

# Robert Browning, Snowsfields and Tower Bridge Primary Schools

We learn and succeed together



 [@robertbrowning.bsky.social](https://www.instagram.com/robertbrowning.bsky.social) [@towerbridgeschool.bsky.social](https://www.instagram.com/towerbridgeschool.bsky.social) [@snsprimary.bsky.social](https://www.instagram.com/snsprimary.bsky.social)  
Find us at: [www.thebridgesfederation.org.uk](http://www.thebridgesfederation.org.uk)

## Newsletter 24th January 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Please check your schools 'dates for your diary' box for upcoming class assemblies.

Our year 5 assemblies were truly fantastic this week, the children demonstrated their confidence speaking, acting and singing in front of an audience. Thank you to the year 5 staff teams and to you parents for supporting your children. Class assemblies are a wonderful celebration of the learning at school.

We are busily planning for our 'Wellbeing Week' from 10th - 14th February, which will include sessions on sleep hygiene (having a regular routine to improve sleep), Safer Internet Day (revisiting how to stay safe online) and reminding the children of the NSPCC's message 'Speak out, Stay safe.'

Our expectation is that every child attends school everyday on time and strives for 100% attendance. Please contact the school office by 9am via the Arbor App or by phone if your child is too unwell to attend school. If your child's absence is at 90% this is called persistent absence and equates to your child missing half a day of school a week. Please speak to a member of the Leadership Team on the gate if you need support with your child's attendance.

Have a lovely weekend, we look forward to seeing you on Monday, the school gates open at 8:45am.



**Important!**  
Scholarpack has changed to Arbor  
6th January 2025

We have changed our MIS system (Scholarpack) to Arbor from 6th January 2025. You will need to download a new app from your app store to continue to receive messages from the school and to be able to send us messages. Please see page 2 of the newsletter for further details. Please contact the school office if you are unable to download the app.



### Dates For Your Diary



#### Tower Bridge

Wednesday 29th January- Year 4 assembly 3pm  
Wednesday 5th February- Y3 assembly 3pm  
10th - 14th February - Wellbeing Week including Safer Internet Day on 11th February  
Friday 14th February- Break up for Half Term  
17th - 21st February - Half Term Week  
Wednesday 5th March- Parent and Pupil Review Meetings

#### Robert Browning

Tuesday 28th January- Year 4 assembly  
Tuesday 4th February- Year 3 assembly  
10th - 14th February - Wellbeing Week including Safer Internet Day on 11th February  
Thursday 13th February- Year 2 Fundraiser  
Friday 14th February- NSPCC Fundraiser  
Friday 14th February- Break up for Half Term  
February 17th- 21st - Half Term Week  
Wednesday 5th March- Parent and Pupil Review Meetings

#### Snowsfields

Tuesday 28th January - Year 4 assembly 2:55pm  
Tuesday 4th February - Year 3 assembly 2:55pm  
10-14th February - Wellbeing week including Safer Internet Day on 11th February  
Friday 14th February- Break up for Half Term  
February 17th- 21st - Half Term Week  
Wednesday 5th March - Parent and Pupil Review Meetings

Term Dates 2024-2025 are on the Federation website  
[Term Dates – The Bridges Federation](#)  
Term time holidays will not be authorised.  
Other important dates for this year can also be found on the school website here:  
[Diary – The Bridges Federation](#)

#### Snowsfields Primary School

Our project 'Play Learn and Grow' has been shortlisted for the Tesco Community Grant Initiative where we could win up to £1,500. Please collect a blue token at the checkout every time you shop at these local Tesco stores (see list below) and vote for us!  
Southwark SE1 5HG, Southwark The cut SE1 8JZ  
London Bridge High St, Blackfriars Circus,  
Tabard Square, Tower Bridge, Borough Rd,  
Ldn Gt Suffolk, Tooley Street, Borough New Kent Rd




On **January 6th 2025** all 3 schools are moving to Arbor.



We will no longer be using Scholarpack.

