St Mary's C of E Junior School Newsletter

Care. Believe. Succeed.

'All things are possible for one who believes.'

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS

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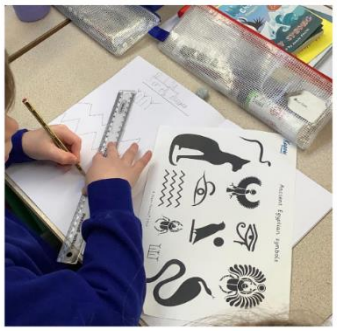
Curriculum

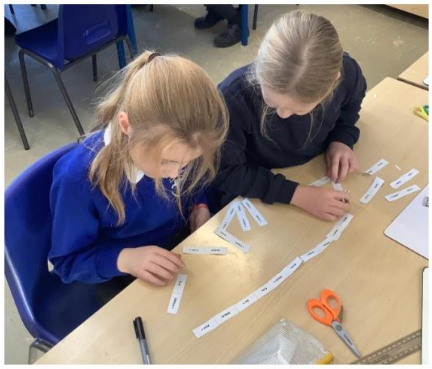
ART

In Year 3 Art lessons this week, the children have been looking at Ancient Egyptian pictures and symbols to re-create in their sketchbooks. Lots of great concentration and wonderful creations!



MATHS

In maths this week, Year 4 have been learning to convert between units of length (mm, cm, m and km). They have also been playing measurement dominoes to match them up.



PSHE

Over the next few weeks, the children will be participating in the NSPCC's Speak Out Stay Safe programme. All children will have an in class assembly and Years 5 and 6 will be participating in workshops during Children's Mental Health Week (5-9 February).

Please do look at the attachment to find out more about this programme.

Mrs Hinchliff

iRock music enrichment lessons started this week for some of our children from Years 3-6. It was so lovely to hear lessons within vocals, electric guitar, drums and keyboard. We are really looking forward to hearing how the children progress within their musical endeavours!

Since Christmas, we are aware that an increasing number of children in **Years 5 and 6** (and also some in Year 4) are getting their own mobile phones, if they did not already have one. We appreciate that this is a part of growing up and a means of communication as they move onto secondary school. However, with this often comes a steep learning curve for our children.

As always at this time of year, we see an increase in the number of children who are using online apps such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram (to name but a few!) and many children are part of several group chats. We have been made aware of some inappropriate language and hurtful comments being used within messages in these groups, leaving some children extremely upset and anxious. The issues occurring within group chats then spills over into the school day and can affect friendships during school time. I am sure that you will agree that this is totally unacceptable, hugely concerning and that you would not want your child to experience this. Please find some time to discuss this with your child to understand the impact of any chat group messages.

The concerns that we are aware of are:

- High volume of messages sent/received over a short period of time, some being sent late into the evening
- Worries about inappropriate content and hurtful comments towards others
- Children using inappropriate language.
- Children falling out with one another over conversations or the blocking/removal of friends.

From speaking with children, it is apparent that many parents may not even be aware that these groups exist, let alone the content of some of the recent messages. I felt that, knowing this, it was important that I brought it to your attention in case your child has been exposed to inappropriate content without your knowledge. Please consider the following important questions:

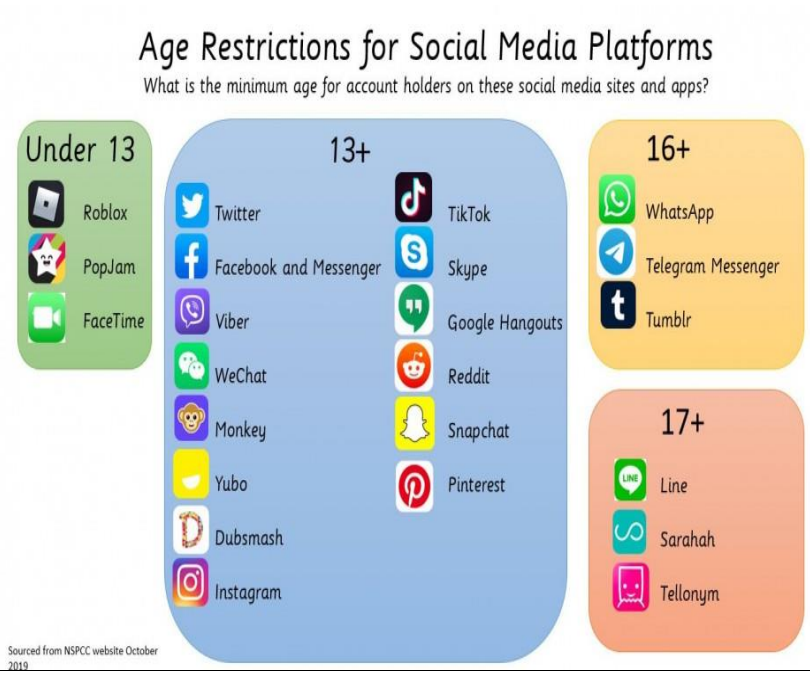
- Does your child have their own mobile phone?
- **Do you know what they are posting/saying on it and regularly monitor it?**
- Does your child use WhatsApp or other social media apps that have age restriction? (see table below)

