

28 FEBRUARY 2025

NEWSLETTER

Dear Families,

What a week! From royal performances to national qualifications, The Whitstable School kicked off the term with a bang! Read on for all the highlights.

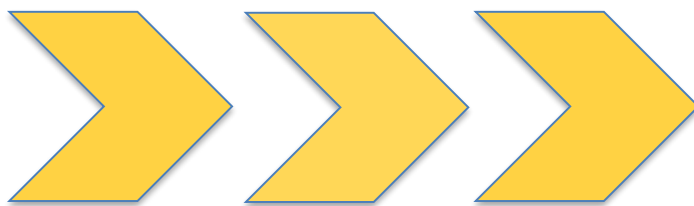
Key Dates:

- 06 March 2025 - Year 9 Options Evening
- 13 March 2025 - Year 8 Parents Evening
- 13 March 2025 - Careers Fair
- 27 March 2025 - Year 7 Parents Evening
- 04 April 2025 - Term 4 Ends

Update

**** Reward Shop Points Important Update ****

We've listened to your feedback!
To make our reward shop system clearer, spending points will no longer appear as negative points on Bromcom and MCAS. Students can check their balance with their **TRACK** Mentor or at the Reward Shop. We're also clearing old transactions to ensure accurate "Total Points." This is a display improvement only, and your child's total points remain unchanged.
For any questions, please contact tw_s_admin@swale.at



NEXT WEEK IS WEEK A TIMETABLE



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REMINDERS

** Respecting Accessible Parking Spaces **

We kindly remind all parents and visitors to respect our designated accessible parking spaces. These spaces are reserved for individuals with disabilities who require close proximity to the school entrance.

Please remember:

- **Not all disabilities are visible.** Some individuals may have valid permits that are not always displayed.
- **Permits must be displayed.** If you have a valid permit, please ensure it is clearly visible in your vehicle's windscreen.
- **Cooperation is key.** We rely on everyone's cooperation to ensure these spaces are available for those who need them.

We understand that parking can be challenging, but we ask that you be considerate of others and refrain from parking in accessible spaces unless you have a valid permit.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in making our school accessible for everyone.

** Engines Off **

To help reduce air pollution, noise levels, and respect our neighbour's, please remember to turn off your engine while waiting to drop off or pick up your child. Thank you for your cooperation.

SIXTH FORM UPDATE

** The Whitstable School Sixth Form Sports Pathways Promo Video is Here! **

We're thrilled to unveil our brand-new promo video showcasing the exciting Sports Pathways available within The Whitstable School Sixth Form! This video highlights the unique opportunities we offer in partnership with the Cave Golf Hotel and Football Futures, providing students with exceptional pathways to pursue their passion for sports.

Please click the link: [New Sixth Form Sports Pathways Promo video](#)



 Football Futures Kent

 footballfutureskent_

 FuturesKent



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**** TWS Football Academy Secures 7-3 Win! ****

Our Academy team delivered a stunning 7-3 victory against Dartford Academy in Wednesday's National League away match!
A huge congratulation to Alex (Year 12), who netted 2 goals and Spike (Year 12), who scored a fantastic hat-trick!
Another outstanding performance from the team!



THIS WEEK SO FAR...

****TRACK Excellence Raffle Winners Announced! ****

Each Wednesday, the school will run a 'TRACK Excellence' raffle with two prizes for students. To enter, students just have to have seven or more positive signatures over the two weeks. Students with negative signatures are still able to participate.

This week's winners are:
Jessica and Riley (Year 10)



Students with their prizes in the TRACK Excellence raffle.



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**** Ski Trip Success! Memories Made ****

Our students had an unforgettable ski trip this half term, creating lasting memories amidst the stunning slopes of Folgaria, Italy. A huge thank you to our incredible staff who organized and supervised the trip, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone. If your child is interested in joining us for next year's ski adventure in the Les Deux Alps-France, please email tws_admin@swale.at for more information.



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** TWS Scholars Shine at Goldsmiths Graduation**

Our **TWS Scholars** celebrated their remarkable academic achievements at a special graduation event at **Goldsmiths University!** The day was filled with insightful activities, including self-reflection, a Q&A with The Brilliant Club and keynotes about university life.

