

# Robert Browning, Snowfields and Tower Bridge Primary Schools

We learn and succeed together



[@PrimaryRobert](#) [@SNSPrimary](#) [@TBPrimary](#)

Find us at: [www.thebridgesfederation.org.uk](http://www.thebridgesfederation.org.uk)

## Newsletter 30th June 2023

Dear Parents,

**Congratulations to our schools, staff and children for LPESSN nominations for sports awards.**

**Robert Browning has been shortlisted for TA of the year (Vincent and Carol), Teacher of the year (Heidi y3) and Young Leader of the year (Izrael y6). Snowfields has been shortlisted for school of the year, SEND provision of the year, PE co-ordinator of the year (Kate y2), Coach of the year (Eugene) and primary female athlete of the year (Zavaria y3). Tower Bridge has been nominated for TA of the year (Tony) and Young Leader of the year (Amerah y6).**

**It has been a fantastic Health Week which featured Sports Day. Thank you to our parents for supporting your children so brilliantly. The children loved the experience of competing in different races and being cheered on by their family and friends!**

**Have a lovely weekend. See you on Monday gates open at 8:45am.**

### Summer Fair

Our annual summer fairs will take place on **Wednesday 12th July** after school. We would be extremely grateful to all parents and carers if you can keep an eye on your app messages for donations needed for class stalls. Also there will be two swap shops one for uniform and one for non-uniform. If you have any good quality used children's clothing that your child has grown out of, please bring it to the school office from Monday 10th July.

### Parental Control Apps

Please see **page 14** of the newsletter for information about **parental control apps** which can be downloaded onto a young person's phone to help parents and carers monitor their child's online activity. In order for this to work, parents/carers must have access to a smart phone or compatible device for the app to be downloaded and accessed.

### Is my child too ill for school?

A useful guide has been created by the NHS to support parents making the decision to send their child to school if their child is feeling unwell. Please click on the link [here](#).

## Dates For Your Diary

### Tower Bridge

**Tuesday 4th July at 2.00pm** - EYFS Sports Day at St John's Churchyard

**Wednesday 5th and Friday 7th July** - School Closed - Strike Day

**Thursday 6th July 9.15am** - Moving from Reception to Year 1 Parent Workshop

**Monday 10th July 2pm** - Year 6 Show

**Tuesday 11th July 3pm** - Nursery and Reception Graduation

**Wednesday 12th July 3.30pm** - Summer Fair

**Thursday 13th July** - Secondary Transfer Parent Workshop

**Friday 21st July 9.30am** - Year 6 Graduation

### Robert Browning

**Wednesday 5th and Friday 7th July** - School Closed - Strike Day

**Tuesday 11th July** - 9.15am - Y5 Parents Secondary Transfer Meeting

**Wednesday 12th July 3.30pm** - Summer Fair

**Monday 17th July** - Year 6 Show

**Tuesday 18th July** - 2.45pm - EYFS Graduation

**Thursday 20th July 2.30pm** - Year 6 Graduation

### Snowfields

**Wednesday 5th and Friday 7th July** - School Closed Strike Action

**Monday 10th July 9.15am** - Y5 Parents Secondary Transfer Meeting

**Tuesday 11th July 2pm** - Caterpillar and Butterfly Graduation

**Wednesday 12th July 2pm** - Purple Class/ Year 6 Show

**Wednesday 12th July 3:15pm** - Summer Fair

**Friday 14th July 9:15am** - Moving from Reception to Year 1 parent meeting

**Friday 21st July 9:30am** - Purple class/ Year 6 Graduation

### Term Dates - 2022 - 2023

#### Summer term

Tuesday 18 April - Friday 26 May 2023

**Half Term Monday 29 May - Friday 2 June 2023**

Monday 5 June - Friday 21 July 2023

**Term Dates for 2023-2024 are now on the school website**

<https://thebridgesfederation.org.uk/home/term-dates/>

**Term time holidays will not be authorised.**

### Strike Action

**Please see page 2 of the newsletter for information regarding the strike action being taken on Wednesday 5th and Thursday 7th July.**