Parents please see below guidance explaining what you need to do. From **January 6th** you will no longer be able to send or receive messages with the school via Scholarpack.

If you need any help please contact your child's school.



## We're using Arbor's free Parent Portal and Parent App



**We've chosen Arbor to help us manage our school.**

Arbor is a simple, smart and cloud-based MIS (Management Information System), which helps us work faster, smarter and more collaboratively as a school. The Parent App and Parent Portal mean we can keep you informed about your child's life at school in a much more accessible way. Log into Arbor to see and update your child's information, get live updates and make payments or bookings on the go!

The Parent Portal works on Google Chrome (computer or laptop) and you can download the Parent App from the App Store or Google Play Store on your phone (Android 5.0; iOS 10.0 and upwards).

### How to get started

1. Wait for your welcome email from us telling you Arbor is ready - you won't be able to log in before
2. Click the link in your welcome email to set up your password
3. Go to the App or Google Play Store on your phone and search 'Arbor'
4. Click 'Install' on Android or 'Get' on iPhone then open the App
5. Enter your email, select the school, then enter your password
6. Accept the Terms & Conditions and enter your child's birthday

The Sunnyville School of Magic  
W10 5BN, London, GBR

Enter your password

Log In

Forgotten password?


### Need help using Arbor?

**Contact the school office if you have questions about Arbor, the App or Parent Portal.** Tell us the type and model of your phone, e.g. an iPhone SE, and include screenshots or screen recordings.

To safeguard student data in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Arbor only works directly with schools.

**Some tips to try:**

1. Ensure your username is the email address you use for Arbor. Ask us to **check the email address** linked to your account.
2. **Reset your password** from the login page, or ask us to do this.
3. If the login email was sent to you more than 96 hours ago, the **password link will have expired**. Ask us to send it again.
4. Ask the school office to check that your email address has not been used twice - e.g. on another guardian or child's profile.
5. **Enter the birthday** of one of your children to log in.
6. Only relatives who are **Primary Guardians** of a child can access the Arbor App. Ask us to check you can access Arbor.





Thank you to Blue Class for their epic assembly this week. What a show!  
Thank you to all the parents and carers who came to watch.

# BLUE CLASS ASSEMBLY



Thank you to you all. We are all now signed up to Arbor. Please check emails to enable notifications of messages etc. We sent an email this week with advice on how to set up notifications on Arbor. Please look at these help pages if you are not receiving push notifications.

**ABSENCES:** If your child is absent, you should only use the Arbor to notify us. Please do not call the office, or email.

**PUPIL REVIEW MEETINGS:** We will shortly be opening up bookings for the next Pupil Review Meetings which take place on 5th March. You will only be able to book your meeting through the Arbor app.

**COMING SOON:** Updates to the app coming soon include:

- signing up to clubs
- online payments for trips and clubs



# bett

This week, our STEM Leaders (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) visited BETT, the Technology in Education Trade Show. They were able to explore new tech and won prizes! What an amazing opportunity for them all.



Thank you to all the parents of children in Year 2 to Year 6 who have signed up for a place in the TCS London Mini Marathon this year. If you haven't signed up and still want to take part, please check your emails for the sign up form



# ART CLUB

Art Club have been learning about Pointillism in their sessions so far this term.

## Blue Class Assembly!

We really enjoyed Year 5's assembly on Tuesday afternoon. They performed and sang all about The Titanic.

Thank you to Tom and Carol for all your hard work preparing the children and thank you to all the parents who attended!



## STEM leaders at BETT!

On Wednesday, Natalie took our STEM leaders to BETT. They found out about the latest Educational Technology!



**bett**  
a Hyve event



## Maths Investigation!

Orange Class have been investigating addition with odd and even numbers. What do you think they found out?

# Snowsfields Primary School

## ATTENDANCE CHAMPIONS



Yellow Class has proudly won the Attendance Cup, earning an impressive 1,850 attendance and punctuality points! A huge thank you to the parents for ensuring their children arrive at school every day and on time—your support makes all the difference!

Well done for winning the attendance hamper!



