

ISSUE 7

15th December 2023



HOLCOMBE
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to our last blog of 2023!

This week has been a fantastic week as we have been celebrating Christmas as a school community. Wednesday was our Christmas Jumper Day and Christmas Dinner Day – it was lovely to see so many students enjoying a Christmas meal with staff. Thursday saw our staff pantomime which again we know the students greatly enjoyed. We have never staged such a production at Holcombe but it seemed to be very popular, so we may well do so again. We may even rehearse next time!! And today is our last day with all form groups spending time together to celebrate the end of another term and the end of 2023 here at Holcombe. We also proudly handed over a huge range of gifts to our local homeless charity which too was greatly appreciated and a lovely Christmas gesture – so thank you to all those who contributed to this.

At the end of a term we often have to say goodbye to staff and this term I would like to publicly thank Mrs Owolabi and Ms Solan for their work with us as both leave us for pastures new. I would also like to welcome Mrs Singla who will be joining our team from January.

A reminder to all that term 3 will start for staff only on Tuesday 2nd January and for all students on Wednesday 3rd January. A few things about the start of term 3:

- With our staffing changes we have had to make a few changes to timetables so all students will be given new timetables on arrival on Wednesday 3rd. Changes should be minimal but this will need careful checking when they receive them. They will be available for viewing on classcharts at the same time. We appreciate students may therefore not have all the correct books for day 1 and no sanctions will be given on Weds 3rd where timetables have changed. However all students will be expected to have correct equipment as usual from Thurs 4th.
- A reminder please to all parents to ensure there are sufficient funds uploaded onto your child's account so they have money to purchase food during the day
- And the usual reminder about uniform please which should be fully correct at the start of a new term. If new items are needed please do ensure these are purchased and ready for your child to return on Weds 3rd January.
- Year 12 will return to their first prelim exams of the year which are being held from Wednesday 3rd to Friday 5th January. A reminder that Year 12s do not get study leave for these exams so should be in school to be preparing in advance of any exams that they may sit.

We are constantly looking to develop the school and already have many plans in place for January 2024. One of the areas I am keen to re-establish here is a thriving Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). For many years our PTA has been the Holcombe Association – a group of parents who worked tirelessly for over 10 years to fund raise for the school but who decided in the summer to close the association down. I am enormously grateful to this group of parents for everything they have done for us over so many years. However we must move on and I am keen to establish a new PTA in Spring 2024. If this is something you would like to consider being involved in, please look out for more information about this early next term.

Finally, a thank you to the 300 or so parents who completed our recent survey. I will be reporting back the findings of this when we return in the new year.

I sincerely hope you all enjoy reading this latest blog and I wish you all a very happy and healthy Christmas, and all good wishes for 2024.

Mr L. Preston

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Our students have been involved in a number of brilliant activities over the couple of weeks. Please take a moment to read through these fantastic opportunities.

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KEY DATES

Term 2

- **Friday 15th December**
- Last Day of Term 2

Term 3

- **Tuesday 2nd January**
- Staff Development Day
- **Wednesday 3rd January**
- First Day of Term 3

STAY CONNECTED

Follow Us on Social Media

See all of the enjoyable and engaging activities we get involved in throughout the year.

Follow us on our social media channels.



[@TSAT - Holcombe Grammar School](#)



[@TSATHolcombe](#)



[@tsat_holcombegrammarschool](#)



YEAR 7 SPORTING SUCCESS



On Sunday the 19th of November, Dexter completed his first year of racing his own kart.

He competed in 2 championships – Bayford meadows (8 Rounds) and Buckmore park (6 Rounds) + 2 other guest races. He managed to win all 16 finals, adding 2 championships to the 2 championships he had already won in 2023 for “Hire/Corporate karts” which is a tremendous achievement in your first season of racing your own kart.

He has been signed by a large kart team in the south east GMS Kart racing team and will be looking to race nationally next season at 2 of the most popular circuits in the UK – PFI and Whilton Mill. The season officially starts again in February but Dexter will not be able to race until after his 12th birthday in March as he will be moving up a class and will be racing 13 – 16 year olds.

Well done Dexter!



CHRISTMAS GIFT SURPRISES



By Noah Heyworth

I aspire to become a product designer in the future and with my woodwork I have greatly progressed.

At home I have a scroll saw which allows me to design and develop my own ideas. This week I have made Christmas gifts for staff in school.

