

Term 6



Newsletter 05.06.26

Hello from Our Principal, Maria Cupit

Dear Families,

Welcome to Term 6

As we begin our final term of the academic year, we would like to thank all families for their continued support. Term 6 is an important opportunity for every child to consolidate their learning, build confidence, and ensure they are fully prepared for the challenges and expectations of their next year group.

Over the coming weeks, teachers will be revisiting key knowledge and skills, addressing any gaps in learning, and providing opportunities for children to demonstrate the progress they have made throughout the year. Every lesson counts and making the most of this valuable learning time will help children make a smooth and successful transition into the next stage of their education.

Regular attendance plays a crucial role in this process. Children who attend school consistently are better able to keep up with learning, develop positive routines, and participate fully in all aspects of school life. Even occasional absences can result in missed learning opportunities that are difficult to replicate outside the classroom.



Hello from Our Principal, Maria Cupit... continued

We kindly ask all families to support us by ensuring children attend school every day, arrive on time, and are ready to learn. By working together, we can help every child finish the year strongly and feel confident and prepared for the exciting opportunities that lie ahead in September.

Building Strong Foundations for Future Success

Alongside excellent attendance, reading, writing and mathematics remain the key building blocks for success across the curriculum and beyond. As we move into the final term of the year, we encourage all families to continue supporting these essential skills at home.

Reading

Reading is the gateway to learning. Whether children are in EYFS, KS1 or KS2, regular reading helps to develop vocabulary, comprehension, confidence and a love of learning. We ask parents and carers to make time for reading at home each day, whether that is sharing a story, listening to your child read, using the Fonetti reading app or encouraging independent reading for older pupils.

Writing

Strong writing skills enable children to communicate their ideas clearly and confidently. In EYFS and KS1, this includes developing accurate letter formation, spelling and sentence construction. In KS2, children continue to build on these foundations through increasingly accurate, detailed and purposeful writing. Encouraging children to write at home - such as keeping a diary, writing lists, letters or stories - can make a significant difference.



Hello from Our Principal, Maria Cupit... continued

Mathematics

Secure mathematical understanding is essential for future learning. Children benefit greatly from regular practice of number facts, times tables, arithmetic skills and problem-solving. Quick recall of number bonds and multiplication facts allows children to tackle more complex mathematical concepts with confidence as they move through the school.

By working together to strengthen these core skills, we can ensure that every child is well prepared for the next year group and equipped with the foundations they need to thrive in their future learning.

We look forward to a productive and successful final term for all our pupils.



Congratulations to all the pupils who performed at the Newbury Spring Festival!

Newbury Spring Festival 18th May 2026



This is what the general public thought of you:

'Pure joy!'

'You should have been the finale of the whole concert'

'That is what singing in a choir is all about - utterly fantastic'



Congratulations to Ivy and Maddison!

RDA fancy dress competition at Windsor show. Friday 15th of May 2026

We are so proud of Maddison and Ivy for the progress they have made and for being given this amazing opportunity to compete on behalf of Lambourn RDA. This year's competition had a space theme so the ladies at Lambourn RDA decided upon the clangers! They all worked so hard to make costumes and organise everything needed. Maddison got to dress up as the musical tree and was riding Freddie, who was dressed as a cloud!

Ivy was the soup dragon and rode Bess who added to the size of the dragon!

It really was a wonderful experience and a brilliant day was had by all.

Congratulations to the girls and for being awarded 4th place overall!