## Strike Information

Dear Parents,

Notification of closure on **Wednesday 5th and Friday 7th July 2023**

*We have been informed by the NEU Trade Union of its proposal to take further strike action both nationally and regionally over a number of days. The next days of strike action by NEU teacher members is planned to take place on **Wednesday 5th and Friday 7th July 2023**. The NEU is in dispute with the Secretary of State for Education with regards to their failure to ensure enough money is available to pay a fully-funded increase in pay for teachers which at least matches inflation, and which begins to restore lost pay*

Why have teachers voted to strike?

The cost of living crisis

According to the NEU, members have reported struggling with the cost of living crisis, childcare costs, energy costs and mortgage payments. They explain that, although the government offered a 5% pay increase to teachers, due to increasing levels of inflation, the reality is that the 5% increase is a 7% pay cut.

Teachers leaving the classroom

According to the NEU, 'One in eight teachers leaves the profession after just a year in the classroom – one in three within five'. They state that their polls show that parents support teachers taking action to 'protect education standards' because of the harm caused by teacher shortages.

When will teachers be striking?

Strike action [will take place on:](#)

- **Wednesday 5th July 2023**
- **Friday 7th July 2023**

All unions are currently balloting their members and unless an agreement is reached further action could be taken in the Autumn term.

### How will this affect Snowfields, Tower Bridge and Robert Browning Schools?

As Executive Headteacher, I have assessed the impact of the strike action on our schools and after careful consideration have decided that all 3 schools will have to close to pupils on **Wednesday 5th and Friday 7th July 2023**. Due to the numbers of staff involved, there will be serious operational difficulties which could impact the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff.

**You will receive a voucher for your child's lunch for those days.**

**Please log onto Google Classroom where children can complete a range of homework projects and also access Mathletics, Reading Eggs, and Times Table Rockstars.**

Our sincere apologies for the difficulties that these arrangements will cause parents/carers.

If our situation changes and we are able to remain open we will inform you as soon as possible.

We will keep you informed about the other planned dates when we have more information.

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact your child's school.





This week has been health week at Tower Bridge and Purple Class had the opportunity to work with the LPESSN in an End Game intrasports competition. They also worked with some children from Green and Blue class to assess their strengths.

Well done to Tony, who has been short listed in the 2023 LPESSN Awards for his commitment to PE and health and fitness in school. Amerah in Purple Class has been nominated for Young Leader of the Year.



Green Class took a trip to Parliament this week as part of their project with Guy Fox History. They were accompanied by Sir Simon Hughes, the former Minister for Justice and former MP for Southwark.

They worked in teams representing the House of Commons or the House of Lords. Stay tuned for the outcome of this exciting project next year!



We will be holding our Summer Fair after school on Wednesday 12th July. All classes are planning and preparing stalls and we hope that you will be inviting many of your friends and family along to join in the fun.



Blue Class went to local secondary school, Southbank University Academy this week to learn in their science labs. They had so much fun learning!



Thank you to all the parents who supported the cake sale EYFS held this week to raise money for resources. Your donations and purchases mean they can buy a mud kitchen for their outdoor area.



This week has been Health Week! It has included our Sports Day. On Wednesday The children from Butterfly Class and Caterpillar Class took part in lots of different sporting activities. Look out for more photos in next week's newsletter!

Congratulations to Carol, Vincent and Heidi who have been nominated for a PESSN award for their commitment to providing great PE for the children. Congratulations to Izrael in Year 6 who has also been nominated! Good luck to you all!



Green Class had a great trip to the Natural History Museum!

Red Class and Orange Class enjoyed a multiskills session in Burgess Park





# Snowsfields Primary School

## Health Week 2023

This week is health week and in **Red class** the children have been talking about Zones of Regulation and how they use these to help them move into the green zone. Two ways the class thought of were breathing and exercise. The children did some Cosmic Yoga to practise these.