I used the scroll saw to cut out curves and shapes of the Christmas tree ornaments. The Danish oil helps bring out the tones of the mahogany in the wood and they will look great on the Christmas tree. I am glad I made the ornaments as they have brought much happiness to the Haven Team.

I aim to create more woodwork ideas with the scroll saw and by hand. Over Christmas I am going to look at developing my creativity and production to the point where I could look at setting up a small business to start to support my career aspirations.

I am studying for my GCSE in DT where I am designing a lamp and look forward to making this next term.



CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY



Thank you to all the student's that took part in our Christmas jumper day and raised over £200 for Kent Air Ambulance and Save the Children charities.



STAFF PANTO



On Thursday 14th December we staged the first ever Holcombe staff panto which we know our students and colleagues very much enjoyed. Huge thanks to all the staff who participated but especially to Mrs Miles who masterminded the event. Looking forward to next year already!



CHRISTMAS CHARITY



This Christmas our school community embraced the spirit of Christmas by donating to the One Big Family Christmas Bag Appeal.

One Big Family is a small, dedicated charity, supporting homeless and vulnerably-housed people in Medway and Huddersfield.

Students, parents and member of staff donated a variety of items for the homeless of Medway. A very big thank you to all members of the school community for their generosity and thoughtfulness.



**CHRISTMAS
GIFT BAG APPEAL 2023**

ITEMS THAT WOULD BE USEFUL INCLUDE:

- SOCKS (NEW)
- UNDERWEAR (NEW)
- TOILETRIES
- PLAYING CARDS
- HAT
- PENS AND PUZZLE
- BOOKS

- CHOCOLATE
- SWEETS
- READING BOOK
- DIARY
- SMALL CRAFT ITEMS
- GLOVES

PLEASE LABEL MALE/FEMALE. NEEDED BY
15TH DEC FOR DISTRIBUTION
NO ALCOHOL OR HARD GEL PLEASE

One Big Family
Helping the
Homeless
Reg. charity no. 0919197

BADMINTON COMPETITION



On Monday 4th December a talented group of year 8 and 9 students competed in the Medway School Games Badminton Competition. Both the A and the B teams got off to flying starts, with the A team defeating Thomas Aveling 4 games to 1 and the B team beating Strood Academy 5-0. Both teams found their second matches more challenging and despite showing great skill and resilience both teams were narrowly defeated by 3 games to 2. This meant that the A team finished in second position in their group and progressed to the next round of games to compete for overall positions 4 to 6, whilst the B team topped their group to make it in to the main competition to compete for overall positions 1 to 3.

The A team dominated the second round of group games with emphatic 4-1 victories against both Hundred of Hoo and St John Fisher, leading to an overall 4th place finish in the competition. The B team fought valiantly against a strong Hundred of Hoo side in their first group game before narrowly losing 3-2. They regained their composure and worked hard in their final game to defeat Rochester Independent College 4-1. Their reward for their efforts was an impressive 2nd place overall finish in the competition and a well-deserved silver medal.

All the students selected represented themselves and Holcombe in a wonderful manner and should be extremely proud of their efforts, well done to all.



YEAR 13 POLITICS



Our Year 13 Politics students recently welcomed Tracey Crouch MP to class. Tracey is the sitting MP for Chatham and Aylesford, a constituency which includes our school. She joined our students for a Q+A session as part of a wider visit to Holcombe. Our Year 13 Politics students asked a wealth of wide-ranging questions, covering topics as diverse as foreign policy to the accountability of ministers and the demands for electoral reform. It was a great opportunity for them to share their opinions and consider contemporary political events with somebody so close to the heart of government.



MEDWAY YOUTH COUNCIL



Year 13 student, Oliver Tomlin, presented to Year 8 forms to discuss what the Medway Youth Council is and what Oliver has been able to do from being a member. The students were very engaged.



MUSIC



Music Department Carol Service

On Tuesday the 5th of December the music department celebrated Christmas with its first Christmas Service in 4 years at St Stephen's Church, Chatham. We were really proud of the over 55 performers, readers and singers who helped make this service so successful. Thanks to everyone who came to help us celebrate this wonderful time of the year and we can't wait to see you the carol service next year!

The Music Department and Dynamics

The music department has teamed up with Dynamics, the Medway Music Hub to offer both Brass, Guitar and Bass lessons. Please come and speak to either Mr Zwanzig or Miss Pathberiya if you are interested in getting lessons.



