

ON TRACK EDUCATION



Merry
Christmas

FROM ON TRACK,

December 2025



A little progress each day
adds up to big results!



Don't
miss a
thing

WHAT AN AMAZING TERM WE HAVE HAD!

What's new?

Letter from the Senior Leadership Team....

Season's Greetings to you all.

We were honoured to again reach the finals in this year's Education Awards for Northamptonshire. We were in the running for SEN school of the year and English team of the year. See the outcome in the article below! Needless to say we are thrilled to be recognised and very grateful for On Track to support so many staff attend this wonderful event.

It's been a long term and as always we would like to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated and amazing staff team for organising all of the wonderful opportunities and trips available to our pupils and their families this term.

We are again super proud of the achievements of our pupils who took their GCSE exams last Summer and completed other vocational work in a range of BTEC subjects. Many of our pupils are now well settled in new educational establishments - Northampton College, Moulton College and other training providers.

Thanks again to all our parents/carers and staff for going above and beyond to support pupils through these qualifications and navigating the ups and downs!

We would also like to celebrate our staff member Jayne O'Connor for passing her Forest School qualification with top marks. Picture below - Well done Jayne.

We have also been lucky enough to have some new staff starting with us this term to support our pupils - Tanya, Lisa and Jenny. We also have two new teaching staff - James, teaching English and Chad, teaching Music. A very warm welcome to you all.

Finally a huge thank you to all those parents and carers who attended our recent Bingo afternoon. It was a fabulous afternoon and you can read more about it within this newsletter.

We do hope you have a very relaxing Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Sally and Pete

🏆 What a Night for On Track Northampton! 🏆

Friday 28th November was a night to remember at the Northamptonshire Education Awards 2025, held at the Count Cricket Club and hosted by Olympian Gail Emms MBE.

★ We were thrilled to be named finalists for SEN School of the Year 2025 - a huge honour in itself!

But the biggest cheer of the evening came when our incredible English Department took home the prestigious title of English Team of the Year 2025! 🇬🇧

🌟 Please join us in celebrating our award-winning English team and the whole On Track Northampton family - proof that hard work, creativity, and dedication really do shine

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

Attendance

Attendance Matters



Whole school attendance is 81%. Well done to the 3 students who won the attendance awards and vouchers.

Attendance is important and we would like any feedback from students on incentives we can offer! Please email: northamptonoffice@ontrackededucation.com



On Friday 17th October 2025, students visited Weston Favell Shopping Centre to attend the "No One Wins" event, inspired by the powerful campaign created by Safer Northants. The original initiative focused on the deep and lasting grief caused by knife crime, reminding everyone that carrying a knife doesn't protect you, it puts you at greater risk.



English Department

English GCSE Mock Exams: This term, our students have excelled in their English GCSE mock exams across both the Cambridge IGCSE and Pearson/Edexcel 2.0 courses. Their results reflect not only strong academic progress but also the resilience, diligence and positive attitude they brought to their studies. Staff were impressed by the determination shown, and students should feel proud of the way they rose to the challenge!

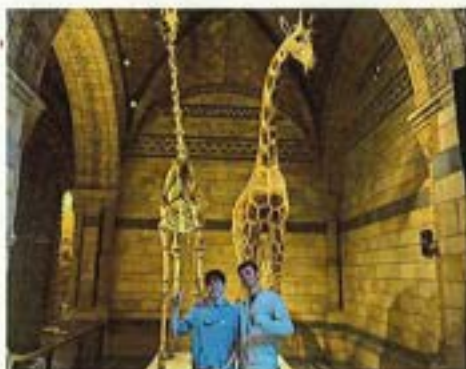
Reading: It has been a delight to see that many more students have discovered a genuine love of reading. This enthusiasm has not only brought enjoyment but has also strengthened their ability to access the wider curriculum with confidence. From novels and poetry to non-fiction texts, reading is opening doors to new ideas and sparking curiosity across subjects.

Northampton Education Awards: We are thrilled to announce that our English department won English Team of the Year at the Northamptonshire Education Awards! This recognition celebrates the hard work, creativity and commitment of both staff and students, and we are incredibly proud to have won.

Next Term: Looking ahead, we are delighted to welcome back The Word Guerrilla- a poet, rapper and artist who will once again inspire our students with poetry, music and wordplay. His workshops are always a highlight, encouraging every student to experiment with language, rhythm and creativity in fresh and exciting ways.



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?



LONDON TRIP WICKED THE MUSICAL & NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Our students had a truly inspiring day out in London! We began at the Natural History Museum, where the festive Christmas T-Rex was a huge hit and set the mood for an exciting adventure.