School Celebrations

Values Medals 18th May



Reading Champions 22nd May



Handwriting & Presentation 22nd May



Headteacher Awards 22nd May



Maths Champions 22nd May



Top Doodler 22nd May



School Celebrations



Reading Champion 5th June



Handwriting & Presentation 5th June



Headteacher Awards 5th June



Maths Champions 5th June



School Office: Reminders, updates & future calendar dates

Future Calendar Dates (new dates added - event information will show in bold)

9th June: Year 5 Local farm Visit

16th June: Choir sing at the Hexagon in Reading

22nd June: Year 4 visit to Ramsbury Estate

25th June: KS1 Sports Day - 9am-10:15am

25th June: KS2 Sports Day - 10:45am-12pm

26th June: PTA Non School Uniform Day in exchange for a bottle (for tombula)

29th June: Year 6 Residential

30th June: Year 4 trip to Great Hall Winchester

3rd July: Futures Day

9th July: Year 3 trip to Seven Burrows

10th July: SEND Breakfast - all parents welcome

10th July: PTA Bouncy Castle Fun Day

14th July: Reception trip to Cotswold Wildlife Park

16th July: Y6 Performance to parents/carers

20th July: Y6 Leavers service in church



If you have a query about your child please contact their class teacher in the first instance:

Mrs Crick: F1@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk F2@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk

Miss Townsend Y1@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk

Miss Townsend Y2@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk

Ms Ross Y3@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk

Mr Wootten Y4@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk

Ms Linsley Y5@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk

Miss O'Farrell Y6@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk

For any other enquiries please phone or e-mail the school office: 0148871479

admin@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk



SEND Update

Ask the SEN Team Breakfast

Friday 10th July, 8:45am (after drop-off)

All parents and carers are warmly invited to join us for our Ask the SEN Team Breakfast. Come along for a relaxed morning of coffee, croissants, and conversation. This is an opportunity to ask questions, share concerns, and find out more about how we can support children with additional needs.

We would love to hear your questions in advance so that we can prepare helpful information and advice. Questions can be submitted anonymously if preferred and may relate to topics such as:

- EHCPs
- Anxiety
- Homework
- Behaviour
- Transitions
- Any other SEND-related questions

Please send any questions to school by Thursday 3rd July.

The breakfast will take place after drop-off on **Friday 10th July at 8:45am**. All parents and carers are welcome, whether you have submitted a question or would simply like to come along for an informal chat.

If a question comes to mind after the deadline, please don't worry – questions can be asked at any time, either on the day or by contacting the school.

We look forward to welcoming you!
Naomi Stapley and Laura Womersley



School Council



The School Council met this week to discuss the plans for the final Term. We will be going out around Lambourn for a Litter Pick (dates will be confirmed shortly) but it will be during the school day.

The children were very knowledgeable of the areas around the village which appear to have the most litter and we planned a route based on their recommendations. We are very proud at how enthusiastic they are about keeping their village tidy.

The tomatoes are growing - we hope to plant some out in the next week or two.



PTA



FRIENDS OF LAMBOURN SCHOOL

Newsletter

JUNE 2026

EXCITING CHANGES!

As you may remember, we recently held a vote to update our official constitution. The vote was passed, and we are officially transitioning from our traditional PTA into The Friends of Lambourn School!

What does this mean for us?

While our core mission remains exactly the same - supporting our wonderful school and raising vital funds for our children - this constitutional change opens up some fantastic new doors.

By becoming a "Friends of" group, we are now able to formally welcome volunteers from the wider community outside of just current parents and staff. This includes:

- Grandparents and extended family members
- Local residents and community champions

Why the change?

As a small charity, keeping things running smoothly and organising the events our kids love takes a lot of hands on deck. Opening our doors to the broader community will bring in fresh energy, new skills, and extra helping hands to ensure our charity remains strong, sustainable, and active for years to come.

How you can help

You are all automatically members of the Friends of Lambourn School. However, if you know a neighbor, a grandparent, or a local business owner who loves our school and has a little time to spare, please invite them along to our next meeting or pass on our contact details.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support, enthusiasm, and dedication to making Lambourn School the best place it can be for our children.

To celebrate all the success of the school and pupils, we are thrilled to announce our

BOUNCY CASTLE FUN DAY

FREE
for Lambourn pupils and their siblings (11 & under)



Friday 10th July from 1:30 pm on the school field

We have a fantastic selection of inflatables booked that will cater to all age groups, ensuring everyone gets a chance to jump around and burn off some pre-summer energy. Sign up for a FREE ticket here.