FREE Weekly Music Tech Sessions

The Medway Music Association is running free weekly Music Technology courses via Zoom Tuesdays from 16:30 to 17:30 every Tuesday during term time.

These sessions are for pupils aged 9 – 18 (year 5 – year 13) and cater for complete beginners through to the more advanced.

These sessions will offer pupils the chance to work with an online Digital Audio Workstation - Bandlab. Pupils will learn how to create music electronically and production techniques such as looping, automation and sampling, as well as creating music for specific purposes, e.g. music for adverts, films etc.

BAR MOCK TRIAL



The Bar Mock Trial was held at Holcombe Grammar for the third year running and organised by Mrs Sandhu and Mrs Mohammed. The Bar Mock Trial is a competition run across the country where students act out a trial face to face based on criminal case which they have prepared for. A group of our Year 12 students had been preparing for the competition since September. The trial focused on two criminal cases focusing on the area of computer misuse offence and a public nuisance. The statutes the cases were based on were the Computer Misuse Act 1990 and The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Acts 2022. Our students performed as prosecution and defence against 5 other secondary schools across the Kent region at Maidstone Crown Court on 25th November and worked really hard to impress the judges in the competition. Our students chose to do this competition as it increases their confidence in public speaking, looks great to add on as an extra-curricular activity on their personal statement and ties in with the criminal law topic which is being studied currently for their A-Level. The students that took part found this to be an invaluable experience and a competition they would take part again in the future.

The students that took part were:

Indiana De Sintat, Nathaniel Idogun, Naomi Omisore, Xaviella Espolong, Papa Amoako-Atta, Maya Billington, Robin Darlington, Obiageli Esenwa, Adam Fletcher-Evans, Brandon Hatega, Harvey Linney, Ruva Elaine Nyatsunga and Favour Osibodu.



TERM 2 INTER-HOUSE RESULTS YEAR 7 & 8



Year 7

Activity	Football	Tag Rugby	Badminton	Total Points	Overall Position
Ardent	4th	2nd	4th	8	4th
Barfleur	1st	5th	1st	11	1st
Conquest	3rd	3rd	2nd	10	2nd
Guardian	2nd	4th	3rd	9	3rd
Shannon	5th	1st	5th	7	5th

Year 8

Activity	Football A	Football B	Badminton	Total Points	Overall Position
Ardent	3rd	4th	5th	6	5th
Barfleur	1st	5th	1st	11	1st
Conquest	5th	1st	2nd	10	2nd
Guardian	2nd	3rd	3rd	10	2nd
Shannon	4th	2nd	3rd	9	4th

TERM 2 INTER-HOUSE RESULTS YEAR 9 & 10



Year 9

Activity	Football A	Football B	Badminton	Total Points	Overall Position
Ardent	1st	1st	4th	12	1st
Barfleur	3rd	3rd	4th	8	4th
Conquest	5th	4th	3rd	6	5th
Guardian	2nd	5th	1st	10	2nd
Shannon	4th	2nd	2nd	10	2nd

Year 10

Activity	Football A	Football B	Badminton	Total Points	Overall Position
Ardent	4th	1st	5th	8	4th
Barfleur	1st	3rd	3rd	11	1st
Conquest	5th	2nd	2nd	9	3rd
Guardian	2nd	4th	1st	11	1st
Shannon	3rd	5th	4th	6	5th

TERM 2 INTER-HOUSE RESULTS YEAR 11



Year 11

Activity	Football A	Football B	Badminton	Total Points	Overall Position
Ardent	2nd	5th	5th	6	5th
Barfleur	1st	4th	4th	9	4th
Conquest	5th	1st	1st	11	1st
Guardian	3rd	2nd	3rd	10	2nd
Shannon	4th	2nd	2nd	10	2nd

BASKETBALL CAMP DURING THE HALF TERM



Kent Crusaders BC are running a Basketball camp at the Victory Academy on Thursday 21st (girls only) and Friday 22nd (boys only) both 10am -3pm.

The camp is free for all Thinking Schools students.

Places are limited and are allocated on a first come first served basis.

