the time they are money sinks. Young people in particular, excited by the chance of enhancing their game, could spend quite a sizeable sum very quickly indeed.

PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES

Hours spent sitting and scrolling means far less time moving around and getting exercise: hardly ideal for a young person's physical health. Additionally, prolonged exposure to the light given off by a phone's screen can lead to eye fatigue and discomfort, especially if viewing it in the dark. Extended phone use before bed can also impact on sleep quality, affecting mood and energy levels over the following days.

Advice for Parents & Carers

ESTABLISH LIMITS

Talk to your child about setting some time limits on how long they can use their phone, tablet or console in the evenings or at weekends – or perhaps how often they can go on a specific app, game or website. You could also decide to involve the whole family in creating this shared screen time agreement, making things fair (and healthier) for everyone.

ENCOURAGE MINDFULNESS

Acknowledging any addiction is key in overcoming it – and compulsive scrolling is no different. If anything mentioned in this guide sounds familiar, it could help to have an honest, open chat with your child about how much time they spend online. Get them to think about how often they scroll through social media aimlessly or habitually open it up whenever they have a spare moment.

NIX NOTIFICATIONS

Stop knee-jerk responses at the source by turning off push notifications and alerts. Whether it's a gaming notification or a social media update, these not-so-gentle reminders are designed to catch our attention and lure us back to our device. Switching them off – or even deleting any particularly intrusive apps – can help prevent your child from being reeled back into the online world.

MAKE A CHECKLIST

Considering a list of relevant questions can be an effective way of helping children figure out why they're scrolling on certain sites or consuming particular pieces of content. A checklist can prompt young people to ask themselves if they're learning anything or benefiting from this activity – or if they're wasting their time. Taking a step back can sometimes help us to see things more clearly.

Meet Our Expert

Rebecca Jennings has more than 20 years' experience in the field of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). As well as delivering workshops and training for young people, parents and schools, she is also a subject matter expert on RSHE for the Department of Education.



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