From there, we headed to the Apollo Theatre to see the spectacular production of Wicked. Because students had already explored the themes of the musical in class, they were able to connect with its powerful message on a deeper level. The dazzling design, unforgettable music, and moving story left everyone buzzing with ideas to take back into PSHE, English, and Art. We're especially proud of our Year 11 Travel and Tourism students, who took the lead in planning and preparing the trip. Their organisation and enthusiasm meant the whole day ran smoothly, and they did a fantastic job supporting their peers.

It was a wonderful experience all round - one that gave our students not only a cultural highlight but also memories and inspiration to carry into their learning across subjects.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

LONDON TRIP WICKED THE MUSICAL & NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM



SCIENCE

Science in Action: Students Investigate Nutrients in Everyday Foods

As part of our ongoing science curriculum, SS recently took part in an engaging practical investigation exploring the nutrients found in common food items. The lesson focused on four essential biological tests used to identify starch, sugar, protein, and lipids, giving pupils the opportunity to apply scientific techniques in a real laboratory setting.

During the session, SS carried out:

Iodine Test for Starch - observing a blue-black colour change.
Benedict's Test for Reducing Sugars - identifying positive results through colour shifts following heating.

Biuret Test for Proteins - looking for a purple colour as an indicator.
Emulsion Test for Lipids - detecting a milky or cloudy layer.

SS demonstrated excellent safe handling of equipment, and careful observation. He recorded his findings accurately and discussed how different foods contribute to a balanced and nutritious diet.

This practical activity not only deepened students' understanding of food chemistry but also strengthened their enquiry skills—preparing them for more advanced scientific learning. The session was filled with curiosity, lively discussion, and a real sense of scientific discovery.

Well done to SS for demonstrating outstanding enthusiasm and professionalism throughout the investigation.



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?



SCIENCE

Young Scientists Explore How the Body Breaks Down Food: Investigating Amylase and pH

As part of our ongoing science programme, a group of our dedicated students recently took part in a hands-on practical investigation exploring how the human body breaks down starch into sugar. This engaging activity introduced pupils to the role of enzymes, specifically amylase, and how conditions such as pH can influence the rate of biochemical reactions within our digestive system.

What the Students Investigated

Working collaboratively, students carried out experiments to:

- Observe how amylase breaks down starch into maltose (a simple sugar)
- Investigate how different pH levels affect the rate of this reaction
- Record colour changes using the iodine test, which indicates the presence or absence of starch
- Analyse results to determine the optimal pH for amylase activity

Throughout the practical, students demonstrated excellent scientific thinking—measuring solutions accurately, ensuring fair testing, and discussing their results thoughtfully.

Understanding the Science Behind It

This practical connects directly to how our digestive system functions:

- Amylase is an enzyme found in saliva and the small intestine.
- Its job is to break large starch molecules into smaller sugar molecules, making them easier for the body to absorb and use for energy.
- Enzymes are highly sensitive to their environment, especially pH.
- Each enzyme works best at a specific pH level—known as its optimum pH.
- For amylase, this is typically around neutral pH (pH 7).
- If the pH is too acidic or too alkaline, the enzyme can become less effective or even stop working, slowing down digestion.

By experimenting with different pH conditions, students were able to see first-hand how the environment inside the body plays a vital role in ensuring digestion happens efficiently.

Excellent Engagement and Effort

Our young scientists worked with focus, curiosity, and admirable teamwork. Their ability to discuss how laboratory findings link to real biological processes was particularly impressive.

Well done to all students involved for their enthusiasm, discipline, and scientific excellence throughout this investigation.



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

➔ Pinnacle Climbing

You're 15 meters in the air with 3 more to go, chalk floating around your face, fingers locked on an edge barely wider than a pencil, you hear your partner below with words of praise and encouragement. For a second, gravity forgets you, you move, you flow, you reach the summit. That's the moment you want to bottle, the one that rewards you with confidence and pushes you to share it with the world, or in our case, the school.

Students at different ages and climbing abilities; from novices to experienced, have been pushing through the levels. These are our most recent recipients; from Level 1 new climber to Level 3 technical climber. All the hard work, the falls and the lessons led to this moment.

VOCATIONAL

Employability

During the month of December, employability pupils have been working together to produce hampers to sell. They were also approached by a lady whose son is currently in Nottingham children's hospital with terminal cancer and were asked to make 50 for gifts for the children. Of course they agreed and have all been working hard on making these to deliver to the hospital the week before Christmas.



Cheesecake business



For part of their enterprise project, pupils wanted to make cheesecakes to sell at the family bingo. They worked out costing and ingredients needed, and made 100 mini cheesecakes including matchmaker, lemon, biscoff and oreo. These were a sell out at the Christmas event with lots of families and staff buying boxes of 12.