For Sports Day, **Blue class** took part in many events such as the sack race, hurdles and sprint and relay races. Overall the children had a great day and especially enjoyed the parents' race at the very end!

What Zone Are You In?			
Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
Sick	Happy	Frustrated	Mad/Angry
Sad	Calm	Worried	Mean
Tired	Feeling Okay	Silly/Wiggly	Yelling/
Bored	Focused	Excited	Hitting
Moving Slowly	Ready to Learn	Loss of Some Control	Disgusted
			Out of Control

### Fantastic Fred

The children across the school had a great time taking part in an interactive play teaching them ways to look after their mental health and well being.



**Yellow class, Purple class, Orange class and Green class** had an amazing day, sprinting, hurdling, jumping in the sack race and completing the all important lap of honour!



A massive thank you to **Kate** our PE subject leader, our talented **Sports Leaders** and our wonderful **parents** for making our Sports Day sparkle! Here they are supporting our children from **Caterpillar** and **Butterfly classes**.







W - Welcoming Everyone



Reading Raffle Winners



Reading Raffle Winners



Our Value this week is: kindness



Reading Raffle Winners

S - Supporting Children to Succeed

Times Tables Rock Stars





	Absence	Lates	Total
Year 1	2	22	450
Year 2	8	20	150
Year 3	12	12	300
Year 4	13	9	275
Year 5	3	4	825
Year 6	3	11	775

**Overall whole school attendance for week beginning 19/6/2023: 93.5%**

**1st Place Attendance: Year 1**

**1st Place Punctuality: Year 5**



**Overall whole school attendance for week beginning: 19/6/2023: 95.94%**

**1st Place Attendance: Y2**

**1st Place Punctuality: Y5**

	Absence	Lates	Total
Year 1	8	9	97.33%
Year 2	5	14	97.50%
Year 3	10	12	96.67%
Year 4	14	13	94.81%
Year 5	9	3	96.09%
Year 6	19	9	93.67%



	Absence	Lates	Total
Year 1	3	2	600
Year 2	14	13	250
Year 3	7	5	550
Year 4	13	8	575
Year 5	12	4	950
Year 6	8	4	875

**Overall whole school attendance for week beginning: 19/6/2023: 96.10%**

**1st Place Attendance: Y1**

**1st Place Punctuality: Y1**



## Family Advice and Guidance

Free confidential advice and support for you and your family over the phone. To book a slot, please call Nadene on 07776 990 819.

(Telephone Service Mon - Fri, 9.00am - 5.00pm)

## Referrals

Family Support referrals must be completed by an Early Help professional, email [earlyhelp@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:earlyhelp@southwark.gov.uk)

To discuss the referral process, please email Elena Salazar:  
[Elena.Salazar@1stplace.uk.com](mailto:Elena.Salazar@1stplace.uk.com)

## Rose VOUCHERS for fruit&veg

The Rose Vouchers for Fruit & Veg Project gives vouchers to buy fruit and veg locally to families on low incomes or with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), who have children under 5 years old. To find out more go to [www.1stplace.uk.com/rosevouchers](http://www.1stplace.uk.com/rosevouchers)



Find 50 low or no cost family activities in the free 50 Things app.

Download from Google Play or Apple Store.



1st Place



## 1st Place Summer Timetable

24th July - 1st September 2023

**Packed full of activities for you and your little ones!**

**1st Place Children & Parents' Centre**  
12 Chumleigh St  
Burgess Park  
SE5 0RN

**Victory Children & Family Centre**  
Elba Place  
SE17 1PT

E-mail: [BBWFC@1stplace.uk.com](mailto:BBWFC@1stplace.uk.com) Phone: 020 7740 8070

[www.1stplace.uk.com](http://www.1stplace.uk.com)

[Instagram](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [YouTube](#) @1stPlaceCentre