Our own Scholars delivered a superb speech to other schools, showcasing their **TRACK** values and sharing their knowledge of Game Theory. They received their well-deserved certificates with pride, marking the culmination of their successful Scholars Programme.

It was a fantastic day of celebration and recognition!

A huge thank you to **Miss Dash** for her dedication and hard work in running the **Scholars Programme** and making this achievement possible!



Spoke Scholars, representing The Whitstable School showed their **TRACK** values as they gave a superb speech to other schools about the experiences and knowledge that they had.

Quote from the PHD Tutor:

"The Whitstable school students will always hold a special place in my heart. This was the first class in this program where every student was consistently active, competitive, and fully engaged throughout the course."

It has been an absolute privilege to be part of such a dedicated and dynamic learning environment."



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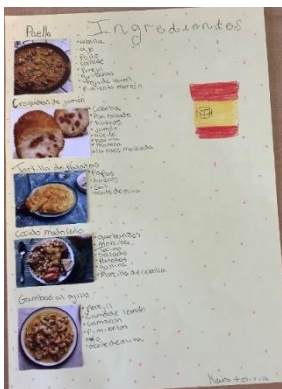
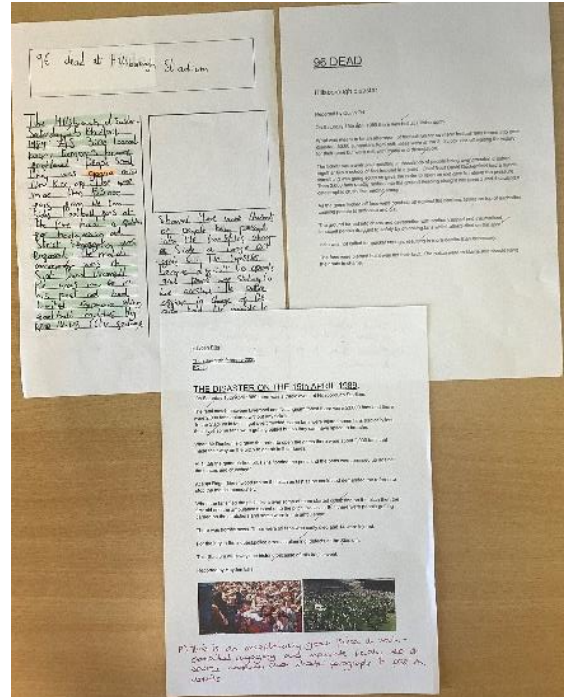
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**** Book of Commendation- Celebrating Student Success! ****

We are pleased to announce the following students have been recognized for their exceptional work and have been added to the Book of Commendation:

- **Isla, Betsy, and Finley (Year 8):** Creative mini-pin books inspired by novel Once by Gleitzman.
- **Amelia (Year 8):** Excellent progress in English.
- **Kian, Quinn and Hayden (Year 9):** Perfect newspaper articles.
- **Olivia and Keira (Year 9):** Well-written Spanish recipes.

Congratulations to all our commended students!



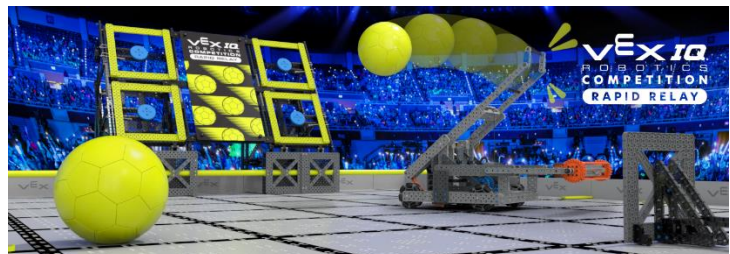
**** TWS Team Whimech Qualifies for VEX Robotics UK Nationals! ****

We're thrilled to announce that Team Whimech has qualified for the VEX Robotics UK National Championship! They'll be competing against the nation's top VEX IQ Robotics teams at the Telford International Centre in the "Rapid Relay" game, with a chance to qualify for the World Championships in Dallas, Texas.

