

05 December 2025

NEWSLETTER!

Dear Families,

This past week was exceptionally successful and productive, offering many exciting highlights and important details to share. Please read on for more details and highlights from this week.

Key Dates:

09 December 2025 - Flu Immunisations – For Students 7–11-year groups

11 December 2025 - Year 11 Parents Evening
Time: 3:30PM – 7:00PM

17 December 2025 – Christmas Dinner

19 December 2025 - End of Term 2
(*Non-Uniform day and students leave at 12:55PM*).

05 January 2026 - Staff Development Day

06 January 2026 - Start of Term 3

08 January 2026 - Year 7 Parents Evening
Time: 3:30PM – 7:00PM

14 January 2026 - Sixth Form Parent Forum from
Time: 5:00PM- 6:00PM

15 January 2026 - Year 13 Parents Evening
Time: 3:30PM – 7:00PM

22 January 2026 - Year 10 Parents Evening
Time: 3:30PM – 7:00PM

29 January 2026 - Year 8 Parents Evening
Time: 3:30PM – 7:00PM

05 February 2026 - Year 9 Parents Evening
Time: 3:30PM – 7:00PM

13 February 2026 - End of Term 3

Survey

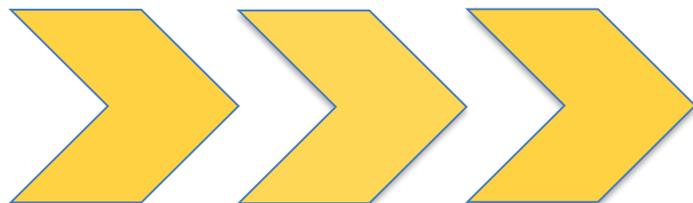
Parent Communication Survey: Newsletter Frequency & Updates

To ensure we are utilising the most effective and convenient methods for keeping you informed, we need your input on how you currently access school communications.

Please take a moment to complete the brief

[Google Form](#)

Your feedback is crucial for tailoring our communication strategy and improving the delivery of important updates, schedules and academic information.



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NEXT WEEK IS WEEK A TIMETABLE

ON TRACK TO EXCELLENCE

A member of Swale Academies Trust

Registered Office: Ashdown House, Johnson Road, Sittingbourne, ME10 2JS

Registered in England No. 07344732

HEADTEACHER UPDATE

Dear parents,

The PAN consultation is now complete, and I would like to thank everyone who shared their thoughts on the proposal to reduce the school's Published Admission Number from 210 to 190 from September 2027.

We are now moving into the next phase, where the proposal will be considered by the Admissions Authority. Their decision is expected by 28th February. Once confirmed, we will proceed with the reduced PAN from September 2027, resulting in slightly smaller year groups joining the school. We believe this will create a school community that more closely fits the character of The Whitstable School and supports the best possible environment for all students.

I would also like to take this opportunity to give a strong push on attendance. Please only keep your son or daughter off school if they are genuinely very unwell and unable to attend. We have seen a number of students absent with minor colds. While illnesses are common at this time of year, it is important that, wherever possible, your child attends school so they do not miss valuable learning, enrichment opportunities or the social interaction that is vital to their development.

Please continue to work closely with our attendance team. If you need any support at all, we are here to help and to encourage your children into school so that they can thrive and succeed.

Mr Alex Holmes
Headteacher



** Key Stage 3 Parents Forum Update **

Dear parents and carers,

Thank you to everyone who attended the Key Stage 3 Parents Forum this week. It was a valuable opportunity to hear your perceptions and to discuss a range of areas. The conversation around progress checks was especially helpful, as it allowed us to clarify some of the more complex parts of grading and how secondary assessment differs from primary.

➤ **Restaurant and lunchtime queues**

A number of points were raised about queue times in the restaurant. We have already taken several steps to improve this. Year 7 now come down slightly earlier which helps ease the first rush. The outside pod has also removed pressure from the main restaurant. In addition, two members of staff supervise the Key Stage 3 and Key



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Stage 4 queues and allow ten students through at a time on each side. We are now looking at adding another member of staff to support the flow even further.