Kickboxing



Engineering

BTEC Engineering students have been getting to grips with the first task of servicing a motor vehicle, removing and checking the spark plugs on a kawasaki750. They will be mechanics before we know it!



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?



CHRISTMAS EVENTS CHRISTMAS DINNER WITH OUR ONTRACK FAMILY

➔ Christmas Panto



This year's Panto was at Wellingborough Castle Theatre to watch Beauty and the Beast. The entire school had an absolute blast with lots of fun and laughter throughout. We can't wait to visit again in 2026!

➔ Christingle

A Christingle orange is a symbolic Christian item used in Advent/Christmas services, made from an orange (the world) with a lit candle (Jesus' light) in the top, a red ribbon (Christ's blood/love), and fruit/sweets on sticks (God's creation/gifts). It represents Jesus as the Light of the World, bringing hope, and is famously associated with The Children's Society in the UK for fundraising for vulnerable children.



➔ Up coming events!

WHAT'S ON

Students return from the Christmas break on Wednesday 7th January 2026

February Half term Break up 13th February Return 23rd February

Word Guerilla - 30th January 2026

Parents' Evening - 12th February 2026

School Residential - 22nd April - 24th April 2026



CHRISTMAS FAMILY BINGO EVENT

Bingo! This years we had the biggest turn out and the best Bingo ever! It was a pleasure to welcome so many families join us to take part in our annual family Christmas bingo!

Students ran their business stands and did very well. There was lots of smiles and fun had.

Thank you all for supporting our school. We raised £145.00



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WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

➔ STUDENT AWARDS

Congratulations to all our students who have won awards this term!



➔ Donations received

I would like to thank all the companies for their donations we received this year to enable us to hold our Christmas Bingo and tombola.

We had an amazing turn out of staff, students and families who won some amazing prizes. Special thanks go to:

- Trade Wind Recruitment, for donating 4 tickets to watch Northampton Town football club, plus sweets and teddies.
- The Pinnacle Climbing Centre
- Bear Me In Mind
- Student Businesses
- And all staff who donated

SUPPORTING CHARITIE AND FAMILIES

Thank you for all of your support this term. We hope you enjoyed all our family/school charity events. This term this has included Wear Yellow to raise awareness of young peoples' mental health and a breakfast club to raise funds are The McCarthy Dixon Foundation, who support families and schools across our county.

FOREST SCHOOL



A great start this term for Unit 3! They have settled in well and have experienced a taster of all aspects of Forest School. Students have enjoyed working with a number of different woodland tools, achieving knowledge and new skills passing AQA Awards along the way! They have gathered wood to build and light a fire using flint and steel, with adult support. Toasting marshmallows is one of their favourite activities. Students are beginning to bond and form good relationships through play and student lead experiences. It has been a joy getting to know them all!

Unit 2 have brushed up on their fire safety skills and are able to collect grades of wood to build and light their fire independently. Students have embedded their knowledge to pass AQA Awards in fire safety. The group have had the opportunity to use a number of different new tools in our sessions and extend their knowledge of using woodland tools. The group are settled, using great communication skills when given the opportunity to play as a group in a student lead environment.

Unit 1 have passed with flying colours in their fire safety skills and have enjoyed making and cooking burgers on the open fire. They have shown fantastic knowledge and skill in all aspects of Forest School and are beginning to develop a sound knowledge in their knot skills. One student has passed a Level one AQA Award and enjoys teaching his peers.



ON THE

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FOREST SCHOOL



ALLERGY REGISTER FOR SCHOOL

Allergy Register.

We are now on the Allergy register. We are ensuring that we are allergy aware and prepared for any possible anaphylaxis in school.

We have emergency adrenaline auto-injectors in school and all staff have undertaken training to manage an allergic response and anaphylaxis.

Please take the time to go through the information provided as everyone in our school community has a part to play.



HOW PARENTS CAN SUPPORT PUPILS

5-7% of children have a food allergy, so it's likely there are pupils in your child's class with a food allergy. There are ways you can do to support these children.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Learn about food allergies and take them seriously. Talk to your child about what it means to live with a food allergy.
- Be Allergen Aware. If you are bringing food into school (perhaps for a packed lunch or cake sale) and your school has asked you not to bring in a specific ingredient, please take this seriously. It's not always obvious that a food will contain a specific allergen, so read the ingredients and allergy labelling carefully.
- Children with allergies may be coping with higher levels of anxiety on a daily basis. Their friends can be their biggest supporters. Encourage your child to be an allergy ally.
- If your child is older and it is appropriate, why not encourage them to learn how to deliver potentially life-saving adrenaline in an emergency. [Check out this free training from The Allergy Team.](#)
- It's understandable that you might feel nervous, if your child has a friend with food allergies who is invited over for a playdate or party. These are some things you can do to help keep them safe and feel included:
 - Speak to their parent or carer to find out what they are allergic to and find out what foods they need to avoid.
 - If you're catering, think about all the ingredients that go into your recipes and make sure you read all the ingredients' labels on bought produce. [Here are some recipes free from the main allergens.](#) Be mindful of cross-contamination eg. make sure you use clean pans and utensils.
 - Please don't be offended if the parent/carer wants to send their child to your house with their own food. Sometimes this is more comfortable for everyone, especially if it's the first time they are visiting.
 - If you are worried about anything, speak to the parent/carer, they are likely to be very happy to help and keen for their child to be included in as many activities as possible.

