ISSUE 9 26th January 2024



MESSAGE FROM

THE HEADTEACHER

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to our mid-term 3 edition of the Blog. Christmas does not feel like it was that long ago and yet here we are, only 2 weeks from February Half Term! I hope you are all well.

Over 130 of our Year 13 students have now completed the UCAS process and many are starting to receive their offers. We also have students starting some excellent Apprenticeship applications in readiness for starting on this journey in September.

Year 11 this week have been working on their 2nd and final set of prelim examinations before the real event this summer. They have been conducting themselves well in these exams and making the most of this one final opportunity to hone their skills before they are sitting examinations for real. In a few weeks time they will receive their results of these examinations and will then be able to tailor their revision accordingly for the last few months of Year 11.

Next week, Year 10 are out on Work Experience all week. I can still remember my Work Experience (just!) from the late 1980s and remember that I learned some really valuable skills as I moved forwards. Our students this year are attending a wide range of placements and we hope they all have a brilliant and useful experience. If your son is in Year 10 and has not organised a Work Experience placement next week, the expectation is that he will attend school as normal. No new work will be completed as the vast majority of students will not be in, but it will be a useful time for anyone in school to consolidate their learning before moving on to new work again the week after.

Whilst on Year 10, can I remind all Year 10 parents and carers that we are running a Year 10 information evening on Wednesday 7th February at 5:00pm in the main hall. We hope to see many of you then.

Year 9 students have received recommendations this week in terms of which GCSE Options subjects they may be best suited to. This is the start of our GCSE Options process which will accelerate in term 4 when we will release the Options Booklet and hold the Options Evening.

As usual this blog is full of updates of what we have been doing here for these past 2 weeks and I hope you find it enjoyable to read. In the coming weeks we will be starting our celebrations for LGBTQIA+ month, starting with an own clothes day on Friday 9th February – our 'Be You' day - where we encourage all our community to come to school dressed in a way that they feel represents who they are. Of course all students should still dress appropriately for a day at school.

Survey update - Trips

Last time, I issued the outcomes of our parents survey which I trust you enjoyed reading. You would have seen that the majority of respondents were very positive about their son/daughters learning experiences here at Holcombe, but as always there were some 'even better ifs' given, which we find very useful to hear as it allows us to make improvements. I said last time that I would update you on one of these 'even better ifs' in each edition of this blog moving forwards. This time around I wanted to address the issue of school trips as this was a common response in the 'what could we do better section'.

I am pleased to report that the number of trips we are offering has expanded significantly. Coming out of the pandemic in 2021 it took some time to re-establish school trips but we are definitely moving in the right direction. In 21/22 we ran 15 trips, in 22/23 we ran 39 trips and so far in 23/24 we have either run or are actively planning to run 43 trips, but the final total for 23/24 will be more than this as several trips not currently at the planning stage will no doubt be offered. We know full well the value that students and parents place on a good school trip and we believe in the benefits they bring. There will definitely be a wide range of trip opportunities coming up for your son/daughter to engage in should they wish, and more than in previous years.

Finally, this is an opportune moment to remind all parents of the '85% rule' for trips which we introduced this year. We will only allow students to attend trips if their Positive:Negative Classcharts ratio is at least 85%. We will not take students on trips who have persistently demonstrated that they are unable to behave well in school.

I will look forward to updating you all further in 2 weeks time.

CONTENTS

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 3

- WC Monday 29th January
 - Year 11 Prelims
- WC Monday 29th January
 - Year 10 Work Experience
- Thursday 1st February
 - Year 12 Parents Evening

We are aware that the winter is the worst time of year for managing household accounts. Please remember to apply for FSM if your family are having any difficulties.

application form for FSM.

We are pleased to confirm that Medway Council will again be using monies from the household support grant to provide a voucher to parents/carers for each eligible benefits related free school meal child over the February break. The voucher will again be provided via Edenred and will total £15 for each eligible child. These will be sent to those that are eligible for FSM in time for the February break.

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.



<u>@TSAT - Holcombe Grammar School</u>



<u>@TSATHolcombe</u>



HOLCOMBE

DIGITAL LEARNING AT HOLCOMBE



Class Charts and Teams - the perfect partnership





It has been really encouraging to see students and parents engagement with, and response to, the introduction of ClassCharts. Teachers, support staff, students and parents alike have given overwhelmingly positive feedback on the improvement in communication and sharing of successes.