Southwark Children and Family Centres  
Borough Bankside and Walworth



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>Chatter Box (drop-in)</b> Victory Children & Family Centre <b>10 am - 11.30 am</b> <b>July 24th 31st</b> <b>August 7th 14th 21st</b> A session where we share advice and support on the development of your child's early speech and language skills.	<b>Healthy Movers (drop-in)</b> Victory Children & Family Centre <b>10 am - 11.30 am</b> <b>July 25th</b> <b>August 1st 8th 15th 22nd 29th</b> Join us for a lively Stay and Play focussing on getting moving including tips and ideas.	<b>SENsational (drop-in)</b> 1st Place Children & Parents' Centre <b>10 am - 11.30 am</b> <b>July 26th</b> <b>August 2nd 9th 16th 23rd 30th</b> See session description on Monday.	<b>Baby Stay &amp; Play (drop-in)</b> 1st Place Children and Parents' Centre <b>1:30 pm - 3 pm</b> <b>July 27th - 31st August</b> <b>27th July</b> Trough Painting... #3 Make your mark <b>3rd August</b> Rhymes and their value #6 Rhyme time <b>10th August</b> Explore bubbles #8 Bubbles <b>17th August</b> Stories & their value #10 Sharing books <b>24th August</b> Peekaboo #32 Where have I gone <b>31st August</b> Signs to support communication #39 Talking signs	<b>50 Things Stay &amp; Play (drop-in)</b> 1st Place Children and Parents' Centre. Sessions are linked to 50 Things To Do Before You're Five activities. <b>28th July</b> Trips on Buses take the bus The wheels on the bus # 28 <b>4th August</b> Visit a Playground outside 1st Place and play in fountains ( bring towels and change of clothes) #26 Splish Splash Splish <b>11th August</b> 1st Place 1 mile challenge (walk our 1 mile route in the park and get a certificate) #27 Little People Park Keeper <b>18th August</b> Sand castle competition at Bananas On The Beach. Prizes for best sandcastle. #5 Squidgy Sand
<b>SENsational (drop-in)</b> 1st Place Children & Parents' Centre <b>2 pm - 3:30 pm</b> <b>July 24th 31st</b> <b>August 7th 14th 21st</b> A session planned to support young children with additional and special educational needs. This session encourages the development of early attention and social communication skills through play. Our Centre is accessible with a beautiful beach area, calming sensory space and outdoor play area. This session particularly supports children with Autism, Global Developmental Delay, ADHD or any other additional need. Respite spaces are sometimes available, but these must be pre-booked. <b>For more information, please call Libby 07759523217.</b>	<b>Babytime (drop-in)</b> Victory Children & Family Centre <b>2 pm - 3:30 pm</b> <b>July 25th</b> <b>August 1st 8th 15th 22nd 29th</b> A session for young babies. On this informative session we offer tips and advice on your babies learning and development while your little one explores our cosy play area, and we will sing songs and rhymes together.	<b>Outings BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL</b> <b>Outings will be from 11 am - 4 pm.</b> For all outings we will meet at Victory Children and Family Centre. If you wish to meet us at the venue, this can be discussed when you book. We can offer support to travel but this is limited. <b>To book, contact Judy. 07760624136</b> <b><a href="mailto:Judy.Morris@1stplace.uk.com">Judy.Morris@1stplace.uk.com</a></b> <b>26th July</b> Princess Diana Playground <b>2nd August</b> Kew Gardens <b>9th August</b> Crystal Palace Park <b>16th August</b> Blackheath Park & Greenwich Park <b>23rd August</b> Ruskin Park <b>30th August</b> Mudchute Farm	<b>Rose Voucher Collections</b> 9:30 am - 12 pm & 1 pm - 3 pm Victory Children & Family Centre <b>Families Matter</b> DWP drop-in service <b>Wednesdays 10 am - 12 pm</b> 1st Place Children & Parents' Centre, 12 Chumleigh Street, SE5 0RN Advisors from the Department for Work & Pensions will be available to offer support and advice on a range of topics including benefits, upskilling & training, CV writing, job interviews, childcare once you're in work and more. <a href="http://www.southwark.gov.uk/familiesmatter">www.southwark.gov.uk/familiesmatter</a>	<b>25th August</b> Explore our mud area and make potions and mud pies. #17 Hocus Pocus potions <b>1st September</b> Picnic in the Park Bring a rug and a picnic, play in the park and join us in a big sing along to finish the session. # 30 Yummy picnic



Download from Google Play or Apple Store.