theallergyteam.com



UNDERSTANDING FOOD ALLERGY



Allergic disease is the most common chronic medical condition in childhood. Food allergy will affect on average 1-2 pupils in every class.

WHAT IS A FOOD ALLERGY?



Food allergy is an overactivity of our immune system, instead of ignoring a food the immune system mistakenly sees it as harmful and reacts to it. A food allergy is very different to a food intolerance or a diet choice. An intolerance does not involve the immune system and is less serious.



Allergic reactions can vary in severity from mild and moderate, to severe and even life-threatening. Severe allergic reactions are called anaphylaxis and need to be treated as a medical emergency. To treat anaphylaxis you need to give adrenaline immediately using an adrenaline auto-injector eg. an EpiPen.



People with a food allergy must avoid their allergen. Even just a trace of the food they are allergic to, can cause an allergic reaction.



COMMON ALLERGENS

You can be allergic to any food but most reactions are caused by just 9 foods



Venom (such as wasp and bee stings), medication, latex, animals and some vaccines can also cause serious allergic reactions.

did you know

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

can include:

- household bills (such as gas and electricity)
- rent
- council tax
- help with buying food
- childcare costs

as well as other important daily essentials

There are people on hand to support and advise you, so please get in touch today.

For more information on cost of living support, visit www.northants.gov.uk/cost-of-living or 0300 576 7000



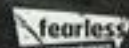
I have information about a crime.
I am worried someone is going to get hurt.

Need to tell someone

Don't want my name involved

Who can I tell?

Tell us **WHAT YOU KNOW**



100% anonymously at Fearless.org



sport

Northamptonshire Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) - Winter 2020

We are reaching this letter to you as we are about to start funded holiday camps during the winter, Easter and Summer holiday periods. With the fantastic success of the funding for the HAF programme has been extended for another 3 years, preparations for the winter 2020 programme are well underway. We are pleased to be able to share the opportunity information and dates for your dates with you now.

The programme will run on selected dates from Friday 10th December 2020 to Friday 15th January 2021.

We will continue to use the 'EEQV' booking system introduced during the summer and this will be open for bookings on Tuesday 23rd November 2020 at 9pm.

You can access the booking system via www.northants.gov.uk/haf, here you can login or create your free account, view what places are available, register your interest and book your session into the bookings are live. Please note that not all sessions will be successful.

As with summer, there are no longer any restrictions on age from schools. You can access the system directly using the link above and make eligibility being checked afterwards.

Each eligible individual will have a credit use for the winter programme. The most popular camps including a performance will have a limit on the number of places a single individual can book to ensure all families have the opportunity to access.

When you make a booking, it will appear as 'Pending'. It will remain as pending until the camp provider has approved it AND the eligibility has been checked. You will receive updates via email and on your profile of the current booking status.

There is a help guide below explaining how to book using the new system below and www.northants.gov.uk/haf for more information.

As always for any HAF related questions we're happy to help at the usual email haf@northants.gov.uk. For any direct booking system questions / issues, EEQV can be reached via the email eeqv@northants.gov.uk or via the contact centre website.

Kind regards
The Northamptonshire HAF Team



FAMILY SUPPORT

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD



SOLIHULL APPROACH

My name is Natalie and I am excited to introduce a new group that we are offering to parents, family members or carers. The Solihull Approach is designed to help parents or carers to understand the child's emotional health and behaviour. I understand that group work can be daunting, so 1-1 or family meetings can also be offered. The meetings are made up of ten 2hr sessions with timings to suit. Within these sessions we look at managing feelings, understanding behaviour as communication and building secure relationships including emotional wellbeing. If this is something you would like to explore, please contact the school and I will be happy to give more information.

I look forward to hearing from you



Let's keep this going for all the people who are going through a tough time.

For anyone who needs some support right now. ❤️

CALM - 0800585858
Mind - 03001233393
No Panic - 08449674848
Bereavement - 08088081677
PAPYRUS - 08000684141
Samaritans - 116 123
SHOUT - Text SHOUT to 85258
Abuse - 0808 2000 247
Refuge - 020 7395 7700

Stay safe this Christmas.