To book, students must contact Cristina at Kent Crusaders directly - cristina.stanciuca@kentcrusaders.co.uk

Term 3 Sports Clubs

w/b	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
1st January <i>(week A)</i>			HOCKEY (YEAR 7-9) GCSE/ A-LEVEL PE SUPPORT (P22)	GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) GYM (YEAR 7 & 10)	GYM (YEAR 11, 12 & 13) GCSE PE practical (Table Tennis A)
8th January <i>(week B)</i>	TABLE TENNIS (ALL YEARS)	GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) BADMINTON (YEAR 7-10) GYM (YEAR 8 & 9)	HOCKEY (YEAR 7-9) GCSE/ A-LEVEL PE SUPPORT (P22)	GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) 	GYM (YEAR 11, 12 & 13) GCSE PE practical (Badminton A)
15th January <i>(week A)</i>	TABLE TENNIS (ALL YEARS)	GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) BADMINTON (YEAR 7-10) GYM (YEAR 8 & 9)		GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) GYM (YEAR 7 & 10)	GYM (YEAR 11, 12 & 13) GCSE PE practical (Handball B)
22nd January <i>(week B)</i>	TABLE TENNIS (ALL YEARS)	GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) BADMINTON (YEAR 7-10) GYM (YEAR 8 & 9)	HOCKEY (YEAR 7-9) GCSE/ A-LEVEL PE SUPPORT (P22)	GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) GYM (YEAR 7 & 10)	GYM (YEAR 11, 12 & 13) GCSE PE practical (Table Tennis B)
29th January <i>(week A)</i> <i>*no sports hall*</i>	TABLE TENNIS (ALL YEARS)	GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) GYM (YEAR 8 & 9)	HOCKEY (YEAR 7-9) GCSE/ A-LEVEL PE SUPPORT (P22)	GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) GYM (YEAR 7 & 10)	GYM (YEAR 11, 12 & 13) GCSE PE practical (Football B)
5th February <i>(week B)</i>	TABLE TENNIS (ALL YEARS)	GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) BADMINTON (YEAR 7-10) GYM (YEAR 8 & 9) YEAR 10 FOOTBALL TRIAL	HOCKEY (YEAR 7-9) YEAR 9 FOOTBALL TRIAL GCSE/ A-LEVEL PE SUPPORT (P22)	GYM (YEAR 11-13) (7.40-8.20am) GYM (YEAR 7 & 10) YEAR 8 FOOTBALL TRIAL	GYM (YEAR 11, 12 & 13) GCSE PE practical (Badminton B) YEAR 7 FOOTBALL TRIAL

MEDWAY GO FAMILY FUN DAY



MedwayGo

WINTER FAMILY FUN DAY

Friday, 22 December

11:30 to 3:30PM

Woodlands Sports Centre, ME7 2DU

Join us for a day of family fun!

Meet MedwayGo providers

Book onto activities

Try out a range of activities from arts &
crafts to multisport

PLUS prizes to win



USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS



What are Social Media Scams?: With online scams on the rise worldwide, particularly at this time of year, it's important we are all aware of what scams are, the common types of scams and helpful tips. Internet Matters have a great information page for parents with lots of useful information. You can find all the information [HERE](#)

Young Minds have put together an A-Z guide giving advice to parents to help with their feelings and behaviours, as well as mental health conditions. This resource will also a signpost you to get help. For further information [Parents' A-Z Mental Health Guide](#) | [Mental Health Advice](#) | [YoungMindsy](#)

How to talk to your children about world news – We all know it can be difficult to talk to your children about things that are happening in the world. War, natural disasters, climate concern and crime are topics that can be tough to navigate. Kooth have shared an article that was written by Qwell which aims to help you discuss world events with your children. The article can be downloaded using this link [parents/carers](#)

School ties - can be purchased from Student Services for £5 cash, please note that there is a limited supply.

Online safety information for parents and carers

Online safety is an important part of keeping children safe at school.

All of our pupils are taught how to be safe and behave appropriately online, but we can only be successful in keeping children safe online if we work together.

It's important that as adults, we take an active interest in our children's online lives and show a willingness to engage in the digital world with them.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, always contact 999 for police assistance.



Think U Know: www.thinkuknow.co.uk

The National Crime Agency Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (NCA-CEOP) have a website which is suitable for children aged 5-16 and has a section just for parents/carers with advice and information.

NSPCC

NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety

The NSPCC have produced resources for parents. Their website covers excellent advice for parents about issues such as online grooming, nude image sharing and cyberbullying, as well as specific advice for children with special educational needs and disabilities.