We have made the decision to set all homework on ClassCharts, moving away from using Teams for that purpose, however, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that Teams remains a vital learning and engagement resource for your child.

Each year group has a specific team where Heads of Year and other staff communicate with them, somewhat like a digital noticeboard. Additionally, every teaching class has a team, where teaching staff share resources, lesson notes etc.

As such, we would like to encourage you to ensure that your child has access to teams on a device so that they do not miss out on communications and opportunities to both collaborate and develop themselves independently.

Microsoft Accessibility



As a Holcombe student, you child has access to Microsoft365 in school and at home. Did you know that their profile can be changed to meet any needs to help support learning, such as background colours and immersive reader.

If you think this would be of use, follow this link for more information: <u>Microsoft UK Accessibility Champions Tips</u> & Tricks - <u>Microsoft UK</u>

Chat GPT and AI



How aware are you of how much your child engages with the use of AI to support their learning? There are undoubtedly huge benefits to us all, in all aspects of learning and life, through its development.

However, we have seen a huge increase in the number of students using AI to complete their homework, especially where extended writing is required. This is, of course, not helpful in developing their knowledge, literacy, writing stamina and ultimately academic success.

Staff have been creative with the use of AI, such as ChatCPT, for example, asking students to generate an essay response and then critique it against assessment objectives - a highly valuable activity. But, unless used carefully, students' knowledge acquisition and ability to retain that knowledge, may be impacted upon.

Have a chat with your child about ChatGPT!

If you have any questions regarding this, or anything relation to digital learning, please get in contact, via the school office, with Mrs Banks or Mrs Morris - or ask you child to speak to us in school.

We would also welcome you to complete the <u>survey</u> on Digital Access to allow us to understand how your child accesses and uses digital technology at home and if there are any areas in which we can support you or your child with digital learning.

YEAR 7 WORKSHOP



We recently concluded our Year 7 workshops, focused on transition and building resilience. This was the last in a series of workshops, led by our Educational Psychologist, with 16 students participating.

Workshops have included a range of team building exercises, discussions and reflection opportunities. The participating students have been very involved and active throughout, often stepping outside their comfort zones, and have very much enjoyed the opportunities provided.

Our last session ended with a celebration of the achievements of our students. Each was presented with a certificate, a letter outlining their achievements and a book. We were delighted that several parents and carers were able to join us in congratulating the boys and marking the end of the workshops with a celebration and O+A session.

The information below was shared with parents and carers and has been shared here again for convenience.



The Haven @ Holcombe



The Haven

Mr D. Hayes (SENCO) Mrs L. Bridges (Asst. SENCO) Miss D. Sutton (LSA, ELSA, 0.6) Miss E. Reader (LSA)

Pastoral

Mr B. Pay (Head of Year 7)

Mr H. Ackers (Conquest FT Mrs C. Sandhu (Guardian FT) Miss E. Laming (Shannon FT) Mr J. Still (Barfleur FT) Mr B. McGovern (Ardent FT)

Supporting our students with SEN

send@holcombegrammar.org.uk

 $\underline{studentservices@holcombegrammar.org.uk}$



School website

Education

Find as shost the education support available for school-aged children and young people with operall educational rends and disabilities (IDAD).

803-Secreta schools and estates

Medway website



HGS Blog

Key dates

January 2024 – Grade cards

w/b 20th May – Full report cards

w/b 3rd June – Y7 exam week

10th July – Parent/carers evening

LEAVER'S HOODIES



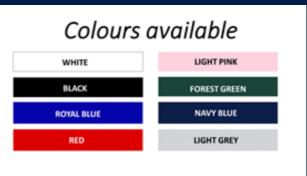
Year 11 and 13 students are now able to order their 2024 leaver's hoodies. The payment item can my found on the MyEd app under:

- Pluspay
- · Three lines at the top left corner
- Payments
- Shopping trolley icon

There is a form linked to the item, please complete and submit the form to select your size, colour and nickname.

Payment and form need to be completed by Friday 15th March.





THE BIG QUIZ



Is your KS3 child a memory mastermind? Do they have the thinking skills to remember facts and information? Or are they lucky enough to have a photographic memory?

The Big Quiz could be for them!

This is a trust-wide competition with prizes and glory to play for.

Last year, HGS was robbed of the title by RGS, coming a dubious second - could your child be in the team to put us in our rightful place of winners?