Positive Pathways Research Study



Positive Pathways is a research project which aims to help educate, motivate and inspire young people to change their negative behaviours, get back on track and move towards a safer future.

The research poses the question- does adventure learning and mentoring support young people to develop prosocial and positive behaviour, and in turn reduce the likelihood of being involved in the youth justice system.

Funded by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), Positive Pathways offers selected applicants a unique residential experience and up to seven months personalised support to keep them on track and move towards a safer future.

To be eligible for Positive Pathways a young person must:

- Be 15-17 years old.
- Live in the East or West Midlands.
- Be willing to take part in a research study which includes undertaking a survey at the start and end of the programme.

Provide consent to take part (as well as a guardian, carer or parent consenting) and meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Vulnerable or At Risk
- Not Engaged in Education
- SEND, EHCP or Health Concern
- Care experienced (Looked after Child, LAC)
- Presenting needs
- Disadvantaged
- Criminal Record
- Arrested/ convicted
- Lack of engagement



ingeus

Positive Pathways Research Study



If eligible, and consent is received, each young person will receive either:

Control Group	or	Intervention Group
→ An activity delivered by the organisation that referred the young person to the research through a £50 enrichment payment from Positive Pathways for participation.		→ A four night, five day residential experience to learn work and life skills. → A dedicated Mentor to provide information, advice and guidance. → A celebration event following programme completion.
→ A £20 Love2shop voucher for completing a survey at the beginning and end of the evaluation.		→ A £20 Love2shop voucher for completing a survey at the beginning and end of the evaluation.

Refer a young person to Positive Pathways today!

Complete a referral form at www.ingeus.co.uk/positive-pathways or by scanning the QR code below.

Please note that making a referral does not guarantee a young person's place on the programme.

For more information about Positive Pathways, for bulk referral information or to discuss partnership opportunities, email: positivepathways@ingeus.co.uk



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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 as 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>.

PLAYSTATION PARENTAL CONTROLS

With parental controls for the PS4, you'll need a PlayStation Network account for 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 to advance, so you might want to do it before the big day. Visit playstation.com and search 'family manager' for instructions.

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.

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 setting 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 user names. Settings > Accounts > Family & Other Users > Add Other User.

SET WINDOWS LIMITS

Once your child's account has been created, as parent admin, you 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, as you can limit who can contact your child, for example.

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 type of game being played. There's also a feature where you can allocate spending money for games or in-game purchases.

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.

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, iD, PC Pro and ComputerActive. He's appeared regularly as a technology pundit on television and radio, including on Newsnight, Radio 5 Live and TV News at Ten. He has two children and writes regularly about internet safety issues.



National
Online
Safety

#WakeUpWednesday



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10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

ELECTRICAL SAFETY AND DEVICES

Electrical safety is a vital topic for parents and educators, especially with the growing use of devices like smartphones, laptops, and power banks. Electrical fires are a major risk and are the cause of many deaths and injuries each year. There are reportedly nearly 20,000 accidental fires of electrical origin each year in the UK. This guide offers practical advice to help families and schools prevent electrical hazards, and promote safety when using everyday devices.

1 CHECK FOR OVERHEATING

Devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones can overheat if used for long periods or when charging. Ensure that children don't use devices on soft surfaces like beds or sofas, which can block ventilation. If a device becomes unusually hot, turn it off and unplug it. Overheating can lead to fire hazards if left unchecked.

2 INSTALL RESIDUAL CURRENT DEVICES

Ensure that homes and schools are equipped with Residual Current Devices (RCDs). These devices cut off the power if an electrical fault occurs, preventing electric shocks and reducing the risk of fires. RCDs should be tested regularly to ensure they are working properly. More information about RCDs is available from Electrical Safety First.

3 AVOID OVERLOADING SOCKETS

Plugging too many devices into one socket can overload the electrical system and cause a fire. In schools and homes, ensure extension leads are not overloaded and never 'daisy chain' multiple extension cords together. Educate children on the dangers of connecting too many devices to a single outlet.

4 POWER BANKS: SAFE USE

Power banks are a handy way to charge devices, but they can also pose a risk if misused. Ensure power banks are of high quality and comply with UK safety standards. Teach children never to leave power banks charging unattended, and to avoid placing them under pillows or bedding where they may overheat.

5 REGULAR DEVICE INSPECTIONS

Regularly check devices for signs of wear and tear. Frayed charging cables, cracked device casings, or devices that are slow to charge may indicate electrical problems. If any issues are noticed, stop using the device until it can be repaired or replaced by a qualified technician. This proactive approach helps prevent fires caused by faulty devices.