# SENsational Stay & Play

Fun FREE groups for children with additional needs or disabilities and their parents/ carers



- **Have fun with your child**
- **Meet other families**
- **Get advice and support from a range of specialists on topics such as Speech & Language, Behaviour and Autism**



Multiple locations across Southwark  
Midweek sessions for under 5s  
Saturday sessions for up to age 8  
**See timetable on back of this leaflet**



Southwark Children and Family Centres



Evelina  
London





# SENsational Play



Sensory

Songs

Play



To book a place please  
call Judy 07760 624 136

## Who is it for?

A play session planned to support young children with additional and special educational needs.

Join us for stories, rhymes, sensory play and other activities. This session is also an opportunity to meet other parents and carers and ask for advice from our team.

## When and where?

**Mondays 1.30pm - 3pm**

15th, 12th, 19th, 26th June | 3rd, 10th, 17th July

1st Place Children's and Parents Centre, 12 Chumleigh Gardens, SE5 0RN



**1st Place**

## New Saturday sessions

3rd June & 1st July please email [BBWCFC@1stplace.uk.com](mailto:BBWCFC@1stplace.uk.com) to find out more.






Join our free after school sports sessions – from **Tuesday to Thursday** for ages 4-11.

From **beach tennis** to **samba soccer**, from **touch rugby** to **cricket**, there's something for everyone!

**PRE-BOOKING ESSENTIAL!**

All activities require pre-booking. To register please visit: [www.bost.org.uk/afterschoolsports](http://www.bost.org.uk/afterschoolsports) and follow the booking link.





**BANKSIDE OPEN SPACES TRUST**

Growing Communities Together

Bankside Open Spaces Trust, Red Cross Garden, 50 Redcross Way, London SE1 1HA | Registered Charity No: 1085454

020 7403 3393 | [sports@bost.org.uk](mailto:sports@bost.org.uk) | [www.bost.org.uk](http://www.bost.org.uk)