One of the main causes of delay is students checking their account balances at the till. We are therefore exploring the introduction of a reader that allows students to check their balance before joining the queue. This should help keep lines moving.

It is also worth reminding students that the restaurant is very quiet by about ten past one. The full range of food is still available and there are no queues at all for the final twenty minutes of the lunch break. Coming down a little later can avoid the wait completely.

➤ **Toilets**

We also discussed access to toilets. Overall, this has improved significantly compared with a few years ago. There can sometimes be queues at the lower global toilets next to the restaurant, simply because they are in the busiest part of the school. However, the toilets in the creative block are usually empty. We will continue to remind students that there are other available toilets only a short walk away across the courtyard.

➤ **Progress checks**

As explained at the curriculum evenings, we have made some changes to the progress checks. The progress pathway will now link directly to the score a student receives in their key task. We will explain this clearly when the next progress checks are sent home.

At parents' evenings we will also offer a short drop-in session where any questions about the assessments or the way the data is collated can be discussed. Progress can seem complicated because the government measures it using Key Stage 2 SAT attainment and GCSE results, which creates the progress eight measure. We will continue to make our explanations as clear as possible so that you can focus on what matters most which is understanding how well your child is doing. Percentage scores at Key Stage 3 remain one of the simplest indicators.

We are continuing work to ensure that key task assessments across subjects offer a similar level of challenge so that no paper is significantly easier or harder than another. A major improvement this year has been the redesign of the English and maths papers so that all students can access them more easily. This is already having a positive impact.

• **Sports facilities update**

Finally, we shared an update on the developments with our sports facilities. We have new goals in place, and we are halfway through a major bid for a brand new 3G pitch and new fencing. The new floodlights have already been installed. This total investment is around half a million pounds and will bring the facilities up to a very high standard for both the school and the wider Whitstable community. The aim is for this work to be completed by the end of next year and we will keep you updated as the process continues.

Thank you again for your continued support.

If you have any questions, please contact us at TWS_admin@swale.at

We are always happy to help.



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SIXTH FORM UPDATE

** Thank you! Sixth Form Applications Now Open! **

We would like to extend a huge **thank you** to everyone who attended our fantastic **Sixth Form Open Evening**. Here are the key details you need to apply for 2026:

- **Prospectus:** Check out our brand-new prospectus. Download your copy here: [📄 Sixth Form Prospectus](#)
- **Applications:** All applications should be made through Kent Choices, where you can peruse our full 2026 course offer. Apply here: [📄 Kent Choices](#)

Need Advice?

If you or your child would like to speak to Ms. Simons, Head of Sixth Form, regarding any aspect of the application process, please contact us at tws_sixthform@swale.at. We are excited to receive your applications!

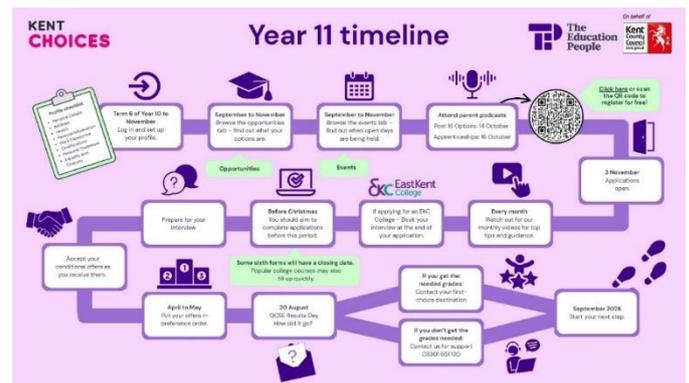
Kent Choices Checklist: Stay On Track 📄

We strongly encourage students in Year 11 to log on and familiarise themselves with the Kent Choices website as soon as possible. Use this quick tick list to help ensure your child is making great progress:

- Get logged on.
- Complete the online profile.
- Note down the open days of Colleges/Sixth Forms.
- Start to think about and make application(s).

