



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Parents / Carers,

We are enjoying the more clement weather at school, it augurs well for the students undertaking expeditions this weekend in Lincolnshire as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award! It has been humbling to issue Principal's awards this week to so many students who have demonstrated great aptitude or levels of commitment to their work.

My thanks to Mr Condon our new STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Maths) coordinator who took Year 10 students to Northampton College on Wednesday for a series of STEM based activities.

Work has continued behind the scenes to ensure that Year 9 can realise their first choices where possible and I appreciate the efforts of Mrs Gerald, Mrs Gledhill and Miss Gray on this. We will write to parents before half term and confirm the GCSE options assigned for our Year 9 students.

Prom tickets appear to be selling well and I would commend so many of our Year 11 who are working hard both in and out of lessons, the examination season has started with oral exams in languages this week. Wishing you a peaceful weekend.

Miss McBrearty

## MATHEMATICS



A huge congratulations to the 126 students from Years 7 and 8 that took part in the United Kingdom Mathematics Trust Junior Mathematics Challenge last Thursday.

The students were exemplary in both their behaviour and attitude towards solving the many juicy mathematical problems that the challenge had to offer.

We look forward to receiving the results of the challenge in the near future.

## STEM– ‘May the 4th be with you’

Mr Condon and a group of Year 10 students attended a “May the Fourth be with you” STEM trip to Northampton College.

They were shown around the new digital centre and used industry level equipment.

The centre was enjoyed by all the students who impressed the tutors with their enthusiasm!





## PROM 2022

*56 DAYS TO GO*



Prom tickets are selling very well. They can be purchased from the front office at break and lunchtimes.

**Prom Date** - 1st July 2022

**Time** - 7.00pm to 9.30pm (students can arrive from 6.30pm)

Students have completed making their nominations for the number of awards that are up for grabs and have also started putting their music requests in.

The student members of the Prom Committee have had to stand down to concentrate on their upcoming GCSEs so it is now time for myself and Miss Pithers to sort the final details and bring everything together. We do have lots of surprises lined up which even the student committee don't know about!

We are looking for donations of cans of pop and individual bottles of water. These can be dropped off at the front office.

Many thanks

Mrs Burgess - Prom Chair



At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many issues which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit [www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com) for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about GROUP CHATS

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## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Occurring through messaging apps, on social media and in online games, group chats are among the most popular ways that young people engage with their peers online. Involving, by definition, three or more individuals, these groups allow users to send messages, images and videos to everyone in one place. While they are useful for helping friends, people with shared interests or members of a club to communicate and coordinate activities, they can also leave young people feeling excluded and bullied – as well as providing opportunities for inappropriate content to be shared and viewed.

### BULLYING

Unkind comments or images which are purposely aimed at an individual can be shared freely in a group chat – allowing and often encouraging others to join in the bullying behaviour. If this content is shared in a group of their peers (especially a larger group), it serves to amplify the hurt, embarrassment, anxiety and isolation that the victim feels.

### EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

This common issue with group chats can happen in several ways: starting a new group, for instance, but deliberately excluding a certain child. Likewise, the chat may take place on an app which one child doesn't have access to, meaning they can't be involved. A child can also feel isolated when a group chat is used to discuss or share images from an event that everyone else but them attended.

### INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some discussions in group chats may include inappropriate words, swearing and unsuitable images or videos. These could be viewed by your child if they are part of that group, whether they actively engage in it or not. Some chat apps have a disappearing message function, so your child may be unable to report something they've seen because it can only be viewed once or for a short time.

### SHARING GROUP CONTENT

It's important to remember that – while the content of the chat is private between those in the group – individual users can easily share a message, photo or video with others outside of the group or screenshot what's been posted. The risk of something your child intended as private becoming public (and potentially going viral) is higher if there are people they don't know well in the group.

### UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Within larger group chats, it's more likely your child will be communicating with people they don't really know. These strangers may be friends of the host, but not necessarily friendly toward your child. It's wise for young people not to share personal details and stay aware that they have no control over the messages and images they share after they've put them online.

### NOTIFICATIONS AND FOMO

A drawback of large group chats is the sheer number of notifications. Every time someone in the group messages, your child's device will be 'pinged' with an alert: potentially, this could mean hundreds of notifications a day. Not only is this highly distracting, but young people's fear of missing out on the latest conversation results in increased screen time as they try to keep up with the chat.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats are often an arena for young people to gain social status. This could cause them to do or say things on impulse, which could upset others in the group. Encourage your child to consider how other people might feel if they engaged in this behaviour. If your child does upset a member of their group chat, support them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

### GIVE SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Remind your child that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded in a group chat, instead of responding to the person who's upset them. Validate their hurt feelings and help to put them back in control by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. On a related note, you could also empower your child to speak up if they're in a chat where others are being picked on.

### BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If your child is in a chat where inappropriate content is being shared, advise them to block the users sending the material, report them to the host app or platform and exit the group. If any of this content could be putting a minor at risk, contact the police. Emphasise to your child that it's OK for them to simply leave any group chat that they don't feel comfortable being a part of.

### PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

In any online communication, it's vital for young people to be aware of what they're sharing and who might potentially see it. Discuss the importance of not revealing identifiable details like their address, their school or photos that they wouldn't like to be seen widely. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they lose control of where it may end up and how it might be used.

### AVOID INVITING STRANGERS

Sadly, many individuals online hide their true identity to gain a child's trust – for example, to gather information on them, to exchange inappropriate content or to coax them into doing things they aren't comfortable with. Ensure your child understands why they shouldn't add people they don't know to a group chat – and, especially, to never accept a group chat invitation from a stranger.

### SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Having a phone or tablet bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be a massive irritation and distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to your child that they can still be part of the group chat, but that it would be healthier for them to turn off or mute the notifications and catch up with the conversation at a time which better suits them.

### Meet Our Expert

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



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