supported by 

**BANKSIDE OPEN SPACES TRUST** | **MARLBOROUGH SPORTS GARDEN**



**STARTING JUNE 2023**

**FREE**

**WEEKLY SPORTS SESSIONS!**

**AT MARLBOROUGH SPORTS GARDEN**








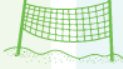











**BANKSIDE OPEN SPACES TRUST**

# WEEKLY SPORTS SESSIONS

ALL ACTIVITIES FREE! TUESDAY 6 JUNE TO TUESDAY 11 JULY

**BANKSIDE OPEN SPACES TRUST** | **MARLBOROUGH SPORTS GARDEN**

	— MONDAY —	— TUESDAY —	— WEDNESDAY —	— THURSDAY —	— FRIDAY —
  <p><b>BEACH</b></p>	<p><b>FREE PLAY MONDAYS</b></p> <p>No pre-booking required</p>	 <p><b>TOUCH RUGBY</b></p> <p>3.45pm – 5.15pm (ages 5-11)</p>	<p><b>BEACH TENNIS</b></p> <p>3.45pm – 4.30pm (ages 4-8)</p> <p>4.30pm – 5.15pm (ages 8-11)</p> <p>PROVIDED BY Deuce Beach Tennis</p>	<p><b>BEACH VOLLEYBALL</b></p> <p>3.45pm – 5.15pm (ages 4-11)</p> <p>PROVIDED BY Deep Dish Beach</p> 	<p><b>FREE PLAY FRIDAYS</b></p> <p>No pre-booking required</p>
  <p><b>NETBALL COURT</b></p>	<p><b>FREE PLAY MONDAYS</b></p> <p>No pre-booking required</p>	<p><b>ROLLERSKATING</b></p> <p>3.45pm – 5.15pm (ages 4-11)</p> <p>PROVIDED BY EMPOWR CIC</p> <p>Please bring your own skates and pads</p> 	<p><b>BOXING</b></p> <p>3.45pm – 5.15pm (ages 7-11)</p> <p>PROVIDED BY Peckham A.B.C</p> <p><b>DODGEBALL</b></p> <p>3.45pm – 5.15pm (ages 4-11)</p>	<p><b>WALL-BALL</b></p> <p>3.45pm – 4.30pm (ages 8-11)</p> <p>4.30pm – 5.15pm (ages 11+)</p> <p>PROVIDED BY UK Wall Ball</p>	<p><b>FREE PLAY FRIDAYS</b></p> <p>No pre-booking required</p>
  <p><b>FOOTBALL PITCH</b></p>	 <p><b>FREE PLAY MONDAYS</b></p> <p>No pre-booking required</p>	<p><b>GIRLS ONLY WILDCATS GIRLS FOOTBALL</b></p> <p>3.45pm – 5.15pm (ages 5-11)</p> <p>PROVIDED BY LPESSN</p>	<p><b>SAMBA SOCCER SCHOOL</b></p> <p>3.45pm – 5.15pm (ages 4-11)</p> <p>PROVIDED BY Samba Soccer Schools</p> 	<p><b>CRICKET</b></p> <p>3.45pm – 5.15pm (ages 8-11)</p> <p>PROVIDED BY Surrey Cricket Foundation</p> 	<p><b>FREE PLAY FRIDAYS</b></p> <p>No pre-booking required</p> 



# Pond Life

at the Centre for Wildlife Gardening  
28 Marsden Road SE15 4EE

## Family Workshop Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July 10am to 3pm

A free fun family day discovering the animals that live in and around our ponds with the London Wildlife Trust. For Southwark residents only. Take part in pond dipping, games, crafts and stories in our lovely wildlife garden. This is not a drop in activity so visit our website for alternative events. [www.wildlondon.org.uk/events](http://www.wildlondon.org.uk/events)

Suitable for all ages. Children must be accompanied and with a maximum of 3 children per adult. Refundable £3 deposit required with booking, but please contact [dwallace@wildlondon.org.uk](mailto:dwallace@wildlondon.org.uk) if that is a problem for you or phone 07740717930



Protecting  
London's  
wildlife for  
the future

To find out more and book your place please visit:  
[www.wildlondon.org.uk/events](http://www.wildlondon.org.uk/events)



A space for families to  
meet an artist and  
get drawing!

ROCK • PAPER  
• SCISSORS •

FAMILY



STUDIO

First Sunday of the month  
5<sup>th</sup> March, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 7<sup>th</sup> May, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2<sup>nd</sup> July  
Charlotte Sharman Primary School  
West Square, SE11 4SN

Drop-in  
10.30 – 3.00pm  
All Free!  
All Welcome!

Bus Routes: 12, 55, 146, 344,  
340, 483, C3  
Stations: Elephant & Castle,  
Waterloo or Lambeth North

07458 277 020  
greenwood@drawingroom.org.uk  
www.drawingroom.org.uk  
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 Fondlands  
Foundation

**DRAWING ROOM**





**FREE  
YEAR 6**

**LITTLE FISH THEATRE**



**SUMMER PROGRAMME**

**FOR SOUTHWARK CHILDREN**

**24TH JULY - 4TH AUG  
2023 (MON-FRI)**

**AT RYE OAK PRIMARY  
SCHOOL**

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO  
BOOK A PLACE FOR YOUR CHILD  
EMAIL: [INFO@LITTLEFISHTHEATRE.CO.UK](mailto:INFO@LITTLEFISHTHEATRE.CO.UK)