We are looking for **DONATIONS** of unwanted, clean, cuddly toys for a game at our Bouncy Castle Fun Day. Please give donations to the school office or directly to one of our committee members. Thank you in advance.



We will be selling refreshments at **SPORTS DAY** so please bring a little bit of cash. Cakes/biscuit donations would be very welcome. They can be home made or shop bought. Thank you for your help.

NON-UNIFORM DAY

In exchange for an unopened (long-life) bottle we will be holding a non-uniform day on Friday 26th June. FoLS volunteers will be collecting the bottles at the gate in the morning. These will be used for our very popular bottle tombola at our Bouncy Castle Fun Day! Please note that bottles do not need to be expensive. Thank you for your support.

Could you be our next PTA chair?

Hannah - our current Chair - will be stepping down from the role at the next AGM and we are looking for an enthusiastic individual (or even a co-chair duo!) to take over the reins starting in the new school year. Leading the PTA is a deeply rewarding way to:

- Make a tangible difference in our children's school experience.
- Collaborate closely with school leadership, teachers and parents.
- Bring fresh ideas to our community events and fundraising efforts.

Don't worry - you won't be flying solo! You'll be supported by a fantastic, experienced committee of parents. If you are curious about what the role entails, want to know about the time commitment, or just want to have an informal, no-pressure chat about the position, we would love to hear from you.



Attendance

Please keep your child home if they have a fever, or feel too unwell to do normal activities. Specific guidance requires keeping children off for 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting. Children with a fever should stay home until it breaks, while mild symptoms like a runny nose or slight cough, without a fever, are usually fine for school.



Do I need to keep my child off school?



Chicken Pox Until all spots have crusted over	Conjunctivitis No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	Diarrhoea & Vomiting 48 hours from last episode	Glandular Fever No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	Hand, foot & mouth No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	Impetigo Until lesions are crusted & healed or 48 Hours after commencing antibiotics
Measles or German Measles 4 days from onset of rash	Mumps 5 days from onset of swelling	Scabies Until after first treatment	Scarlet Fever 24 hours after commencing antibiotics	Slapped Cheek No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	Whooping Cough 48 Hours after commencing antibiotics
Flu Until recovered	Head Lice No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	Threadworms No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	Tonsillitis No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed		



Year 1 & 2 Update

Hello from Year 1/2!

I hope that everyone had a wonderful half term break. I cannot believe that we are into the final half term already! We still have a lot to fit into the last few weeks of term including lots of learning, sports day and a chance for parents to come and see what we have been learning in the classroom.

In maths, Year 1 have been learning about telling the time, and Year 2 have been learning about capacity. In English we have started our unit learning about 'The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark'. In history we are learning about the Great Western Railway and how it made travelling a lot quicker during Victorian times.

Our swimming lessons have been going very well in PE, and I have been very impressed with the confidence that everyone has been showing in the pool, as well as how they have been listening carefully to instructions. In art we have been making clay houses and using a variety of modelling techniques to add detail. By the time you get this newsletter they will have been sent home, so I hope you enjoy admiring them as much as the children did making them



Year 1 & 2 Update...contd

We have got our next COOL Session coming up on Monday 22nd of June. Invitations will be being sent out shortly. It will be at 3 o'clock in the Year 1 and 2 classroom.

In PSHÉ on Monday 8th June the children will be thinking about how they have changed since they were babies and we will be playing a game of 'Guess Who' using baby pictures of children in the class. Thank you to those of you who have already sent baby pictures in. If you would like to send a picture of your child in then you can either email it to me on Y1@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk or Y2@lambourn.excalibur.org.uk over the weekend, or if it is easier to send in a physical copy, I can add this to the game on Monday. I will be setting weekly homework assignments on Doodle.

Many thanks for your continued support,
Miss Townsend, Miss Ball, Mrs Lord, Mrs Backhouse and Mrs Kumar



Year 3 Update

Hello from Year 3!