Resources & Support

For helpful videos and information for both parents and students, please use this link: [Kent Choices Resources](#). Any queries or questions should be directed to a member of the careers team in school, or you can contact us via email at tws_careers@swale.at.



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**** Parental Careers Support: Volunteer Needed! ****

As we strive to provide our students with the best possible foundation for their futures, we know that some of the most valuable lessons come from real-world experience.

We are reaching out to you, our wonderful parent community, hoping to build a collaborative network for our upcoming careers events.

Your professional insights could make a huge difference!

If you can support our students in any way (even just for an hour), please complete this [Google Form](#)

If you have any questions, please contact me via email at tws_careers@swale.at.

**** National League Football Update: Points Secured! ****

The Whitstable team had a home fixture against Welling United on Wednesday, December 3rd, resulting in a **2–2 draw**. This result successfully extends our lead at the top of the table to **3 points!**

Alex (Year 13) opened the scoring with an excellent left-footed volley for 1–0. After conceding a penalty, Alex then delivered a free-kick that found the head of **Luca (Year 13)** to make it 2–1.

Unfortunately, Welling equalised in the final five minutes.

Though the boys were disappointed not to take all three points, it was a valuable draw. Our next National League match is January 21st, but we have SCL and Schools Academies League fixtures before then.



FOOTBALL FUTURES
SUPPORT WHERE YOU NEED IT MOST

**UPCOMING EVENTS****** Important reminder: Upcoming School Immunisations ******Seasonal Flu Vaccine (December 2025)**

The Immunisation Service will be visiting the school on **Tuesday, December 9, 2025**, to offer the **Seasonal Flu Vaccine** to students from **Year 7 to Year 11**. Students in **Year 12 or 13** with an underlying health condition should contact their GP surgery to arrange their vaccination.

If your child cannot be vaccinated at school, you will receive an email with a link to book an alternative appointment at one of their clinics.



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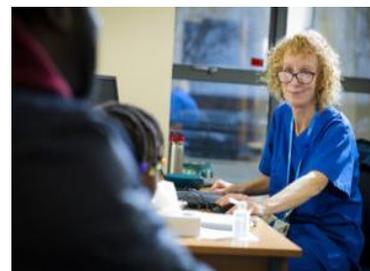
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HPV Vaccine (February/March 2026)

The Immunisation Team has also scheduled visits for the **HPV Vaccine** on the following dates:

- **Wednesday, February 25, 2026**
- **Wednesday, March 11, 2026** (Full-day visits)

The primary focus is **Year 8 students**. However, students in Years 9, 10 or 11 who have not yet received a dose of the HPV vaccine will also be included in these sessions if they are available.



Further Information & Support

- **General Information:** For more details on the flu vaccine, visit vaccineknowledge.ox.ac.uk/flu-vaccine or www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine.
- **General Questions:** If you have questions about the process for the immunisations, please contact the [school office](#).
- **Health Support:** For wider support regarding issues like sleep, behaviour, emotional support, and healthy lifestyles, Kent School Health supports children and young people aged four to nineteen. You can find helpful information at **Kent Family:** <https://family.kentcht.nhs.uk/>

🎁 The Christmas Gift Grotto Returns! Support Our Holiday Appeal 🌲

As the holiday season approaches, we are dedicated to ensuring that every child experiences the joy of Christmas, especially those in need.

To achieve this, the Christmas Gift Grotto will return this year, and we are reaching out for your support!

We are kindly requesting donations of **new Christmas gifts** that we can distribute to children who may otherwise not receive gifts this year. Any contribution, large or small, will bring happiness and a sense of belonging during this festive season.

Last year, we proudly provided gifts to just over 50 vulnerable families and the thoughtful donations were very much appreciated!

How You Can Help:

- Donate Gifts: Your donation can be a new toy, books, clothing or any other gift you feel would delight a child (or a gift they can give to their family).
- Drop-Off Location: Please drop off the presents at the school office or the safeguarding office.