[HTTPS://SHORTURL.AT/DIS17](https://shorturl.at/dis17)

**"SCAN THE QR CODE"**



**ART**

**DRAMA:** *Music*





## Parental Control Apps

Parental control apps can be downloaded onto a young person's phone to help parents and carers monitor their child's online activity. In order for this to work, parents/carers must have access to a smart phone or compatible device for the app to be downloaded and accessed. Most Apps will come with 'system requirements' information so that you can ensure your devices are compatible. Some Apps only work when the two devices being used are of the same operating system i.e. iPhone to iPhone. Some Applications will allow for an Android to iPhone pairing or vice versa. Please check such before installing. Some apps have differing features dependent on the phones operating system. It is suggested that you research your chosen App and use the 'free trial' option to test it out. After this trial, there is usually a monthly or yearly subscription to continue usage.

Below is a list of some of the Parental Monitoring Apps available.

***Please use your own discretion and conduct your own research when selecting an App.***

**KidsGuard** - Allows parents and carers to monitor texts, Social media, call logs, contact lists and downloadable content/files. Also allows for geo-fencing and geolocation, allows you to block apps and restrict time spent on certain apps. Allows for time limits to be set. Different versions, inc. versions that can monitor PC's and Pads, can be downloaded from ClevGuard. This app is hidden on the target phone. Works best on Android. Can be used on iPads and PC's

**MMGuardian** - Allows parents and carers to monitor text messages, photos, internet usage, block content and be alerted to worrying content. Also allows for geo-fencing, social media monitoring, phone time limits and app blocking. Certain features can only be accessed when the App is downloaded directly from their server and not from an app store. You can add settings to stop this app being uninstalled on the target device. Works best on Android. Can be used on other devices.

**Qustodio** - Parents and Carers can monitor internet usage, text messages, call logs, time spent on social media and can block certain apps as well as put time limits on the phone or individual apps. There is geo-location and a 'panic button' option when downloaded onto an android. More features with Android. Can be used on other devices.

**Ourpact** - Allows parents and carers to block individual apps or give time limits to them. Sets daily screen time allowance. Allows for web filtering and geolocation. Allows you to view online activity. Can be used with both iPhone and Android

**Netnanny** - Offers geolocation and phone use monitoring. Also allows you to restrict and monitor screen time. There is no social media monitoring. Internet filtering and YouTube monitoring. App blocking. Can be used on iPads and PC as well as IOS and Android.



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about AI VIRTUAL FRIENDS

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### CONTENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

AI chatbots may not always be able to recognise when content is age inappropriate or harmful and should be filtered out. So there's a possibility that children could be exposed to offensive 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 to provide companionship, it could very likely 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, as most humans would. It might therefore fail to respond appropriately. AI misinterpreting what it's being told or replying insensitively 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 originate from the USA or the UK, for instance, they can display a distinctly western-centric worldview). This could lead to children developing skewed attitudes and behaviours.

### 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, creativity and ability to engage in open-ended discussions with other people.

### PRIVACY CONCERNS

Chatbots typically collect data about users, including personal information and conversations. This is ostensibly to improve their performance as they gradually learn about our behaviour – but many experts are warning that there may be significant risks associated with how this information is stored and used (the possibility of potential breaches or misuse by third parties, for instance).

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### CHAT ABOUT CHATBOTS

If your child is already expressing an interest in AI apps, a relaxed, 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 options with your child and perhaps do your own research to ensure you think they're suitable. Once you're totally happy, you could sit with your young one and begin exploring AI chatbots together.

### CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

If your child is keen to engage with AI chatbots, encourage them to do so in a safe environment: ideally in a shared space at home, 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 your child 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 are still getting plenty of opportunities to learn to solve problems for themselves, as well as building their interpersonal 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 your child can download and use. 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 your child. In particular, emphasise that AI isn't a real person (however much it might sound like one) and may occasionally tell them something that isn't entirely impartial or accurate.

## 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.



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