What they need to do:

- 1. Email aimee.banks@holcombegrammar.tsat.uk to express interest in participating
- 2. Learn the content of the knowledge banks attached on Teams and ClassCharts
- 3. Come to the HGS heat on Monday 5th February during form time in S17, where they will be answering a quiz on facts from the knowledge banks

The top three students will each win a £10 voucher and will progress to the next round of the trust competition, where more prizes await!

(N.B. This competition is only open to years 7, 8 and 9)



READING AT HOLCOMBE



Please see below the English Department's book recommendations. They have included a contemporary choice and a literary classic!



Reading at Holcombe

See below for the English Department's book recommendations. We have included a contemporary choice and a literary classic!



KS3

- The Girl with the Shark's Teeth by Cerrie Burnell. A contemporary fantasy adventure with themes of identity, courage and friendship.
- The Hobbit by JRR Tolkien. a timeless classic that follows the journey of Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit who is reluctantly swept into an epic quest.





<u>KS4</u>

- The Midnight Library by Matt Haig. A thought-provoking contemporary novel that follows the story of Nora Seed, who finds herself in a mysterious library between life and death.
- Brave New World by Aldous Huxley. This dystopian novel imagines a future society where people are conditioned for conformity and pleasure, raising questions about individuality and the cost of a utopian vision.



Reading regularly stimulates the brain, keeping it active and engaged. It has been linked to a reduced risk of cognitive decline as people age.



Recently, our Year 9/10 basketball team played against Rainham Mark. Throughout the game, Holcombe fell behind by 7 points. It seemed as though their players were more experienced than us, as this was our second game played as a team. Using our practice before the game, we used an effective defensive stance and layout to prevent the opposing team from scoring, leading to more fast-break opportunities, with Lotanna scoring open layups. The score gradually became tied. We had possession of the ball but lost it due to a poor pass and turnover, however, gained it back after a missed shot and rebound. Lotanna began to run up the court and the ball was passed to him with little time left on the clock, he scored a layup! It was a close game but we won by one point!

Account by Alex Riley, Year 10

Extra-curricular attendance

Congratulations to the following students for attending the most PE clubs between 3rd January and 22nd January



MATHS CLUB



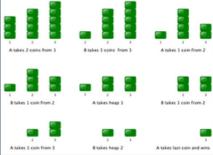
Over the past few weeks, several students across Key Stage 3 have been engaging in a brand-new Maths Club. Throughout the sessions, students have had the opportunity to discover some significant mathematical problems, puzzles and games that have puzzled some of the greatest Mathematicians in history.

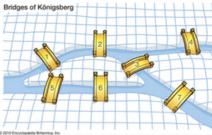
In the first week, students were introduced to the game of Nim, a game in which two players take turns at removing objects from distinct piles. Each player must remove at least one object from any pile on their turn, provided that all the objects removed are from the same pile. The game operates normal play conditions, where the last player able to move wins the game. As the students played the game, they began considering various strategies that may help them win, introducing them to the wonderful world of combinatorial game theory! By the end of the session, students were combining their strategy with their knowledge of the binary number system to create situations in which it was impossible to lose!

In the second week, students considered the famous 'Seven Bridges of Konigsberg' problem. This problem was once considered by Leonhard Euler in 1736 and laid the foundations for a branch of mathematics known as graph theory. The problem is set based on a city called Konigsberg in modern day Russia. The city was situated at the mouth of a river and had seven bridges joining the two sides of the river with an island and a peninsula. The question is: Could you take a walk through the town, visiting each part of the town and crossing each bridge only once? After some suggestions relating to swimming across the river were discounted, students realised that simplifying the problem would be a very appropriate first step, and so they set about drawing graphs to represent the situation. They tested other graphs to see if any others could indeed be drawn, and they noticed some marvellous patterns. The students found out that each of the vertices on the graph was either odd or even, and a solution could only be found if there were either precisely two odd vertices, or none at all! Then, students identified that the Bridges of Konigsberg problem was, in fact, impossible to solve after all! This was

This week, students spent time looking at the 'Eight Queens Problem'. The challenge is to place eight queen pieces onto a regular chess board such that no two pieces are in a position to attack each other (that is, none of the queens are allowed to be on the same row, column, or diagonal). It seemed like an easy problem, and students set about trying to complete it eagerly. However, with 4,426,165,368 different possible combinations of arranging the queens, and only 12 fundamental solutions, this was no easy task! Nevertheless, three of our brilliant students did manage to find one of those solutions... Can you?

precisely what Leonhard Euler had also discovered nearly 300 years ago!