The children in Sunshine Class had a fantastic time designing and building their own trains using 2D and 3D shapes! This hands-on activity helped them explore shapes in a fun and creative way.



## INTRA-SCHOOL SPORTS DAY

Children from Years 1 to 6 enthusiastically participated in our Intra-School Sports Challenge Day! The event was packed with exciting problem-solving activities, encouraging teamwork, resilience, and strategic thinking.

## bett



Our STEM Leaders had an inspiring trip to the BETT Exhibition, where they explored the latest innovations in technology and education. They discovered exciting new resources that could enhance learning experiences for all our children.



## Christchurch Fountain Trip

Purple Class revisited the fountain at Christ Church, Southwark, to see the progress of the renovation work there since they last visited in Year 5. They also learned about the techniques and skills used to conserve and repair old structures.



A huge well done to Blue Class for their fantastic class assembly, where they shared fascinating facts about the Titanic's maiden voyage! The children delivered their lines with confidence and enthusiasm, and their beautiful singing made the performance even more special.

A big thank you to all the parents who attended and supported the children—it was wonderful to have you with us!



Our school value this week is:  
W - Welcoming Others

Reading Raffle Winners



Our core value this week is: Respect

Reading Raffle Winners



Times Tables Rock Stars

Our school value this week is:  
S - Striving to Improve

Reading Raffle Winners





	% present	Lates	Total
Year 1	94.2%	2	100
Year 2	91.0%	0	175
Year 3	97.0%	10	75
Year 4	96.4%	9	100
Year 5	90.7%	10	75
Year 6	95.5%	4	150

**Overall whole school attendance for week beginning 13/1/2025: 94.29%**

**1st Place Attendance: Year 3  
1st Place Punctuality: Year 2**



**Overall whole school attendance for week beginning: 13/1/2025: 94.68%**

**1st Place Attendance: Y3  
1st Place Punctuality: Y3**

	Absence	Lates	Total
Year 1	14	7	94.07%
Year 2	12	5	95.00%
Year 3	9	4	96.65%
Year 4	12	13	95.04%
Year 5	21	5	92.14%
Year 6	19	7	92.18%



	Absence	Lates	Total
Year 1	19	9	<b>100</b>
Year 2	24	13	<b>50</b>
Year 3	5	2	<b>300</b>
Year 4	27	12	<b>0</b>
Year 5	6	4	<b>175</b>
Year 6	8	10	<b>100</b>

**Overall whole school attendance for week beginning: 13/1/2025:**

**93.16%**

**1st Place Attendance: Y3  
1st Place Punctuality: Y3**

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

## ATTENDANCE UPDATE

**Being in school and having the best attendance possible underpins all the many benefits of school for your child, such as their learning, wellbeing and wider development. We want to work with you to ensure that attendance for pupils at the Bridges Federation is the best it can be.**

As a parent, you are legally responsible for making sure your child gets a suitable full time education. This means making sure your child is in school every day except when

- Your child is too ill to go to school.
- You have permission for a leave of absence from your child's school for them not to attend. You should only ask for this in exceptional circumstances. Generally, a holiday will not be classed as an exceptional circumstance.
- Your religious body has a day especially for religious observance.

### **If my child needs to be absent from school, what do I need to do?**

You should contact us as early as possible (no later than 10am) on the first day of absence to explain why. If you do not, we will contact you to find out where they are.

### **My child is ill. What should I do?**

If your child is ill, read the NHS's 'Is my child too ill for school?' advice to help you decide whether they can go to school. Contact us as soon as possible to let us know that they will be absent.

### **Do I need to provide medical evidence to support my child's illness related absence?**

We may ask for medical evidence when your child is absent due to illness. This may be in cases where:

- Your child is regularly absent due to illness, to assess how we can help by putting support in place.
- We have reason to believe your child was not too ill to attend and a conversation has not resolved the issue.

If you are asked to provide evidence this does not need to be a letter from your doctor or consultant, and doctors will not usually provide such letters. It can, instead, be appointment cards, prescriptions, or notes of previous consultations (including from the NHS App.)