"All Wrapped Up" Programme (Food Vouchers)

In addition to the Grotto, Miss Crocombe is overseeing the 'All Wrapped Up' programme. We can confidentially refer families in need who will receive a food voucher to help towards Christmas expenses.

If you are aware of any families who would benefit from this programme, please let Miss Crocombe know. Thank you for your incredible generosity.



THIS WEEK SO FAR...

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

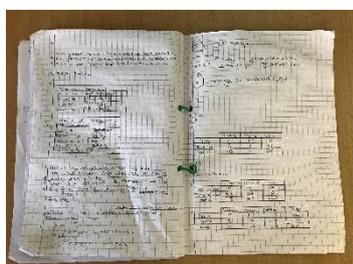
We are pleased to announce the following students have been recognised for exceptional work and have been added to the Book of Commendation.

English:

- **Florence, Grace, Isabella, Matt, Imogen (Year 8) and Nevaeh, Poppy (Year 7)** were commended for their excellent work on linear graphs.

Food preparation and Nutrition:

- **Ella, Jude, Faith and Freddie (Year 7)** were commended for their delicious savoury scones.



Science:

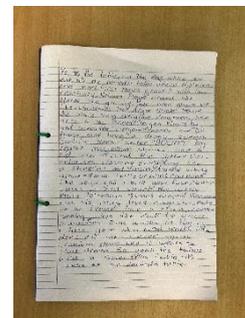
- **Sidney P., Sidney B., Camille and Frankie (Year 8)** were recognised for writing and performing a rap song about the periodic table.

Performing arts:

- **Leo and Sunny (Year 8)** for their amazing Romeo and Juliet performance.

Maths:

- **Isla and Holly (Year 8)** were praised for their very well-done work in Maths on graphs and tables.



** TRACK Excellence Raffle Winners Announced! **

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

This week's winner is:

Miles (Year 8)

We've teamed up with local businesses for amazing rewards.

This week's prize is lunch voucher for our restaurant Cuccina.



** GCSE Art, Photography & Textiles Exhibition! **

The GCSE Fine Art, Photography, and Textiles students are showcasing their wonderful coursework in an end-of-term exhibition!

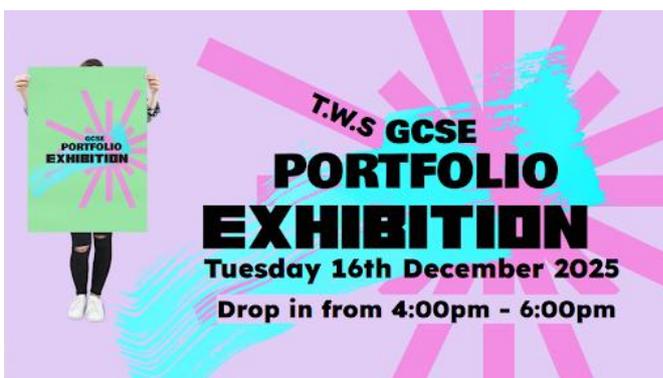
Students and staff are all welcome to view the incredible artwork displayed around the Art department until the end of term.

Private View Invitation for Year 11 Parents

Parents of **Year 11 students** are specially invited to come and celebrate the success of the students at our **Private View!**

- **When:** Tuesday, December 16th, 2025
- **Time:** 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

We hope to see you all there! — Mrs. Connell



** GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition: Year 10 Success! **



The Year 10 GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition students have delivered further successful outcomes with their latest assessment!

Students were tasked with planning, cooking, and justifying their choice of a main meal suitable for a sporty teenager. They produced an impressive array of dishes, demonstrating skill and creativity, including:

- Pesto pasta
- Wraps
- Fajitas
- Burgers

It was especially pleasing to see so many students showcasing complex culinary skills by making elements from scratch, such as pasta, bread and even mayonnaise—well done to all involved!