6 UNPLUG DEVICES WHEN NOT IN USE

Encourage children and pupils to unplug devices when not in use, particularly overnight. Devices left plugged in unnecessarily can overheat or become fire hazards, especially if left charging unattended for long periods. Simple habits like unplugging can prevent serious incidents.

7 USE GENUINE CHARGERS

Always use chargers supplied by the manufacturer or from a reputable retailer. Faulty or counterfeit chargers can cause devices to overheat, short-circuit, or even catch fire. Teach children the importance of avoiding poor-quality chargers, and regularly inspect charging cables for signs of wear or damage. More tips on safe charging can be found at Electrical Safety First.

8 WATER & ELECTRICITY DON'T MIX

Teach children that water and electricity are a dangerous combination. Devices should never be used near sinks, bathtubs, or swimming pools. Parents and educators should ensure that any electrical appliances near water sources have proper waterproof casings and are plugged into RCD-protected outlets.

9 KEEP DEVICES VENTILATED

Devices need proper ventilation to avoid overheating. Avoid stacking items on top of plugged-in devices like laptops or gaming consoles, and make sure there is enough space around devices to allow for airflow. Proper ventilation helps prevent dangerous heat build-up, reducing the risk of fires.

10 SUPERVISE YOUNG CHILDREN

Younger children may not understand the dangers of electricity, so it's important to supervise them when they are using devices. Keep electrical cords out of reach and always remind children never to put objects into electrical outlets.

Meet Our Expert

James Whelan is an experienced health and safety expert who is a Chartered Member of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health. He provides services to educational settings as well as many other industries to help them maintain a safe working environment.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

See full reference list on our website

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about TOY SCALPING, FAKES & SCAMS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Online scalping is when individuals or groups use automated software (bots) to bulk-buy high-demand items – such as gaming consoles, concert tickets, limited-edition trainers, or exclusive merchandise – with the intention of reselling them at vastly inflated prices. It's a fast-moving online trend that can frustrate young consumers and expose them to misleading practices or financial harm. As this unethical tactic grows, it's important to help children and young people understand how scalping works and how to navigate it responsibly.

FINANCIAL PRESSURE AND MANIPULATION

Scalpers create artificial scarcity by buying up large quantities of stock before the public has a fair chance to purchase. This drives up demand and pushes prices to extreme levels. Young people may feel intense pressure to spend more than they can afford for fear of missing out entirely.

EXPLOITATION OF FANDOMS

Scalping often targets popular releases with strong fan bases, knowing that loyal followers are emotionally invested. Children and young people may place huge value on owning certain items linked to their favourite artists, sports teams or games, making them more likely to accept unfair prices or questionable sellers.

ACCESSING UNSAFE WEBSITES

In the rush to secure rare items, young people might click through to unverified sellers, online marketplaces with little consumer protection, or even sites designed specifically to harvest personal and financial data. This can expose them to fraud, malware, and identity theft.

NORMALISING UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

Some influencers and online communities present scalping as a clever money-making scheme rather than an exploitative one. This can normalise dishonest behaviour and blur the line between legitimate business and opportunistic profiteering for younger audiences.

RISK OF SCAMS OR COUNTERFEIT GOODS

Not every high-priced resale is legitimate. Fraudulent sellers may take payment for goods they never send, or ship counterfeit versions of branded items. In some cases, the product may look authentic in photos but turn out to be of poor quality or completely different from what was advertised.

REINFORCING INEQUALITY

Scalping makes already expensive items even less accessible, particularly for lower-income families. Children may feel excluded from brands or shared experiences with friends if their family cannot meet the inflated prices, which can lead to feelings of isolation and disappointment.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALK ABOUT ONLINE FAIRNESS

Use scalping as an opportunity to discuss fairness, consumer ethics, and how some people exploit markets for profit. Encouraging children to think critically about whether they truly need an item – and at what cost – can help them make more considered decisions.

SUPPORT INFORMED PURCHASING

Show children how to check seller credentials, read independent reviews, and verify whether a site is secure before making any payment. Knowing how to spot red flags, such as unrealistic promises or missing contact details, can prevent costly mistakes.

ENCOURAGE PATIENCE OVER IMPULSE

Teach young people to wait for official restocks or future releases instead of paying over the odds. Many products come back into circulation, and patience can save significant amounts of money while reducing the likelihood of falling victim to scams.

SET SPENDING BOUNDARIES

Establish clear rules for online spending, including limits on prepaid cards, gaming gift cards, and online wallets. Discuss the real-world value of money spent on digital or collector's items so children understand the long-term impact of their purchases.