Welcome back to the start of the final term! It is wonderful to see the children return refreshed and ready for a busy and exciting few weeks ahead. This term is an important one as we continue to build on our learning and begin preparing for the transition into Year 4.

In English, we have started a non-fiction unit based on 'An Anthology Of Intriguing Animals'. We will be developing our ideas to write our own informational texts about ocean animals, focusing on clear structure, interesting vocabulary, and engaging facts.

In math, we finished our unit on time at the end of last term. This was a challenging topic, but the children showed great perseverance and worked incredibly hard throughout. This week, we have completed our unit on measurement of length, where we have been focusing on adding and subtracting lengths as well as converting between different units of measure. The children have made good progress and are becoming more confident in applying these skills.

In DT, we have begun our new project on Egyptian collars. The children have started learning sewing techniques. Our first stitch we looked at was a running stitch. They have shown excellent determination and focus during these practical lessons, and I have included some photographs of their work and progress



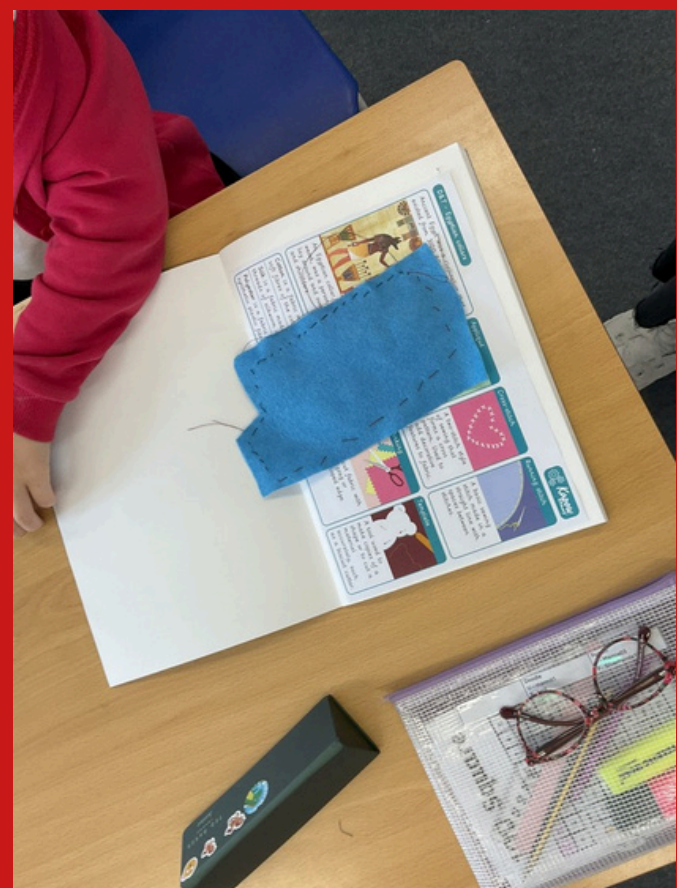
Year 3 Update...contd

In Science, we have started our new topic on plants. In our first lesson, the children demonstrated excellent recall of the parts of plants and their functions, building on previous learning with confidence and enthusiasm.

Homework continues to be set on Doodle. The children will receive a checklist outlining which assignments need to be completed each week. In Term 5, an increasing number of children stayed in at lunchtime, with me, to support them in completing their homework.

While I am always happy to provide this support where possible, your encouragement and support at home would be greatly appreciated to ensure children are given the time and opportunity to complete their homework consistently and to the best of their ability.