**** Beyond the Textbook: Year 7's Hands-On Maths Adventure! ****



On Tuesday, Year 7 had an unforgettable trip to the Science Museum's Winton Gallery in London! They weren't just looking—they were diving deep into the fascinating world of mathematics. A huge thank you to the staff who organised this fantastic learning opportunity! organised this fantastic learning opportunity!



**** Elf on the 'Reading Shelf' Challenge Starts Monday! ****

Get ready! **The elves on the (reading) shelves** will be appearing in the English department every day starting Monday with a 'recommended read' from the team. Their first featured book, the classic Ray Bradbury story *Fahrenheit 451*, has clearly shocked them to the core—they are worried that the magic of reading is disappearing!

There are prizes available to students who can correctly spot the 10 books that are read on the lead-up to the Christmas holidays. Keep an eye out daily!



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**** Consistent Attendance: The Cornerstone of Success and Wellbeing ****

Attendance isn't just about learning in class; it's your **all-access pass** to everything exciting happening at The Whitstable School! We believe that the incredible clubs, trips and competitive events are the best reasons to keep school attendance at 100%.

We offer **over 30 extra-curricular clubs and activities** that turn a regular school week into something epic.

Activities Include

- Cross Trust events
- STEM clubs (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths)
- Visitors talk
- Competitions
- Trips, and much more



Next Week's Key Events (Starting Monday, December 8th)

Here are the key events and important mock exam dates scheduled for the upcoming week:

Clubs & Activities

Activity	Year Group(s)	Day	Time/Location
Art Club	All Students	Tuesday	Lunchtime in CZ24 (Making Christmas decorations!)
Cuddle Club	All Students	Wednesday	Lunchtime with Bertie (A relaxing and therapeutic session!)

Events & Trips

Event	Year Group(s)	Day	Details
University Simulation Experience (RAW)	Year 12 & 13	Monday, December 8th, 2025	Trip to the CCCU (Canterbury Christ Church University) Simulation Suite for valuable hands-on insight into higher education and future career pathways.
Elf on the 'Reading Shelf' Challenge	All Students	Starts Monday, December 8th, 2025	The elves will appear daily in the English Department with recommended reads. Spot the 10 featured books for a chance to win prizes!



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Event	Year Group(s)	Day	Details
'12 Days of Christmas' Teacher Singer	All Students	Ongoing	Find out which teacher will be singing the '12 Days of Christmas'!

Encouraging Student Responsibility

We are actively encouraging participation in existing roles designed to build student confidence and responsibility, such as:

- **Year 7: Attendance Runner** (Once a term for two periods on a chosen day)
- **Year 8: Student Runner** (Once a term for the whole day)

Students who participate in these roles will receive positive points on their Track cards!

Remember: We have exciting opportunities available every week within the school and consistent attendance is essential for students who want to participate and get involved!

- **For more information, please visit our website:**
[TWS Extra- Curricular](#)

** Anti-Litter Leaders Poster Competition: Deadline Extended! **

You may have noticed signs encouraging students to become Anti-Litter Leaders by putting their litter in the bin! To support this initiative, we launched an Anti-Litter Poster Competition.

Due to high demand, we've extended the deadline!

- New Deadline: Monday, December 8th, 2025
- Winners Notified: By Friday, December 12th
- Prizes: Will be awarded to the creators of the best entries, and winning posters will be displayed around the school by Christmas.

Competition Criteria & Submission Details

Entries will be judged in three age categories: Year Groups 7-8, Year Groups 9-10, and Year Groups 11-13.



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Design Criteria:

Size: Must be A4 (297 x 210mm).

Medium: Any flat medium (paint, pencil, digital). No 3D, collage, or glitter (must be printable).

Content:

Must include the words 'See it, Bin it!'

Must creatively show the importance of keeping the school litter-free and the negative impact of dropping litter.

Submission Instructions:

Sending In:

Best Option: SCAN your poster and email it to tws_admin@swale.at.

Alternative: If you can't scan, hand the poster directly to Ms. Rimmington, School Office Manager, to be scanned for you.