To avoid disruption to your child's attendance, medical and dental appointments should not be booked during the school day whenever reasonably possible.

### **My child is struggling to attend school. What can I do?**

The first step is to talk to us about why your child is missing school, and what help we can give. You should still do everything you can to help your child attend as much as possible whilst waiting for help and support to be put into place. Information on who you can contact for help, including the school's senior leader responsible for attendance, can be found in our attendance policy on the website. We follow the expectations laid out in the DfE guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance.'

<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2024/07/aaa-guide-for-parents-on-school-attendance-19th-Aug-version.pdf>

<https://thebridgesfederation.org.uk/home/attendance/>



# Family support

## FATHER'S GROUP



Join a 12-week course to improve your parenting skills.

Whether you are a father, grandfather or stepdad, receive advice and tips on topics such as positive parenting, improving relationships and role modelling. Crèche provided.

**When:**  
**Where:** 1st Floor Family Hub  
12 Chumbleigh Street, Burgess Park, SE23 0BN

**BOOK A PLACE**  
Email: [ben.campbell@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:ben.campbell@southwark.gov.uk)  
Phone: 07738 860 768



## The Nest - Wellbeing Hub

The Nest operates a drop-in service every **Saturday between 10:30 and 14:30**. Therapeutic practitioners and support workers can offer 1:1 emotional support, information & advice and signpost you to the appropriate services.

## Drop-In Service | The Nest

### SAFETY IN THE HOME

A ONE DAY COURSE

ACCIDENT PREVENTION & AWARENESS WORKSHOP FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

**DATE:** TUESDAY 21ST JANUARY, 2025  
**TIME:** 10AM - 12:00PM

**VENUE:** THE LEWINGTON CENTRE COMMUNITY CENTRE  
8 EUGENIA ROAD ROTHERHITHE SE16 2RU

**FOR DETAILS & TO REGISTER:**  
02035398605, 07394462602  
[Admin@parentskills2go.com](mailto:Admin@parentskills2go.com)  
[parentskills2go.org](http://parentskills2go.org)

**Southwark Young Carers**

To get involved, you can refer via our website [www.imago.community](http://www.imago.community) or scan the QR Code

For further information, please contact our Hub  
[youngcarers@imago.community](mailto:youngcarers@imago.community)  
**0300 111 110**

We support young people living in Southwark aged 6-24, who provide unpaid care or support to a family member with a long-term illness, disability, mental health condition or a substance misuse issue.

Southwark Young Carers in service of a brave Community  
Registered charity number: 2336 008

### Free Workshops for Parents and Carers

Do you want more guidance on how to talk to your children, teens and young people about vaping, alcohol or drugs? Do you want to be informed on the current themes and trends we come across working with young people in the borough?

Substances are more accessible today than ever before. For parents, carers or anyone responsible for children and young people, it can feel overwhelming and difficult to know how to respond.

We're offering FREE online workshops for parents and carers in Southwark, to give advice and guidance to help you navigate this quickly changing landscape.

**WE'LL COVER:**

- Current trends amongst young people
- Strategies for talking to young people about substances in an open and supportive way
- Practical advice on how to keep your children safe from the dangers of substance misuse

JOIN NOW

Beth Gilbey  
07394 865 980  
[bethany.gilbey@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:bethany.gilbey@southwark.gov.uk)  
[EARLYHELP@SOUTHWARK.GOV.UK](mailto:EARLYHELP@SOUTHWARK.GOV.UK)

We hold in person sessions throughout the borough. Contact the team for the next available session.

For further information contact:  
• Email: [Southwark.YoungPeople@cgl.org.uk](mailto:Southwark.YoungPeople@cgl.org.uk) or scan the QR code for a direct link to the eventbrite page.  
• You can call us on: 020 3404 7699

### Free and stand alone information sessions for parents and carers on a range of topics - 'TAP-IN' to the support you need or complete the course.

Sessions include:

- Digital Safety - how to support children to be safe online
- Ages and Stages - how to support different developmental stages
- Parental Wellbeing - how to communicate our needs
- Parenting and Autism
- Parenting and ADHD
- More to come....