Thank you for your continued support.
Kind regards,
Miss Ross

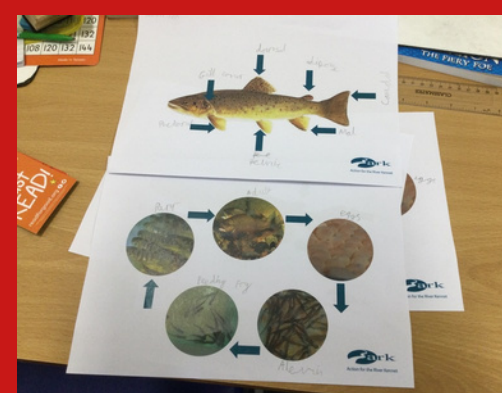


Year 4 Update

Hello from Year 4!

Year 4 enjoyed their river workshop and learned about the lifecycle of a trout, as well as its habitat. They are looking forward to their trip to the river in a few weeks. They also had huge fun building their castles and learned lots about construction, including measuring, scoring the folds and the importance of glue tabs. Swimming has started and the children are very excited for this to be added to their PE timetable.

Thank you as always for your support!
Mr Wootten and Mrs Smith



Year 5 Update

Hello from Year 5!

The children have come back ready and raring to go for the final term of Year 5!

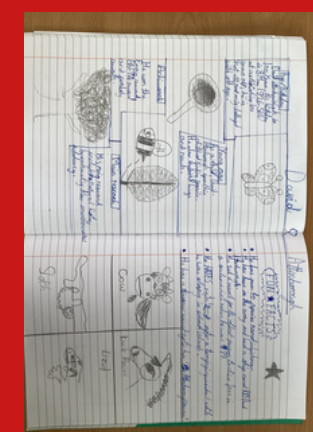
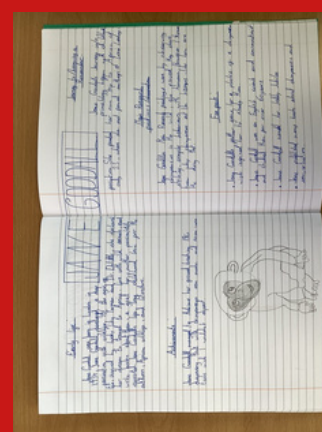
This week we have delved into our Maths unit on angles, where the children have identified, estimated and even measured angles using protractors.

In English, we have been learning about child labour, which links to our Geography unit, and we will be writing to persuade footballers to invest in Fairtrade footballs in the next two weeks!

In Science, we have concluded our Life Cycles topic, and the children enjoyed researching and creating reports about famous wildlife conservationists, such as Jane Goodall and David Attenborough.

Before the half term, we concluded our installation Art unit and the children created some wonderful installations that communicated messages to an audience. I was so impressed with their creativity and original thinking.

Thank you for your continued support at home.
Miss Linsley



Year 6 Update

Hello from Year 6!

It is hard to believe that we have reached the final half-term of Year 6! The children have worked incredibly hard throughout the year and should be immensely proud of everything they have achieved.

As we head towards the end of the year, there is still plenty to look forward to. The children are busy preparing for our end-of-year production, and we are already impressed by their enthusiasm, confidence and commitment during rehearsals. Alongside this, we will be completing a range of exciting curriculum projects, celebrating their achievements from across primary school and helping them prepare for the transition to secondary school.

Please keep an eye on communications regarding upcoming events, rehearsals, performances, transition activities and our Leavers' celebrations. We are looking forward to making the most of every remaining moment together and ensuring the children finish their primary school journey with wonderful memories.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support throughout the year.

Miss O'Farrell



Year 6 Costumes

As you may already know, Year 6 will be performing Peter Pan as their end-of-year production. We are incredibly excited to begin preparations and are looking forward to sharing this special performance with you. To help bring Neverland to life on stage, we would be grateful if you could provide some simple costume items for your child. We can supply many of the accessories and props in school, but your support with the basic costume elements will help make the production a success.