Want to cheer them on? Watch the live stream of the event on Sunday, March 2nd and Monday, March 3rd.

Click here: <https://vexuknationals.co.uk/viqr>

We wish Team Whimech the very best of luck!



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**** Students Perform for Queen Camilla ****

Our students made history on Tuesday! Pupils from across year groups, including the Whitstable Sea Scout Band, had the incredible honour of performing for Queen Camilla in Canterbury at the unveiling of a new statue.

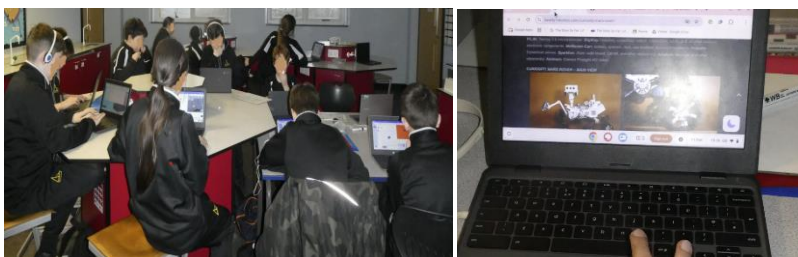
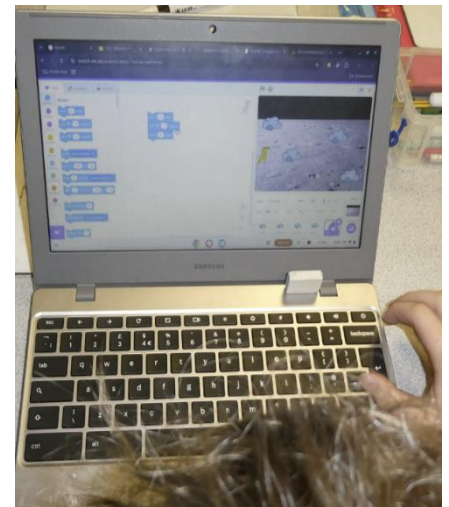
Megan (Year 12) proudly played the band's bass drum, while **Daisy (Year 9), Isabela and Emily (Year 7)** also delivered fantastic performances.



**** STEM Academy: Exploring Mars & Beyond ****

To ignite their passion for the universe, **STEM Academy** students are diving into exciting upcoming events! They can look forward to a virtual talk with astronaut Tim Peake, a masterclass with the National Space Agency and an exclusive IFLY experience with a Physics of Flight workshop.

Currently, students are learning about Mars exploration, focusing on the Perseverance rover's mission to find water in the Jezero Crater. This ties into their "Water, water, everywhere" project, exploring water on Earth and other planets. They've even coded a Mars rock-sampling game, and will soon build their own Mars surface and rovers. Stay tuned for more space-themed updates!



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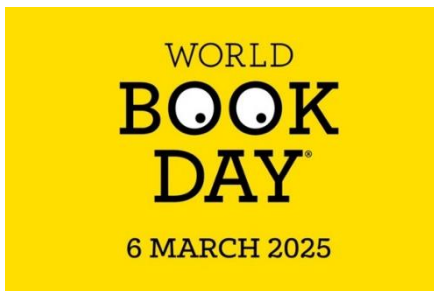
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** Artist of the Month**

Huge congratulations to all the talented students featured in this month's Artist of the Month display! So much incredible work, well done.



** World Book Day Tokens **



KS3 students have received their World Book Day tokens from their English teachers.

If you'd prefer a digital voucher, you can access one here: [Digital Tokens - World Book Day](#)

** Trip to Chatham Dockyard **

Year 9 Trip to **Chatham Dockyard!** All Year 9 students are invited to a whole-year group trip on **March 10th**. Book your space now on Parent Pay.