Required Information (VERY IMPORTANT): The email or the poster submission must include your:

Full name

Year Group

Limit: Only one entry per person.



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NOTICE BOARD

** YOUNG CARERS AT THE WHITSTABLE SCHOOL **

Did you know that The Whitstable School has a Young Carers Support Group running every Wednesday lunchtime in GZ2?

This group is run by Mrs James and is open to all Young Carers (registered or non-registered).

Whether it is to just sit and listen, talk and share or just be in the company of other young people with caring responsibilities, we are here!

What is a Young Carer?

A young carer is a young person under 18yrs who provides practical and/or emotional support, usually to a family member who may have: A long-term health condition, illness or frailty, Physical Disability, Neurodevelopmental Disorder, poor mental health or substance misuse issue. If you are unsure if your child is a Young Carer, please contact Mrs James or see attached for more information [Young Carers Parent Resource](#)



** Annual Policing Survey: Have Your Say **

Matthew Scott, the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, is currently undertaking an **Annual Policing Survey**. The survey seeks the public's views on trust in the Police, safety where we live, and what the Force's priorities should be.

TWS has been asked to share this survey with pupils and parents so that you can have your say on your experiences. Last year, over a thousand young people took part and directly influenced policy in Kent.

- **Take the Survey Here:** [Policing Survey Link](#)
- **Deadline:** The survey closes at the end of **December 25th**.

The results will be used to set Kent Police's priorities next year and inform how we can work together to improve safety. Thank you for any support you can provide.

** Canterbury District Cultural Strategy Consultation & Focus Group Opportunity **

Canterbury City Council are currently consulting on the Canterbury District Cultural Strategy and are trying to engage with residents and stakeholders, to share their views on the strategy.

There is also an opportunity for a member of my team to come out the week commencing 19th January to carry out a focus group, if you would be interested please let me know and I will get that organised for you.

It closes on the **12th January 2026** but we are doing focus groups past this date.

Here is a link to the consultation page and a link to the survey: [Draft Cultural Strategy - Canterbury Newsroom](#)



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Do you have what it takes to be crowned the next Young Cooks Champion?

Are you aged 6 - 18?
Do you have a flair for flavours and a passion for cooking?

You are invited to take part in our **Young Cooks cookery competition** with the winners receiving a share of £500

In addition, a finalist will be selected to cook at a **Showcase Lunch** at The Dog in Wingham and may have the opportunity to attend a **master class!**

Closing Date:
31st January 2026

Scan or visit for more details & entry



sekgroup.org.uk/support/sek-schools/young-cooks-competition




Christmas Carol & Memorial Service

Friday 19th December, 6pm

Join us at this service to:

- Leave a personal message on our Christmas tree using one of our tags
- Write a Christmas card for your loved one and post it in our memorial post-box
- Light refreshments will be provided

To book a place to attend our service please call 01227 201 961 or email hernebay@westerleighgroup.co.uk

If you cannot join us for the live service, you can watch it from home via: <https://christmas.obitus.com> using **Username: HerneBay Password: robin**

Watch again service will be available via the same link from Mon 22nd Dec available for 28 days following the service.

Herne Bay Crematorium & Memorial Gardens
Bullockstone Rd, Herne Bay CT6 7NF
fb: www.facebook.com/hernebaycrem
ig: www.instagram.com/westerleighgroupuk
t: 01227 201 961
e: hernebay@westerleighgroup.co.uk
www.hernebaycrematorium.co.uk




Who are SNAAP?

SNAAP – Special Needs Advisory and Activities Project – are a local (Herne Bay) Charity, who support families across the Canterbury District to navigate the Special Needs world.

SNAAP informs, encourages and supports families, enabling them to provide the best possible help to their children via a range of services.

- Help with form filling
- Stay & play sessions
- Age related Clubs
- Support with food and Clothing
- Emotional support
- Advocacy Support

SNAAP doesn't require a diagnosis & you don't need a professional referral.