INDOOR ROWING TRIALS



Indoor Rowing Trials

The "Medway School Games Indoor Rowing" competition takes place on Thursday 7th March. Only 4 students from each year group can be selected for this event.

Trials will take place as follows:

Year 7 - TUESDAY 30th JANUARY (1.20pm)

Year 8 - TUESDAY 30th JANUARY (3.10pm)

Year 9 - MONDAY 29th JANUARY (3.10pm)

Year 10 - FRIDAY 2nd FEBRUARY (1.20pm)

Year 11 - WEDNESDAY 31st JANUARY (1.20pm)

Year 12/13 (girls & boys) - WEDNESDAY 31ST JANUARY (3.10pm)

HARD WORK beats talent WHEN TALENT doesn't WORK HARD

MEDWAY PUBLIC HEALTH



Many of you will have heard reports from local and national media outlets regarding the increase in the number of measles cases across some areas of the country.



The Department for Education has published a new blog relating to school children and schools <u>What to do if you think your child has measles and when to keep them off school - The Education Hub</u> (<u>blog.gov.uk</u>), this may be useful for you to read.

Medway Public Health are working with all of the relevant agencies and will be providing additional information to us in school.

THINKING AMBASSADORS



What are the Thinking Ambassadors?

The Thinking Ambassadors are a collective of students within the school who monitor how the thinking tools, ranging from Thinkers Keys, Thinking Maps, Hats and Holcombe Habits, are being utilised. We aim to broaden the ways in which the thinking tools are applicable since they are key in not only enhancing academic skills. We are supporting the new Holcombe Charter, both inside and outside of the academic setting and in real life situations. The people who are currently the Thinking Ambassadors are as followed:

- Harlem Hodges (10Ba)
- Dylan Patel (10Sh)
- Taylor Mortimer (10Ba)
- Finn Dewane (10Ba)
- Chimdi Mgbemena (10Ba)

If you are interested in the Thinking Ambassadors, please go to S16 or M14 on Thursday to speak to either Ms Cook or Mrs Ortega. It is a brilliant opportunity to improve your thinking skills which can help you significantly with your academics and, in particular, revision!

What do the Thinking Ambassadors do?

As Thinking Ambassadors, we work to make sure that every student knows what the Thinking Tools are and how they can use them to benefit their learning.

We believe that the Thinking tools are resources that are extremely beneficial for a student's learning and revision. Focussing in on the revision part of learning, here at Holcombe, we prepare students on how to revise so that they get the most out of their revision/study time and walk away with the most valuable knowledge that they can gather from their private studies.

This is done through the encouragement of the use of Thinking Tools. For example, the Thinking Maps are an excellent way of laying out your revision in a format that has been scientifically proven to help students with their studies by organising it in a way that makes it easy for the brain to process and remember.

To read more and to see examples of the thinking tools, please click here.

WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO BE...



7 Conquest submitted some excellent homework for their Geography lesson exploring a range of careers that they would like to pursue and linking these back to Geography. From Geotechnical Engineering to Musicians, Aerospace Engineers to Chef, the class presented excellent research, considered how Geography and other subjects are holistic in preparing them for potential careers and surprised even Mrs Obee with their innovative thinking outside the box.



TRIPS



So far this year, pupils have attended trips to:

- Parliament with tours of the site
- · The Gurdwara in Gravesend
- Design Museum
- Normandy
- Theatre Woman in Black
- Theatre Lion King
- Bar Mock Trials in Maidstone
- · Art and Design Museum
- Kent University MFL Conference
- · Ravensbourne University for Media Studies
- Theatre Back to the Future

On the 18th January, the Music department took 29 students to watch Back to the Future the musical at the Adelphi Theatre in London. We were really impressed with the music and effects throughout the performance and would highly recommend it to anyone wishing to see a musical in London. The students were fantastic during the trip and were complimented by members of the public at the theatre. We look forward to taking others to watch this in the future!



Year 12 and Year 13 went to the University of Kent for some Language and Linguistic lessons. They had taster sessions about Sign Language, The Colonisation of Hispanoamerica, Introduction to Linguistics, French Culture among others. Students were very engaged in the sessions delivered by Kent University Professors and found the sessions informative and thought provocative.