UPCOMING EVENTS

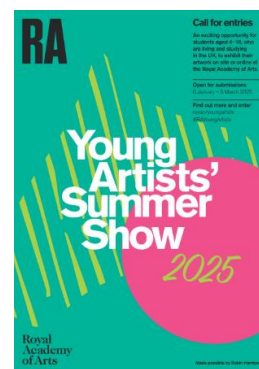
We thank you in advance for any opportunities you are able to provide

****Calling Young Artists! ****

This free exhibition showcases the incredible talent of young artists aged 4-18 across the UK. Want to participate?

- **Students:** Speak to Miss Butler to learn how to submit your artwork through the school.
- **Teachers & Parents/Guardians:** You can also submit artwork on behalf of students.

A panel of esteemed artists and arts professionals will judge the submissions. Selected artworks will be displayed both online and at the prestigious Royal Academy of Arts.



Don't miss this exciting opportunity!

Submission Deadline: March 5th, 2025

**** Important Work Experience Dates for Year 10 and 12 ****

Week of: June 30th - July 4th, 2025 (5 days)

Work experience is a valuable opportunity for you to:



- Gain exposure to the professional world and explore different career paths.
- Develop essential skills desired by employers, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.
- Boost your confidence and build your personal and social skills.

Finding Your Placement:

You are responsible for finding your own work experience placement. This allows you to explore your interests and connect with potential career fields. We will be providing support through Unifrog, a platform that helps you track and manage your placement search.

Have Questions?

If you have any further questions about work experience, please don't hesitate to contact:

- Email: tws-workexperience@swale.at

We thank you in advance for any opportunities you are able to provide.



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Are you able to support a Year 10 or 12 student develop valuable employability skills?

We are seeking work experience placements for our students during the week of **Monday 30th June to Friday 4th July 2025.**

We manage our Work Experience program through Unifrog, which handles all the necessary administration, including risk assessments, health and safety policies, and parental/carer consent.

If you can offer a placement during this week, we would be incredibly grateful.

Please complete the short form to express your interest or scan the QR code:

Form: [Work Experience Placement Form](#)

Alternatively, you can contact us directly at: tws-workexperience@swale.at



NOTICE BOARD

****Emotional Wellbeing/Support Workshops (Feb-Mar 2025) ****

Boost your family's emotional wellbeing! We've got a fantastic line-up of workshops designed to support parents and children. Check out the links to the posters for more information and registration details:

- [Less Stress Guide in Exams](#)
- [Understanding ADHD](#)
- [All online workshops](#)



EMOTIONAL WELLBEING TEAM KENT
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TEAM
MEDWAY



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**** New Flavours at Cucina Restaurant ****

Exciting menus are coming to Cucina Restaurant this month! Expect fresh salads, healthy mains and daily specials.



Menu

- Crispy Chicken Tikka & Mango Chutney Pancake
- Mushroom & Spinach Pancake
- Turkey Ham & Cheese Pancake
- American Style, Banoffee Pancakes - £1.55
- Traditional Lemon & Sugar Pancake - £1.55
- American Pancakes with Blueberry Compote - £1.55

GET CRACKING WITH OUR HOMEMADE PANCAKES



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PERFORMING ARTS WEEK

**RED
ROSE
DAY**

WEDNESDAY 19TH MARCH 5.5&6

Performing Arts Sharing COMEDY
IMPROVISATION PERFORMANCE/DANCE PERFORMANCES

FRIDAY 21ST MARCH 5.5&6

Karaoke Party! TAKE ON TEACHERS AND FELLOW
STUDENTS IN A SINGING BATTLE. PRIZES FOR BEST AND WORST

YOU CAN JOIN IN EITHER OF THE EVENTS ABOVE IN EXCHANGE FOR A
DONATION TO COMIC RELIEF. DETAILS TO FOLLOW ON PARENT PAY

ARE YOU A YOUNG CARER?



Do you care for a family member or friend with an illness, disability, mental health issue or addiction?

Do you help with practical tasks, physical care or emotional support?

If so, come along to the Young Carers Support Group on a Wednesday lunchtime in GZ2 with Mrs James.