We are raising money for SNAAP because they are a vital resource for many of the TWS community & they recently admitted that if they don't get donations they will have to close. Let's not let that happen!



Non Uniform Day!

Friday 19th December

£1

All proceeds to go to **SNAAP**






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Half Term Programme

Canterbury
December 20th, 2025 -
January 2nd, 2026

Our Activities

- Wildwood Trips
- Roller Skating
- Table Top Gaming
- Family Swim
- New Years Eve Party
- Pantomime: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs



Contact us
CanterburyFH@kent.gov.uk

Find us on Facebook or
Instagram at
Canterbury Family
Hubs

Family Hub Sites are run by Kent County Council

Canterbury Family Hubs

Information:

Booking Activities:

Families of children aged 4 to 16 years, who are in receipt of benefits related to free school meals can access our winter holidays Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme. The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme in Kent focuses on children's physical health and wellbeing by providing healthy food and exciting activities for children and young people during the school holidays. To register your interest, please email: canterburyfh@kent.gov.uk

20th & 22nd December

Wildwood Trip

We have a number of tickets available for families to enjoy a day at Wildwood, with lunch provided for all young people attending. Time slot booking required for Santa's Grotto. For 0-19 years (25 SEND). Parents/carers in attendance.

Meet at: 10:00am

Herne Common, Herne Bay CT6 7LQ



20th December

Roller Skating

Get ready to glide, spin, and groove! Join us for an awesome afternoon of roller skating and music. No experience? No problem! Skates will be available. Bring your energy and have some fun. For 11-19 years (25 SEND).

1:00pm - 2:30pm

The Bay Sports Arena, Bullockstone Rd, Herne Bay, CT6 7NS



22nd December

Table Top Gaming

Ready to roll the dice and dive into epic adventures? Come along for an afternoon of fun, strategy, and great company! Whether you're a seasoned gamer or just curious to try something new, everyone is welcome. Bring your favourite game or join in on ours—let's make it a night to remember! For 11-19 years (25 SEND).

1:00pm - 5:00pm

The Long Rest, 8 Butchery Lane, Canterbury, CT1 2JR



30th December

Family Swim

Free Family Swim session. Meet us at Kingsmead Leisure Centre reception for your 1 hour swimming ticket and healthy snack bag (2:30pm - 3:30pm). For 0-19 years (25 SEND), parents/carers in attendance.

*One family swim ticket entitles 2 adults and 2 children.

Meet at: 2:15pm

Kingsmead Leisure Centre, Kingsmead Road, Canterbury, CT2 7PH



31st December

New Years Eve Party

Come along for our New Year's Eve family celebration. We'll be counting down to 12 noon with music, games and entertainment. Aimed at 0-11 but open to all ages.

10:30am - 12:30pm

Herne Bay Family Hub, Memorial Park, Kings Road, Herne Bay, CT6 5RG



2nd January

Pantomime

We have a number of tickets available for families to see Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Healthy snack bags will be available. Please note, this performance includes the use of haze, smoke, pyrotechnics, streamers and sudden loud noises. For 0-19 years (25 SEND).

2:30pm - 5:00pm

The Marlowe Theatre, The Friars, Canterbury, CT1 2AS



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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 AI-ENABLED SCAMS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?
Artificial intelligence (AI) is quickly becoming a widely used tool, with lots of positive applications being discussed and developed. Sadly, however, as with most technology tools, there are those who will seek to use it for malicious and dishonest practices, with children and other vulnerable groups particularly at risk.

PHISHING EMAILS: BETTER & QUICKER
Phishing scams – emails designed to trick people into handing over login details or money – are not new, and do not rely on AI; however, AI has made them far more dangerous. Criminals can now generate highly convincing emails at speed, mimicking an organisation's tone, branding and language with ease. This makes phishing attempts harder to spot, especially for young people who may not yet know what to look out for.

EMPLOYMENT SCAMS
Using AI, criminals can create fake online profiles that seem completely real. These synthetic identities can chat with young people about fake job offers, asking for money to secure a visa or paperwork. In 2025, The Guardian reported a scam targeting young people with promises of quick cash, posing as TikTok staff.