Here are some ideas for costumes:

Peter Pan

- Green tunic, oversized green T-shirt or green top
- Green leggings or trousers
- Brown belt or rope belt

Wendy Darling

- Light blue or white nightdress or pyjamas

John Darling

- White nightshirt or oversized white shirt/ pyjamas
- Black top hat (if available)

Michael Darling

- White nightshirt or oversized white shirt/ pyjamas
- Teddy bear (if available)

Tinker Bell

- Green dress, skirt or tutu, wings



Year 6 Costumes

Mrs Darling

- Long skirt and blouse or a simple long dress

Lost Boys

- Brown, green or earth-coloured clothing
- Shorts, trousers, tunics or oversized T-shirts
- Optional animal ears or hats, fake bow/arrows

Pirates (including Captain Hook and Smee)

- Striped tops
- Dark trousers
- Waistcoats (if available)
- Bandanas or pirate-style hats

Islanders (including Tiger Lily)

- Brown, tan or earth-coloured clothing
- Fabric belts, headbands or simple accessories

Crocodile

- Green clothing

Please do not feel that you need to purchase anything specifically for the production. We encourage families to use items already available at home wherever possible. School will provide additional accessories, props and costume pieces to complete each character's look.

We kindly ask that all costume items are brought into school in a named bag before 3rd July 2026.

Thank you for your continued support. We are looking forward to an exciting few weeks of rehearsals and to sharing our performance with you soon.

Kind regards,
Miss O'Farrell



Year 6 Kit List



LAMBOURN C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Year 6 Residential Visit – Croft Farm Water and Leisure Park, Tewkesbury
Gloucestershire

Monday 29th June- Wednesday 1st July 2026

We are delighted to be able to offer this enrichment experience to our Year 6 children and look forward to a successful and enjoyable trip. We shall do all we can to ensure the children get the most from this opportunity and ask that you help with a few details so that the organisation can run as smoothly as possible. The children will need to take with them sufficient suitable clothing and personal items; here is the recommended kit list. All students are required to bring their own **sleeping bags and pillows**. Specialist safety equipment such as helmets, buoyancy aids, etc are provided.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medication: Any medication your child needs must be named and handed in to Mrs Womersley before departure, with clear written instructions for use, and signed permission for group leaders to supervise administration as required. Asthma inhalers must be named in a sealed zipped bag. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please note: no electronic games, <u>no mobile phones</u>, radios, or sweets, etc, are to be brought – these are the rules of the Centre. In addition, no money is required and anything valuable should stay at home! 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bags/Luggage: We have <u>limited space</u> in the cabins, and due to the rough surface of the centre so we advise no cases. Please ensure your child can lift their own bag, as they will be expected to take these to their rooms. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bed making practice: We also recommend that children practice packing and unpacking their sleeping bag. They may wish to have a pillow in a pillowcase. 	

ALL CLOTHING & KIT MUST BE NAMED PLEASE

ITEM	Packed in bag
Lunch for the first day... <i>We will have lunch on arrival but our first provided meal is the evening meal and so you will need to provide a packed lunch so please ensure all packaging can be thrown in the bin, except for a reusable drink bottle <u>please</u>, such as a named flask or unbreakable drinks container. No glass bottles.</i>	
Reusable water bottle	
Small bag/rucksack to carry round each day (lunch for day 1)	
Two towels	
Changes of underwear and socks for three days, with 'plenty of spares' for water activities and emergencies	
T-shirts- we recommend 3-4	
Two jumpers or sweatshirts, one long sleeved top for archery	
A <u>light weight</u> waterproof jacket – with a hood!	
At least three pairs of jogging bottoms, leggings or trousers (waterproof trousers are also fine) NOT JEANS for safety and comfort	
Shorts (optional)	
Pyjamas – children must wear clothing in bed	
Pumps, cros, flipflops or slippers for indoors (optional)	
Comfortable outdoor shoes or trainers	
Swimsuits – <u>one piece</u> costumes for girls, shorts or trunks for boys	
Old pair of trainers/pumps that can get wet (lake shoes)	
Washing kit, including shower gel or soap, toothpaste, toothbrush and roll-on deodorant, hair ties for long hair. <i>Please note: no hair gel, spray deodorants (roll on only) or hairdryers.</i>	
A hat and <u>sunglasses</u> (optional and taken at child's own risk)	
Sun cream – ideally waterproof	
A book for bedtime (optional)	
A camera – optional (brought at child's own risk). <i>(Digital or disposable are useful but no phones!)</i>	
A bin bag for muddy shoes, wet clothes, etc.	
Torch (optional)	
Sleeping bag/ pillows	



Community News

Let them play!