** Timetable & Family Hub Information **

"Timetable information and details about our local Kent Family Hub can be found here: [Kent Family Hub](#)



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The Whitstable School

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Headteacher: Mr A Holmes BA (Hons), MA, NPQH

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.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about MARVEL RIVALS

Marvel Rivals launched in December 2024 and amassed a player count of nearly 150,000 in mere weeks. This play-versus-play (PvP) shooter packs in a host of recognizable comic-book characters, pitting two teams of six against each other. Despite the game's cartoonish nature, there are several potential risks for parents and educators to be aware of.

ESRB Rating: PEGI 12 (ESRB: suitable for ages 13 and older)

AGE RESTRICTION: PEGI 12

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

IN-GAME CHAT
Voice chat allows players to speak to teammates and opponents within the game, but is conversational and somewhat muted. Conversations can become unpleasant, but chat is generally prevented among those playing on PC and will be shown on the side of the screen. Moderation on chats is essential, so it's important to recognize that potentially inappropriate messages could arrive at any time.

IN-GAME PURCHASES
While Marvel Rivals is free, there is an in-game store, selling character skins from recognizable movies and comic book titles. Each season also includes a 10 Battle Pass (much like those seen in Fortnite and Call of Duty), offering a variety of exclusive cosmetic items. These passes don't expire, but they can't be purchased once the next season starts, resulting in a loss of missing out.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS
With such a huge player base, it's impossible to prevent children from connecting with others or playing online. They're virtually certain to run into strangers through voice and text chat. For starters, levels of direct contact will be arbitrary, depending on the action, but there is the risk of some users behaving inappropriately with younger players - either intentionally, or because they don't realize that they're speaking to a child.

VIOLENT CONTENT
There's no gore in Marvel Rivals, and the violence depicted is comparatively cartoonish to the anime characters' excessive fury between more traditional superheroes and supervillains, and figures like Iron Man and the Punisher, who use more realistic firearms. Even the game's nature on a character, this may make some parents and carers uncomfortable as some players will be firing those weapons at each other.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT
The game includes some innuendo and mature themes in the dialogue, which could expose youngsters to content inappropriate for their age, depending on the role and how they're playing. As an example, Iron Man's dialogue could include age-inappropriate slang, ranging from referring to mature themes to potentially harmful content.

FAMILIAR CHARACTERS
The inclusion of iconic characters might make Marvel Rivals appear more appropriate than other games in the genre, with recognizable heroes and villains like Spider-Man and Venom. This could lead to more interest from younger players, increasing the likelihood of children playing the game without properly understanding the risks.

Advice for Parents & Educators

FOLLOW ESRB RATINGS
The ESRB rating for Marvel Rivals says the game shouldn't be played by anyone under 13. Most children of that age will be able to appreciate the moral compass of the roster of characters. Parents can play on their own, the Goddess of Death, for example, while also ensuring that the violence, however cartoonish, won't overwhelm them.

FAMILIARISE YOURSELF
The game's inclusion of fan-favourite characters like Iron Man and the Hulk, plus its increasing popularity, means that younger Marvel fans will likely be eager to see what the fuss is about. Since it's free, consider playing Marvel Rivals yourself to gauge how you feel about a child playing it. Alternatively, you could let them play online, but ensure they're using a parental control to complete online.

MONITOR OR TURN OFF CHAT
Voice and text chat can both be adjusted within the in-game settings. If you're particularly concerned about exposing children and young people to them, however, you can disable both forms of chat in the game's settings. If a child wants to play alongside friends, remind them that they can use their console's party chat feature or host on a third-party service like Discord.

DISCONNECT PAYMENT OPTIONS
Parents should ensure that no payment options - such as debit cards - are linked to the game, to prevent unauthorised purchases and charges. Children can be tempted by enticing in-game offers without fully understanding the costs. Removing payment methods avoids impulsive in-game spending and instils a sense of financial awareness, teaching young people to be careful with their money.

Meet Our Expert
Lloyd Coombes is Games Editor of the Daily Star and has been working in the gaming and tech industry for five years. A regular visitor to the App Store to try out new tools, he's also a parent and therefore understands the importance of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, he has been published on sites including iOL, Tech Radar and ptefy.com.