We are organising more trips in line with each year groups curriculum which will be evident in the coming weeks.

We currently have February booked with the following trips:

- Rescheduled Trip to Cambridge University
- Final Art Competition at Folkestone
- Poetry Live GCSE Trip
- Theatre Hamilton

MUSIC LESSONS



PATRIC DEONY

M U S I C I A N

Holcombe Grammar School Letchworth Avenue Chatham Kent ME4 6JB Proposal ref: 014

16th/01/2024

INTRODUCTION

PROPOSAL FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Re: Overview of initial drumming tuition at Holcombe Grammar School

Dear young drummers-to-be,

You are about to become brand-new members of a very special and supportive group of people in the world!

Our most important jobs as drummers are to make people move or dance with what we call groove, and to hold the band or orchestra tightly together, like glue, by keeping time.

Your primary goal will be to master the complete basic backbeat, which is played by Leon "Ndugu" Chancler in the intro to the song Billie Jean on the album Thriller.

Other versions of this basic beat can be heard in the more recent songs Green Green Grass by George Ezra, Flowers by Miley Cyrus, Worth It by Raye and Dance the Night by Dua Lipa.

In the meantime you can always have a go at the air drums!

I much look forward to meeting you all.

Drum sticks and a practice pad will come in handy at home if you can obtain them.

With Compliments

PATRIC DEONY BA

The music department is pleased to announce that we have partnered with Dynamics, the Medway Music hub, to supply drum lessons at Holcombe Grammar School. Please see any member of the department

for more

information.

MUSIC LESSONS



The music department is pleased to announce that we have partnered with Dynamics, the Medway Music hub, to supply guitar lessons at Holcombe Grammar School. Please see any member of the department for more information.



Dear Parents

I am happy to announce the introduction of instrumental lessons at Holcombe Grammar School. I believe that music is not just an art form but a means to inspire creativity, boost confidence, and develop lifelong skills. With instrumental lessons, your child will have the chance to explore their musical talent, learn new skills, and have fun.

Instruments currently available:

Guitar

Bass

Ukulele

Vocals

1-2-1 Lesson Pricing

30 minutes 1-2-1: £20.25 20 minutes 1-2-1: £13.50

All lessons are to be conducted during school time and on school property. There is a new instrument loan scheme for those without their own instrument to practice with at home. Please indicate if you would like to take advantage of this. Any and all abilities are welcome to take part. Lessons will be booked in blocks on a half-termly basis and invoices will be issued prior to and due before the start of lessons. Lessons can be cancelled at any point by letting me know with at least 48 hours' notice via email.

To register your child, simply complete the form using the link below. Spaces are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis so please don't hesitate.

https://forms.gle/uWWuq4s85MWT7xHr9

I look forward to hearing from you all.

James Taplin

James Taplin Music Ltd.

SMARTPHONE SAFETY TIPS

for young people

You may have been lucky enough to have unwrapped a smartphone at Christmas, or you might be eagerly anticipating getting a new one at some point during this year. Whether it'll be your first ever phone or an upgrade on your old model, it's always useful to have a refresher about how to set it up and adjust the settings to keep yourself – and your valuable personal info – safe and secure. We've collected some expert tips to help you enjoy your smartphone in the healthiest way possible.

NEVER SHARE YOUR PASSCODE

Alongside face or fingerprint recognition, your passcode is crucial to unlocking your phone and accessing your apps and personal information. You shouldn't give it out, even to close friends — after all, you wouldn't hand them a key to your house and let them go in for a nosey ground! If a friend wants to use your phone, ask them why and make sure you can see what they're doing with it.

RESPECT PARENTAL CONTROLS

If you're allowed to have a smartphone, it's because your parents or carers feel that you're mature and responsible enough to use it safely. They might set controls and boundaries on your device – not to spoil your fun but to help you avoid hazards like too much screen time or costly in-app purchases. Fellowing these rules means you can enjoy using your phone while respecting their wishes.

TALK TO A TRUSTED

Whether It's to listen to music, play games, create content or chat with triends, using a smartphone should be fun. If you're ever feeling anxious, worried or scared about going on your phone, then something isn't right. It's important not to ignore these feelings; instead, talk to a trusted adult about what's happening and how it's making you feel.