Multi-Activity and Football Holiday Camps

Open to Boys & Girls aged 5-12

LAMBOURN, MAIDENHEAD, NEWBURY, READING

Discounts up to 15% off Online!
We accept Childcare Vouchers

MNR COACHING
Ofsted
@MNRCOACHING

Information for parents and carers

NHS Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Transition anxiety workshop for parents of primary aged children in Year 6

With the Mental Health Support Team (MHST)

This parent workshop is designed to help you:

- Learn about the key factors that can make a child anxious about Transition from primary to secondary school
- Learn about what support is on offer in secondary schools
- Explore practical ways parents and carers can provide support to ease that transition
- Understand when and how to seek further support if your child is struggling

Microsoft teams
Tuesday the 9th of June 12:00-13:00

Sign up here: [Register for Transition anxiety workshop - 9th June 26 12pm](#)

Scan me

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/services

Information for parents and carers

NHS Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Anxiety workshop for parents of primary aged children

With the Mental Health Support Team (MHST)

This parent workshop is designed to help you:

- Understand what anxiety is and how it can show up in children's thoughts, feelings, bodies, and behaviour
- Learn about the key factors that maintain anxiety
- Explore practical ways parents and carers can provide support
- Understand when and how to seek further support if your child is struggling

Microsoft teams
Friday the 12th of June 12:00-13:00

Sign up here: [Register for Anxiety Workshop \(Primary\) - 12th June](#)

Scan me

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/services

THE BASE'S FESTIVAL OF ARTS & Crafts

Sat 6 & Sun 7 Jun, 10am - 4pm

£2 per person suggested donation on entry

50+ stalls | Food & drink | Live Music | Lots of free family activities!

FAMILY TASTER WORKSHOPS...

Sat 6 Jun
Pots of Hope Throwing, 1.30pm, 2.15pm, 3pm & 3.45pm
Children's Printmaking, 2pm

Sun 7 Jun
FREE spray painting, half hourly slots from 10am - 4pm

Scan to check availability and view the full list of taster workshops

GET INVOLVED!
Head to the Info stall:
Scavenger Hunt
Free Craft activity

INSIDE AT THE BASE

Ground Floor
Festival of Art Exhibition
HUGE Doodle Wall
Honesty Café

1st floor (lift available)
Resident Artists' studios
Art Auction
Lookout Studio
Taster Workshops
Dog PAWtraits

With thanks to our Lead Sponsor **honesty**

FREE PARKING Greenham Business Park, RG19 6HN

To find out more visit thebasegreenham.co.uk/basefest
All donations go to The Base charity (1199188)





Community News

BERKSHIRE MUSIC TRUST

Summer of Sound 2026

MUSIC • CREATIVITY • FUN

JULY - AUGUST 2026

DISCOVER YOUR SOUND. MAKE NEW FRIENDS. HAVE FUN.

TRY SOMETHING NEW. DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS. MAKE MEMORIES THAT LAST A LIFETIME.

BOOK YOUR PLACE TODAY!

BOOK ONLINE: WWW.BERKSMUSICTRUST.ORG.UK

SPACES ARE LIMITED! BURSARIES AVAILABLE.

ACTIVITIES: BANDS, DJING, JAZZ & CREATIVITY, THEORY & MORE!