ONLINE MARKETPLACE FRAUD
Online marketplaces are now a common way to buy and sell everything, from second-hand clothes to cars. Criminals are exploiting this by using AI to enhance or completely fake product photos and videos, and pressure buyers into paying deposits or full amounts upfront. These tactics are becoming more advanced, making it vital to pause, check, and verify the sale before parting with any money.

INFLUENCER & INVESTMENT SCAMS
AI tools now make it easy to manipulate video and audio, with technology available that can generate entirely fake content using the likeness of celebrities or influencers. Criminals are using this to create convincing videos of well-known figures promoting fake products or services, which young people can be particularly susceptible to. Cryptocurrency scams are a common tactic, luring people into investing in schemes that do not exist. Once payment is made, the criminal simply disappears with the money.

VOICE IMPERSONATION
AI can now realistically impersonate a person's voice when given a small sample of someone's speech patterns. This is especially concerning where voice has been enabled as an alternative to password-based logins. One such example was the use of AI deepfake audio as part of a fake kidnapping scam: the criminals used an AI voice clone of a 15-year-old to convince her parents she had been kidnapped and elicit a ransom.

ROMANCE SCAMS & SEXTORTION
AI chat bots can now mimic real conversations, often accompanied with realistic fake photos and videos, which makes it easier for criminals to build trust with young people – among other things, this can lead to fraud or sextortion. In 2024, the NCA's SCOP Safety Centre received 380 reports of sextortion. Alarmingly, in the first five months alone, police received an average of 117 monthly reports involving under-18s, showing how serious and targeted this threat has become.

Advice for Parents & Educators

THINK CRITICALLY
The key to addressing the increasing growth of AI-enabled scams is to think critically and show caution. Inform children that if something is too good to be true, then it probably is. Encourage them to stop and carefully consider what they are seeing and reading before taking any action. For example, if a social media post expresses urgency, proceed with caution; if content seems unusual, even from a known person, it may be that their account has been hacked.

USE TRUSTWORTHY SITES AND SERVICES
Online marketplaces are useful when buying and selling items; however, where possible, encourage children to use reputable companies and their online shopping sites. These companies are likely to have more sophisticated cyber-security safeguards in place, underpinned by consumer legislation, enabling them to control how products and services are displayed and traded on their sites.

SEEK TO VERIFY
Criminals may breach an influencer's account or spread misinformation and fake content; however, their approach will generally be limited to a single account, site or service. Where possible, show children how to verify information to check its legitimacy before proceeding. Small actions, such as phoning the person who is the subject of a suspicious email, or checking content via an individual or company website or social media sites can make the difference. The greater the risk, the more effort we should expend to confirm whether the information presented is true or false.

REPORT IT
As the sophistication of scams increases, the likelihood of being tricked by them also increases, especially when not paying attention or acting quickly. It's important that young people know how to report incidents as they happen, show children how to report their concerns to the social media site, Action Fraud, banks, and other individuals or organisations linked or involved. If you are unsure of the most effective reporting channel, contact Action Fraud.

Meet Our Expert
Gary Henderson is the Director of IT at Millfield, a large independent boarding school in Somerset, as well as a member of the Digital Futures Group, Vice Chair of the ISC Digital Advisory Group and an Association of Network Managers in Education (ANME) Ambassador.

#WakeUpWednesday
The National College

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ON TRACK TO EXCELLENCE

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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 proximity to the school entrance.

Please remember:

- **Not all disabilities are visible:** Please remember that many individuals with disabilities may not show outward signs.
- **Permits must be displayed:** If you have a valid permit, please ensure it is clearly visible in your vehicle's windscreen. Some individuals may have valid permits that are not always displayed.
- **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.

For more updates and events, please visit our website and follow us on X and Facebook.

<https://www.thewhitstableschool.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/TheWhitstableSchool>

<https://x.com/TheWhitSchool>

Best Wishes

The Whitstable School Team



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