Childline: www.childline.org.uk

The Childline website has a wide range of information and advice on both online and offline safety for children. There is information about online gaming, grooming, and the Zipit App which helps children feel empowered when confronted with inappropriate chat online. They also provide a helpline for children to get advice over the phone: 0800 1111



UK Safer Internet Centre: www.saferinternet.org.uk

UK Safer Internet Centre provides a wide variety of advice and guidance to help you discuss online safety with your children. There are useful checklists for privacy settings on social networks and suggestions to consider before buying devices for your children.



Childnet: www.childnet.com

Childnet has resources, including videos and storybooks, to help you discuss online safety with your children. It includes advices on setting up parental controls, cyberbullying and setting up a family agreement for safer internet use.

**internet
matters.org**

Internet Matters: www.internetmatters.org

Internet Matters bring you all the information you need to keep your children safe online. It has a tool which guides you through how to set up parental controls on all the different devices in your home to protect your children.



**Kent
Police**

**THE EDUCATION
PEOPLE**

GOLDen rules for parents and carers

Ground advice

- Discuss and agree as a family how the internet will be used in your home. Let your children tell you what they think is and isn't acceptable for them to do online, such as not being nasty to people, keeping personal information private and speaking to an adult when they are worried. Then add your own rules such as how long they can spend online and when and where webcams can be used.
- You might find it helpful to write these 'ground rules' down as a visual reminder.
- Make sure your child understands that their actions and behaviours online can have offline consequences.
- Remember these are whole family rules, so consider your own use of the internet and think about how much information you are sharing on your social networks about your children and who can see it, such as school photos.
- Agree on what will happen if they don't follow your family rules.

Online safety

- Make sure you apply parental controls to all internet enabled devices in your household, including tablets, phones and games consoles. They can restrict access to inappropriate content and can help you manage how much time your child spends online.
- Make sure your child understands the parental controls are in place to protect them, not restrict them; some children will actively work around parental controls if they feel constrained without knowing why.
- Set up filters on internet search engines to limit the likelihood of your children accidentally coming across inappropriate content when searching online.
- Be aware that internet history can be hidden and deleted, so talk to your children and supervise their online use appropriately.
- Remember filters and parental controls are not 100% effective so you cannot rely on them alone to protect your children. It is important your children understand they should tell you straight away if they see something inappropriate or upsetting online.

Listen

- Take an active interest in your child's online life and talk openly with them about the things they do. Talk to your child about which websites and apps they like to use and why; engage in their online world with them.
- Be aware of any changes in behaviour, language and attitude in your child. These behaviour changes can indicate something is upsetting your child online. Children who are groomed, radicalised, abused or exploited online will often be pressured to withdraw from family and friends.

Dialogue

- Talk to your children – be open and positive when talking about the internet.
- Make sure your child knows they can come to you for help if something happens online that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable. Many children won't disclose online worries because they are scared adults will blame them or remove their access to the internet.
- Ask your child if they know where to go for help, where to find safety advice, information about privacy settings and how to report or block users on their games and websites.
- Explore their games and websites together to ensure your child knows how to block and report anyone who is nasty or inappropriate. Encourage your child not to retaliate or reply and to keep any evidence. If the game/app has a 'parent section', explore the parental controls and reporting systems yourself.
- Ensure your child understands pictures, videos or comments posted online can be very difficult to remove and rarely remain private.
- Discuss the pressures for young people to send inappropriate or nude(indecent) images to each other. How might this behaviour affect their relationship? Do they know what they would do? Young people need to be aware images can be copied, saved and shared without their knowledge and if they are under 18, they may also be breaking the law by making an indecent image of themselves.



**Kent
Police**

**THE EDUCATION
PEOPLE**

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SETTING UP NEW DEVICES FOR CHILDREN

At Christmas, millions of lucky children will be excitedly ripping the wrapping off new phones, tablets, computers or consoles. However, in the rush to let young ones enjoy their shiny gadgets, many parents neglect to set these devices up safely – increasing the chances of children going online and stumbling across adult content, making expensive downloads or installing unsuitable apps. A little time configuring the device properly can save a lot of anguish later. Here are our top tips to ensure that a dream gift on Christmas morning doesn't turn into a nightmare by New Year.

PASSCODES FOR IPHONE/IPAD

If your child's getting their own iPhone or iPad, you can set parental controls that make it difficult for them to access inappropriate content or download expensive apps. Once the device is set up, go to the Settings app and tap Screen Time, then select Use Screen Time Passcode and enter a passcode. Keep it to yourself so your child can't switch the protection off.