May we take this opportunity to remind parents/carers that WhatsApp has an age rating **of 16+,** and therefore should not be used by pupils of St Mary's Junior School.

We completely understand the benefits that social media, including WhatsApp, can have if used in a mature and sensible way. It is completely up to parents to make these decisions and we are here to support you should you wish. The following links may provide information that helps:
https://parentinfo.org/article/whatsapp-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers

https://faq.whatsapp.com/general/security-and-privacy/minimum-age-to-use-whatsapp/?lang=en
As a school, we subscribe to National Online Safety for advice and training. We advise you follow them on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter as they routinely provide great advice for parents and carers on how to stay safe online.
We urge all parents to keep an eye on their child's mobile phone and online activities involving social media. The children are constantly reminded that they must tell a parent / adult if they receive anything inappropriate from any application they might have access to.
As a school, we strongly advise you to remove the chat groups / apps that have an age rating above that of a Junior school child. However, we respect your decisions as parents. At the very least, we ask that you monitor your child's use to prevent exposure to or use of inappropriate content.

If you need further advice or wish to discuss this further, please do get in touch.
Thank you for your understanding and ongoing support.



PUPIL PARLIAMENT

Mrs Castle and Pupil Parliament children will be introducing a new fundraising event from Friday 26th January. They are SO excited to start……

HOT DOG FRIDAYS

Hot dogs will be on sale on the Year 3&4 playground from Friday 26th January at a cost of £1 each. Please ensure that they have £1 coins only in order to purchase these. All profits will go towards their IT equipment fundraising.

RE-GIFTING SALE

Thank you to all those who came to our re-gifting sale on Friday. Our Pupil Parliament children raised £75 towards IT equipment! There are still lots of items left, so there will be another sale on Friday 26th January after school, alongside the Hot-dog stall.

Attachments with this newsletter:

- **What parents need to know about age appropriate content**
- **Smartphone Safety Tips**
- **What parents need to know about group chats**
- **What parents need to know about Whatsapp**
- **PSHE NSPCC's *Speak out. Stay safe.* programme**

Diary dates

Spring Term 2024
Thursday 4th January 2024 to Thursday 28th March 2024
Spring Half Term: Monday 19th February 2024 to Friday 23rd February 2024
Easter Break: Friday 29th March 2024 to Friday 12th April 2024
GOOD FRIDAY: 29th March 2024

Summer Term 2024
Monday 15th April 2024 to Tuesday 23rd July 2024
Summer Half Term: Monday 27th May 2024 to Friday 31st May 2024
EASTER MONDAY: 1st April 2024
MAY BANK HOLIDAY: Monday 6th May 2024
INSET DAY: Monday 15th April 2024
INSET DAY: Monday 3rd June 2024
TRANSITION DAY: Thursday 11th July 2024
INSET DAY: Monday 22nd July 2024
INSET DAY: Tuesday 23rd July 2024

Autumn Term 2024
Monday 2 September 2024 to Friday 20th December 2024
Autumn Half Term: 28th October 2024 to 1st November 2024
Christmas Break: Monday 23rd December 2024 to Monday 6th January 2025
INSET DAY: Monday 2nd September 2024
INSET DAY: Friday 25th October 2024
OCCASIONAL DAY: Friday 29th November 2024

Spring Term 2025
Monday 6th January 2025 to Friday 4th April 2025
Spring Half Term: Monday 17th February 2025 to Friday 21st February 2025
Easter Break: Monday 7th April 2025 to Monday 21st April 2025
INSET DAY: Monday 6th January 2025

Summer Term 2025
Tuesday 22nd April 2025 to Wednesday 23rd July 2025
Summer Half Term: Monday 26th May 2025 to Friday 30th May 2025
GOOD FRIDAY: 18th April 2025
EASTER MONDAY: 21st April 2025
INSET DAY: 22nd April 2025
MAY BANK HOLIDAY: 5th May 2025
INSET DAY: Monday 2nd June 2025
TRANSITION DAY: Thursday 10th July 2025
Summer Holidays: 24th July 2025 to 29th August 2025