Meet Our Expert

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

SNAPCHAT

Age Rating
13+

Snapchat is a photo- and video-sharing app which also allows users to chat with friends via text or audio. Users can share images and videos with specific friends, or through a 'story' (documenting the previous 24 hours) visible to their entire friend list. Snapchat usage rose during the pandemic, with many young people utilising it to connect with their peers. The app continues to develop features to engage an even larger audience and emulate current trends, rivaling platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.



Connecting with Strangers

Even if your child only connects on the app with people they know, they may still receive friend requests from strangers. Snapchat's links with apps such as Wink and Hoop have increased this possibility. Accepting a request means that children are then disclosing personal information through the Story, SnapMap and Spotlight features. This could allow strangers to gain their trust for sinister purposes.



Inappropriate Content

Some videos and posts on Snapchat are not suitable for children. The hashtags used to organise content are determined by the poster, so an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's Discover function lets users swipe through snippets of news stories and trending articles that often include adult content. There is currently no way to turn off this feature.



Compulsion and Excessive Use

Many users spend vast amounts of time trying to become a Snap Star. Snapchat is offering a share of \$1 million, and the chance of online fame, to users who create and share the best videos. Children are therefore becoming obsessed with producing appealing content. The Spotlight feature's endless scroll of videos makes it easy for children to pass hours watching content, slowly getting addicted to the app.

Sexting

Sexting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat. The app's 'disappearing messages' feature makes it easy for young people (teens in particular) to share explicit images on impulse. While these pictures do disappear - and the sender is notified if it has been screenshot first - users have found alternative methods to save images, such as taking pictures with a separate device.

Damage to Confidence

Snapchat's signature filters and lenses are a popular way for users to enhance their 'selfie game'. Although many are designed to entertain or amuse, the 'beauty' filters on photos can set unrealistic body-image expectations and create feelings of inadequacy. Continually comparing themselves unfavourably against other Snapchat users could threaten a child's confidence or sense of self-worth.



Advice for Parents & Carers



Turn off Quick Add

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



Choose Good Connections

Snapchat has recently announced that it is rolling out a new safety feature: users will receive notifications reminding them of the importance of maintaining connections with people they actually know well, as opposed to strangers. This friend Check up encourages users to delete connections with users they rarely communicate with to maintain their online safety and privacy.

Talk about Sexting

It may feel like an awkward conversation (and one that young people can be reluctant to have) but it is important to talk openly and non-judgementally about sexting. Discuss the legal implications of sending, receiving or sharing explicit images, as well as the possible emotional impact. Emphasise that your child should never feel pressured into sexting - and that if they receive unwanted explicit images, they should tell a trusted adult straight away.



Keep Profiles Private

Profiles are private by default, but children may want to make them public to gain more followers. You may wish to customise the settings so that your child's Stories can only be viewed by people they know well in real life. In SnapMaps, enabling 'Ghost Mode' (again via settings) prevents your child's location being seen. It also nullifies SnapMap 'snaps', which visibly displays a user's exact location for as long as they stay there.



Be Ready to Block and Report

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



Chat about Content

Talk to your child about what is and isn't wise to share on Snapchat (e.g. don't post explicit images or videos, or display identifiable details like their school uniform). Remind them that once something is online, the creator loses control over where it might end up, and who will see it. Additionally, Snapchat's 'Spotlight' feature has a #challenge like TikTok's: it's vital that your child understands the potentially harmful consequences of taking part in these challenges.



Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Bultmann is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI-GENERATED VIDEOS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AI-generated videos are increasingly difficult to spot and easy to share. From fake news clips to deepfake abuse, children and young people face new risks every day online. These videos can imitate real people, spread false narratives or even generate harmful content from scratch. Understanding these dangers is crucial for schools and families who want to protect children in a fast-evolving digital world.

DEEPFAKE ABUSE CONTENT

Shockingly, artificial intelligence is now being exploited to create child sexual abuse material (CSAM). These synthetic images and videos are a form of digital abuse, often generated by manipulating real children's photos, including ones shared innocently online. Alarmingly, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has identified a sharp rise in this disturbing trend. Whether real or AI-generated, this content causes lasting trauma – and its creation or possession remains a criminal offence under UK law.

BLURRED REALITY

Regular exposure to fake content can erode a child's trust in real-world evidence. If everything can be faked, they may begin to question genuine videos – including actual abuse or injustice. This is known as the 'liar's dividend', where real harm is dismissed as fake news. It can discourage victims from coming forward or speaking up.

USED FOR BULLYING

Deepfake technology is already being used by peers to create embarrassing or explicit clips of classmates. These videos can be edited to appear as though a child said or did something they never did. Once shared, they are almost impossible to delete completely. AI-generated bullying adds a new layer of harm that is deeply personal and difficult to prove.

EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION

AI-generated videos can be used to provoke strong emotions, including fear, anger or guilt. Fake footage of crying children, injured animals or burning buildings may be created purely for clicks, donations or political influence. Children may feel upset or powerless, unaware that what they are watching has been digitally invented to manipulate their reaction.

DISINFORMATION

AI-generated videos can spread fake news, making it harder for children to separate fact from fiction. False clips may include deepfake interviews, hoax disasters or fabricated health claims. AI is already being used to produce misleading or persuasive material that appears authentic. If they don't develop media literacy, children may accept false content as truth.

IMPERSONATION AND SCAMS

With just a few photos or voice clips, AI tools can imitate someone's appearance or speech. This makes it easier for scammers or trolls to create fake videos of children, teachers or celebrities. These impersonations can be used for fraud, harassment or humiliation – and can spread quickly through social media or group chats, due to the viral potential of video, in particular on social media.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TEACH HOW IT WORKS

Explain to children that videos can be faked – and show them how. Demonstrating side-by-side examples of real vs AI-generated clips helps to build awareness. Discuss how faces, voices and even movements can be copied by machines. Understanding the technology reduces fear and builds confidence in navigating digital content safely.

TALK ABOUT TRUST

Always keep lines of communication open. If a child sees something upsetting or unbelievable, they should feel safe discussing it without judgement. Create an environment where they know they will not get in trouble for asking questions. This also helps you step in quickly if harmful content has been shared; trust is vital and needs to be nurtured.

ENCOURAGE CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Help children question what they watch. Who made this? Why was it made? Is it trying to persuade me? These habits encourage digital thinking, especially when videos seem too shocking or convenient. Reinforce that not everything shared by friends or influencers is true, even if it looks convincing at first, and that the initial approach should always be one of speculation.

STRENGTHEN PRIVACY SETTINGS

Advise children not to share voice notes, selfies or personal videos on public platforms. AI tools often scrape content from social media to create deepfakes. Use privacy controls to limit who can see their content and turn off facial recognition where possible. Fewer public images means fewer opportunities for misuse.

Meet Our Expert

Brendan O'Keefe is a headteacher and digital education consultant with over a decade of experience in education. As Director of Digital Strategy across multiple schools and an adviser to The National College, he specialises in digital safety, PREVENT, and pastoral care.



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Eco Schools



This term students have taken a deeper look into the 10 Eco School topics and how it effects their environment.

Biodiversity Energy Healthy Living Litter
Global Citizenship Transport Waste
Water School Grounds Marine

We have looked at areas we can improve in our school environment and made an action plan.

The topics students have chosen are

- Waste
- Litter
- Energy
- Biodiversity

Students have had the opportunity to make a number of different crafts using recycled materials.

Milk bottle Elephant



Paper making



Christmas hats



Pebble painting



DID YOU KNOW?

The unreleased energy contained in the average dustbin each year could
POWER A TELEVISION FOR 5,000 HOURS



1 recycled plastic bottle would save enough energy to power a
60-WATT LIGHT BULB FOR 3 HOURS

Recycling steel and tin cans saves
74 of the energy necessary to
PERCENT produce them

Enough energy is saved by recycling one aluminium can to
RUN A TV SET FOR 3 HOURS



Your iPhone
USES 16p of energy a year

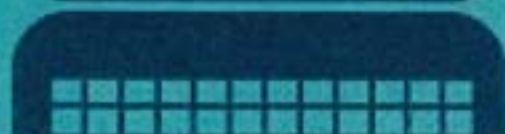
Microwaves use
70% TO 90% LESS energy than ovens

AN AVERAGE 5 MINUTE POWER SHOWER can use up to 100 litres of water



The energy used to boil
ONE KETTLE OF WATER could light a room for an entire evening

Your laptop uses
£5.09 of energy a year





Christmas Hats

You will need:
Toilet Paper rolls
Wool
Scissors
Tissue paper



1: Start by cutting wool into threads. You'll need a lot of threads — all with equal length (the length depends on the width of your paper roll)

2: Next, cut the paper roll, you only need a thin ring.

3: Then, fold the wool thread in half and push the loop side through the paper roll.

4: Now, take the other end and fold it over the paper roll and into the loop. Pull to get a knot.



5: Rinse and repeat until you have all the paper roll covered with wool.

6: Once all is covered you will need to push the yarn through the paper roll (The easiest way to do that is to twist all threads and just push them through).



7: Next, roll a small ball out of tissue paper. Push it into the paper roll (this will help you get the perfect hat shape and keep the wool in place).

8: Now, all that is left to do is to tie a knot around the threads to get a nice hat shape. Then, trim the ends to get a nicer shape.

Enjoy
Happy Christmas!