VE.234

STAY ALERT

Two words: look up. It might sound obvious, but it's so easy to get immersed in what we're looking at or listening to on our phones that we can become unaware of our surroundings - or who might be around us. People often walk with their head down, focusing on their phone, and forget to check for obstacles in their path, cars or other pedestrians coming towards them, which is clearly democrate.

DEVELOP HEALTHY HARITS

Phones offer a vast amount of content and the chance to chat with friends whenever we feel like it, which can make it difficult to take time away from the screen. If that's something you struggle with, you could try setting time limits on certain apps. Putting our phones down for a while gives us more time to interact with others or do something physical that helps keep

IGNORE UNKNOWN NUMBERS

might call or text asking you to share personal data or to click on a link and provide your details. Some may claim to be from a genuine company, but trustworthy businesses don't spontaneously call or message to ask for your information. It's safest to ignore calls or texts from unknown numbers, and never give your personal details out over the phone.

ONLY USE AGE-APPROPRIATE APPS

Before downloading a new app or game, check what age rating it has bon't feel pressured into getting a particular game or app just becaus your friends are using it. If it's intended for older people, there's a definite risk that it could include content (which is violent or frightening, for instance) or language which ien't suitable and may leave you feeling upset or disturbed.

REMOVE TEMPTATION

good night's sleep is so important or concentration, mood and overall ealth. Unwinding properly before oing to bed – which means not toring at a screen late at night – an often improve sleep quality. Put our phone on charge overnight, ut not in your room. This means ou'il have a lot less temptation to heck any notifications, reply to sessages or get caught up

THINK ABOUT OTHERS

Watching videos, listening to music or calling someone can all help to pass the time while we're on the bus, waiting in a queue or walking down the street. It's important to remain mindful of other people, though: they might not want to hear your tunes or your conversation. Likewise, if you're calling from a public place then don't lorget that anyone could overhear something personal about you.

SWITCH OFF GEOLOCATION

in your phone's settings, you'll be able to disable geolocation for individual apps and photes: this means that people online (including strangers) can't see information about where you are when you share or post a pic. On the subject of images, it's also important to ask permission before taking or sharing a photo of someone – and don't share embarrassing images of your triends with others.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Clidire Sutheriand is an entine salety consultant, educator and researches who has developed and implemented and bullying and oyler safety positive for schools, the has written various accelents papers and earthod extressemblire the Australian government comparing interneture and setting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



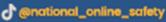
The National College







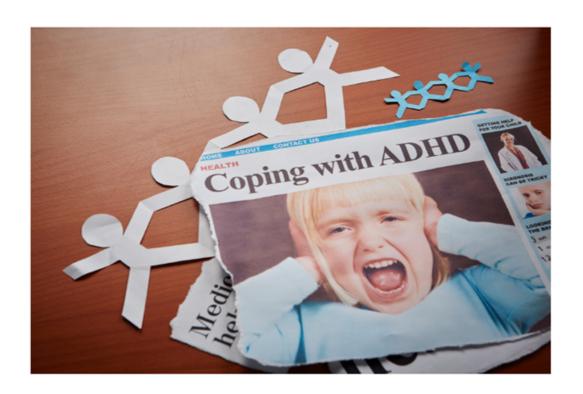




SUPPORTING A CHILD WITH ADHD POSTER



Supporting a Child with ADHD



Challenge the stereotypes and get the facts with Jane Keyworth

Thursday 1st Feb (7pm to 9pm) £24

Available to book now via the website

facefamilyadvice.co.uk



Parent/Carer Autism Online Workshops

Whether your child is awaiting a diagnosis or has already been diagnosed, these workshops are a great opportunity to learn more about Autism & ask questions within a supportive group of other parents & carers.

- Monday 5th February An introduction to Autism
 An opportunity to explore what Autism is, the many strengths and the differences that make each child so wonderfully unique.
- Monday 12th February Communication
 Identifying what communication is and the different communication methods that may be helpful for Autistic children.
- Monday 19th February Sensory Processing
 Explaining the 8 sensory systems, how the environment can impact on a child with sensory processing differences/challenges and strategies to meet an individual's sensory needs.
- Monday 26th February Pathological Demand Avoidance
 A look into the interesting subject of PDA, how this may present and
 what is the best approach to take to avoid conflict.

Workshops will be held 7:30-8:30pm via Zoom.

£25 per workshop for each family.

To book your place...Email enquiries@theautismtrainingnetwork.com

Or scan the QR code







Search the Education Hub to find out more

NHS