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI VIRTUAL FRIENDS

Artificial intelligence has seen significant development over the recent months, with companies releasing new AI-based software or adding an AI element to existing apps (such as Snapchat). One form of AI that has become especially popular has been the 'AI friend' or chatbot. There are now numerous 'virtual friend' apps available, with other successful platforms likely to adopt it soon.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- CONTENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**
AI chatbots may not always recognise when content is age inappropriate or harmful and should be filtered out. As a result, there's a possibility that children could be exposed to explicit language or explicit material while conversing with their virtual friend. The companies producing such AI solutions are also unlikely to take responsibility for any content that their algorithms generate.
- REDUCED SOCIAL CONTACT**
An excessive reliance on chatbots for social interaction could potentially cause a child to begin reducing the amount of face-to-face communication they have, leading to social isolation. If young people become dependent on chatbots for providing companionship, it could potentially hinder the development of their real-life social skills.
- LACK OF SENSITIVITY**
Chatbot software isn't always sophisticated enough to pick up on subtle emotional cues or recognise signs of distress in children, or react humanly would. It might therefore fail to respond appropriately. AI misinterpreting what it's being told or replying inappropriately to a young user who's already struggling could potentially impact a child's emotional wellbeing or exacerbate any existing emotional issues.
- UNINTENTIONAL BIAS**
AI companions are only as reliable as the information they've been programmed with. The algorithms they use, therefore, may unintentionally promote bias, stereotypes or discriminatory behaviour. As many chatbots originate from the USA or UK, for instance, they can display a distinctly western-centric worldview. This could lead to children developing skewed attitudes and behaviours if they interact with the AI consistently.
- COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS**
Although many are now undeniably advanced, AI-powered chatbots still have limitations in terms of understanding complex concepts, context and nuance. Depending heavily on chatbots to help with learning or solving problems may stunt the development of a child's own powers of critical thinking, their creativity and their ability to engage in open-minded discussions with other people.
- PRIVACY CONCERNS**
Chatbots typically collect data about users, including personal information and conversations. This is extremely useful to improve their performance as they gradually learn about our behaviour – but many experts warn that there may be significant risks associated with how this information is stored and used (for instance, the possibility of potential breaches or misuse by third parties).

Advice for Parents & Carers

- CHAT ABOUT CHATBOTS**
If a child is already expressing an interest in AI apps, then it's relevant, natural chat should help you to discover which ones they're aware of and how they're using them (or are planning to). Discuss these apps with children and perhaps do your own research to ensure that you think they're suitable. Once you're totally happy, you could sit and explore the range of AI chatbots together.
- CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**
If a child is keen to engage with AI chatbots, encourage them to do so in a safe environment: ideally in a shared space, so you can easily keep an eye and ear on their progress. Set up appropriate content filtering measures in advance – and gently remind them that you'll be close by and ready to help with any questions or concerns that may arise.
- FIND A BALANCE**
Work alongside children to establish the right balance in terms of how they might use AI-powered chatbots – and when it's appropriate. It's important to make sure that children still get plenty of opportunities to learn to solve problems for themselves, as well as building their social skills through face-to-face conversations with friends, family members and teachers.
- TAKE CONTROL**
As with any form of app or game, when it comes to AI chatbots we'd strongly recommend that you consider employing parental controls (either on the device being used or within the software itself) to manage which apps a child can download and interact with. This is particularly important for younger children, who may be more at risk of being upset or frightened by inappropriate content.
- RECOGNISE THE RISKS**
It's unlikely that most children will have even considered the potential risks attached to having a virtual companion. So it's probably wise to explain some of the possible hazards and challenges of AI chatbots to them. Emphasise that AI isn't a real person (however much it might sound like one) and may occasionally tell them something inaccurate or skewed by bias.

Meet Our Expert
A Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), Gary Henderson is the Director of IT at a large boarding school in the UK, having previously taught in schools and colleges in Britain and the Middle East, with a particular interest in digital citizenship and cyber security, he believes it is essential that we become more aware of the risks around technology, as well as the benefits.

#WakeUpWednesday
The National College

@wake_up_weds | /www.thenationalcollege | @wake.up.wednesday | @wake.up.weds

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Release date: 27.04.2023 Last reviewed: 08.05.2024