SCREEN TIME SETTINGS ON IPHONE/IPAD

Once you've set a Screen Time Passcode, you can adjust various safety settings. You could, for example, only allow communication with people from the Contacts app, place restrictions on App Store purchases and apply age limits to movies, music and web content. There are many more protective options available within the Screen Time settings section.

FAMILY LINK FOR ANDROID

Parents can manage Android phones and tablets, as well as Google Chromebooks, through Google's Family Link app. This gives your child some independence (and their own Google account) but lets parents monitor which apps are being used, set limits on content and ensure that parental permission is required to install apps. Look for Family Link in the Google Play Store.

ADD A CHILD TO FAMILY LINK

The easiest way to add a child's device to Family Link is to set it up with its own Google account. It's a good idea to create this before they use their new phone, tablet or Chromebook. Once they're logged in, open the Family Link app on your phone, press '+' in the top right and add a new family member using their Google account details. Then follow the on-screen instructions.

FAMILY SHARING ON A MAC

Families using a Mac get similar screen time options to iPhone and iPad users. Again, if you're setting up a Mac for a child, make yourself the main admin and add them as a user. This is handled through Apple's Family Sharing service, which not only allows you to put controls on child accounts but share apps and other purchases with them too. Search 'Family sharing' at <https://support.apple.com>.

Meet Our Expert

Barry Collins has been a technology journalist and editor for more than 20 years, working for titles such as the Sunday Times, Which?, PC Pro and Computeractive. He's appeared regularly as a technology pundit on television and radio, including on Newsnight, Radio 5 Live and ITV News at Ten. He has two children and writes regularly about internet safety issues.



SET AN ADMIN ON PCS

On Windows PCs and laptops, it's important not to let your child share a general user account or be the main admin on the device. If you're booting up a new family PC or a child's own device, set it up using your own account details and you'll become the admin by default. Then set up children with their own separate account: Settings > Accounts > Family & Other Users > Add Other User.

SET WINDOWS LIMITS

Once your child's account has been created, a parent admin can go back into the Family & Other Users menu and apply limits to it. These include restricting screen time, the type of games and apps that can be installed, web filters and more. Microsoft also includes reporting tools which, for example, can email you with a weekly summary of your child's activity on the device.

TREAT AN XBOX LIKE A PC

The same control settings you use for a PC can be used to apply parental controls on an Xbox. Again, once your child is signed into the Xbox with their own account, you can then monitor and regulate their activity from a PC or web browser. Microsoft's dashboard allows you to manage voice communication through the console, so you can limit who can contact your child, for example.

PLAYSTATION PARENTAL CONTROLS

With parental controls for the PS5, you'll need a PlayStation Network account (as the 'family manager') and the child will need their own account, which they should sign in with on the console. This all needs to be set up in advance, so you might want to do it before the big day. Go to PlayStation.com and search 'family account' for instructions.

INSTALL XBOX FAMILY SETTINGS

If you don't have a PC, but your child does have an Xbox, it might be easier to use the Xbox Family Settings app for iPhone or Android. Here, you can restrict console screen time (particularly handy if the console is in a bedroom), restrict communication and monitor the types of game being played. There's also a feature where you can allocate spending money for games or in-game purchases.

DISCUSS IT WITH YOUR CHILD

If you're planning to implement any kind of restriction or protection settings on your child's new device, we'd recommend having a discussion with your young one first about what these controls do, and what they are for. If you try to impose parental controls surreptitiously or with no advance warning, don't be surprised if your child tries to find a way around them.

STAY VIGILANT

It's important to remember that none of these methods is 100% foolproof. Nobody will ever invent flawless filters or parental controls – not least because what's unacceptable to some parents is perfectly acceptable to others. So although devices' parental controls will help to keep your child safe online, they work best side by side with good old-fashioned parental vigilance.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

10 Conversation Starters for Parents

Talking about mental health to children is sometimes hard. To the point that we can put off raising the subject, not wanting to unearth problems or raise overwhelming subjects that we perceive our child is too young or not ready for. But rather than keeping children in the dark, this guide is designed to help you confidently talk about mental health, so they feel comfortable talking about their own worries and end any stigma before it begins.

NOS National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday

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 tentative about your child's wellbeing. Children instinctively know when your questions and support come from a place of wanting to help and care.



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/>
<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>