WakeUpWednesday | The National College

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SNAPCHAT

Snapchat is an instant messaging app which allows users to send images, videos and texts to people in their friends list. One of Snapchat's unique features is that pictures and messages disappear 24 hours after they've been viewed, however, this content isn't as temporary as many believe - with some users saving screenshots or using another device to take a photo of their screen. This year, Snapchat added 'My AI', a customisable chatbot with which people can chat and share secrets as well as asking for advice and suggestions of places to visit.

AGE RESTRICTION: 13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS
Even if your child only connects with people they know, they may still get friend requests from strangers. The Quick Add option lets users befriend people the app recommends - but these 'friends' are mostly a username, which could have anyone behind it. Accepting such requests reveals personal information through the Story, SnapMap and Spotlight features, potentially putting them at risk from predators.

EXCESSIVE USE
Snapchat works hard on user engagement, with features like streaks (messaging the same person every day to build up a high score), Spotlight Challenges (tempt users into spending time producing content) and Snapcash (cash prizes and online fame, while it's easy for children to pass hours watching Spotlight's endless scroll of videos).

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT
Some videos and posts on Snapchat aren't suitable for children. The hashtags used to group content are determined by the poster, so even an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's 'disappearing messages' feature also makes it easy for young people (teens in particular) to share explicit images on impulse - so sexting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
My AI is Snapchat's new chatbot, which helps to question a human-like manner. However, the software is still in its infancy and has significant drawbacks, such as biased, incorrect or misleading responses. There have already been numerous reports of young users turning to AI for medical help and diagnoses, which could be inaccurate and therefore potentially dangerous.

ONLINE PRESSURES
Although many of Snapchat's filters are designed to entertain or amuse, the 'beauty' effects on photos can set unrealistic body-image expectations - creating feelings of inadequacy if a young person compares themselves unfavourably with other users. Snapchat now also has 'priority' notifications (which still get displayed even if a device is in 'do not disturb' mode), increasing the pressure on users to log back in and interact.

VISIBLE LOCATION
Snap Map highlights a device's exact position on a virtual map, which is visible to other users. There are options to restrict who can see this information: all friends, only you (Ghost Mode) or selected friends. Snapchat also has real-time location sharing, which is intended as a buddy system to ensure friends have reached home safely - but which could also be used to track a young person for more sinister reasons.

Advice for Parents & Carers

TURN OFF QUICK ADD
The Quick Add feature helps people find each other on the app. This function works based on mutual friends or whether someone's in your child's contacts. Explain to your child that this could potentially make their profile visible to strangers. We recommend that your child turns off Quick Add, which can be done in the settings (accessed via the cog icon).

CHOOSE GOOD CONNECTIONS
In 2021, Snapchat rolled out a new safety feature: users can now receive notifications reminding them of the importance of maintaining connections with contacts they actually know well, as opposed to strangers. This 'Friend Check' encourages users to delete connections with users that they rarely communicate with, to maintain their online safety and privacy.

DISCUSS AI
Although My AI's responses can often give the impression that it's a real person, it's essential that young people remember this isn't a real person. Encourage your child to think critically about My AI's answers to their questions and to encourage one-to-one chat with their real friends, and that it's always better to talk to an adult person in relation to medical matters.

KEEP ACCOUNTS PRIVATE
Profiles are private by default, but children may make them public to gain more followers. Snap stories are visible to everyone your child adds, unless they change the settings. On SnapMaps, their location is visible unless Ghost Mode is enabled (again in the settings). It's a good idea to add people your child doesn't know in real life - especially since the addition of My AI, which allows other Snapchat users to see where your child regularly visits and checks in.

BE READY TO BLOCK AND REPORT
If a stranger does connect with your child on Snapchat and begins to make them feel uncomfortable through bullying, pressure to send explicit images or by sending sexual images to them, your child can select the three dots on that person's profile and report or block them. There are options to state why they're reporting that user (harassing or malicious messages, spam, or masquerading as someone else, for example).

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.

NOS National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday

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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 www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

An estimated one-third of children have a social media account, so it's important that trusted adults know what content young people are consuming, what they're posting and the interactions they're having. On social media, it can be easy to go down 'rabbit holes' that aren't beneficial to our wellbeing. As platforms grapple with managing such 'legal but harmful' content, lives are being impacted – sometimes to tragic effect. We might be daunted by the scale of the tech giants and their content which so entralls young people, but we can still help children to be aware of their mental wellness: recognising when something isn't OK... and knowing what to do about content that upsets them.

- 1. UNDERSTAND THE ALGORITHM**
Algorithms rank content by user interest: someone who regularly interacts with sports news, say, will see the latest results at the top of their feed. Likewise, if a user browses content that causes harm, what's what will be recommended to them in future. Someone who had a bad day and looks for posts which reflect their mood will find similar content being suggested to them more and more.
- 2. AVOID THE MAIN FEEDS**
Avoiding the default feeds on social media platforms limits the amount of recommended content that's shown. Users can opt to only scroll through the accounts they follow, use restricted modes, or highlight posts that they don't want to see more of. Explore the platform safety settings to see how you can take control of what your child's phone shows them when they open the app.
- 3. DISCUSS WHAT THEY'VE SEEN**
Chatting about what your child's seen online keeps you aware of the content they're interacting with. Don't assume that platforms are screening out inappropriate material, or even that your child would recognise content as being harmful. Discuss who they follow, what posts they like and what comes up in their feeds. If alarm bells ring, it could be time for a more in-depth talk or to seek support.
- 4. LEARN HOW TO HIDE CONTENT**
If your child stumbles across unsuitable content on social media, there's the option to hide that post as well as indicating you'd prefer any similar material not to be suggested in future. On some platforms, you might also be able to block posts that contain specific words, which is an excellent way to start taking control of what your child sees online.
- 5. SET DAILY LIMITS**
Phones and most apps can tell you how much they're being used. Spending too long online can mean a child misses out on other activities that are important to all-round wellbeing. You could set some family rules – for everyone to follow – around device use, such as screen time limits and tech-free spaces involving your child in creating this agreement, makes them more likely to stick to it.
- 6. MONITOR THEIR ACTIVITY**
Keeping a discreet eye on how your child is using social media can help ensure they're not entering potentially dangerous situations. As they grow up, of course, children need space to exercise their independence – but you can still occasionally ask to see what they're looking at. Be transparent about your own social media use and try not to sound judgemental about your child's.
- 7. TURN OFF PUSH NOTIFICATIONS**
Even for adults, it's tempting to check an email or message as soon as the alert sound pings. Push notifications encourage people to open their apps and spend time on their device, so turning them off will help your child to practice mindful use of tech. Most of us have other things that we need to focus on as a priority – and those notifications will still be there later, when we have more time.
- 8. USE DEVICES TOGETHER**
Giving children internet-enabled devices and complete freedom to explore platforms on their own can result in exposure to hugely damaging content. You could consider dedicating a particular area at home a designated space to use phones, tablets and so on – making it much easier to monitor what content your child is viewing and (if necessary) steer them away from any potentially harmful posts.
- 9. ENCOURAGE OTHER ACTIVITIES**
Mental health professionals often highlight the importance of exercise, quality time with loved ones, a balanced diet and restful sleep for our mental wellbeing. Spending hours on social media can cause us to sacrifice other activities that our brains need to feel well – so encouraging your child to put down their phone to enjoy something that doesn't involve a screen can be immensely beneficial.
- 10. TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE**
Most platforms default children's accounts to private, so only people they've accepted as friends can see their posts. This reduces the risk of bullying or unkind comments, but – just like online life – the digital world can still make children feel as if they need to post or look a certain way to fit in. Talk to your child about peer pressure, and listen to any concerns so you can provide the support they need.

Meet Our Expert
Shazia Sarwar-Aziz is executive headteacher at a specialist primary school and, as an emotional therapy coach, works with school leaders to focus on the SEN, mental health and wellbeing agenda. A passionate advocate for vulnerable learners, Shazia is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching and the author of the Rainbow Wings, a book which supports children with SEN needs.

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