JOIN NOW

Beth Gilbey  
07394 865 980  
[bethany.gilbey@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:bethany.gilbey@southwark.gov.uk)  
[EARLYHELP@SOUTHWARK.GOV.UK](mailto:EARLYHELP@SOUTHWARK.GOV.UK)

We hold in person sessions throughout the borough. Contact the team for the next available session.

### STRENGTHENING FAMILIES STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

For parents of children aged 8 - 16 years

This 12 week course helps parents and carers to:

- Build positive family relationships
- Manage anger and stress
- Implement effective discipline strategies
- Understand your child's development
- Recognise and value your family and cultural traditions
- Develop effective communication
- Meet others and share ideas

JOIN NOW

We are seeking **Parents/Carers** from all backgrounds and ethnicities to join our course.

**WHEN IS IT ON?**  
Weekly (10am to 12pm) on Wednesdays  
From 12th January - 10th February  
Online evening group (see website)  
What else?

For further information contact:  
• Email: [Southwark.ChildrenAndFamilyHub@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:Southwark.ChildrenAndFamilyHub@southwark.gov.uk)  
• You can call us on: 020 3404 7699

### EPEC BEING A PARENT 1-3

For parents of children aged 1 - 3 years

This 9 week course helps parents learn practical skills for everyday life.

- Looking after yourself as a parent
- Recognise and manage your children's emotions
- Learn positive parenting strategies
- Support your children's resilience

JOIN NOW

Contact: Claire Gager  
Email: [Claire.Gager@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.Gager@southwark.gov.uk)  
Tel: 07547 859 666

**WHEN IS IT ON?**  
STARTING 17TH JANUARY 2025

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON  
1ST FLOOR CHILDREN & FAMILY HUB  
12 CHUMBLEIGH STREET  
LONDON SE23 0BN

What time?  
10am-12pm

### BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF AUTISM & SEND

(SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES)

### ISSUES FOR BLACK AND MARGINALISED FAMILIES

(5 WEEKS ONLINE PROGRAM)

Monday 20th January  
TIME: 6:00PM - 7:00PM (ONLINE)

FOR DETAILS & TO REGISTER:  
02035398605, 07394462602  
[Admin@parentskills2go.com](mailto:Admin@parentskills2go.com)  
[parentskills2go.org](http://parentskills2go.org)

ZOOM DETAILS WILL BE SENT AFTER REGISTRATION

Parent Skills 2Go

Connect with Us  
[parentskills2go](https://www.facebook.com/parentskills2go)  
[parentskills2go](https://www.instagram.com/parentskills2go)

### PARENT SPACE

A QUARTERLY ONLINE & IN PERSON PROGRAM

A QUARTERLY COFFEE MORNING FOR PARENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN TO SHARE THEIR ISSUES AND CONCERNS AS WELL AS GOOD TIPS ON HOW THEY SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN

**DATE:**  
WEDNESDAY 16TH JANUARY 2025 TIME: 9:30 - 11AM  
WEDNESDAY 2ND APRIL 2025 TIME: 9:30 - 11AM  
WEDNESDAY 16TH JULY 2025 TIME: 9:30 - 11AM

FOR DETAILS & TO REGISTER:  
• Admin@parentskills2go.com  
• [parentskills2go.org](http://parentskills2go.org)

OR CALL:  
07957443777  
0732182253  
02035398609  
07394462602

PLEASE NOTE TO BOOK ON BEHAVIOUR AND MENTAL HEALTH WE REQUEST YOU REGISTER

# Family info

**SOUTHWARK SCHOOLS IMPROVE AIR QUALITY**

Southwark Council has introduced a new project to improve the air quality in our schools.

**Air Quality Monitoring & Engagement Project for students in Year 5 and above**

This project will use an air quality monitor to measure the levels of particulate matter (PM10) in the air at the school. The monitor will be used to measure the air quality in the school grounds and the surrounding area. The data will be used to help us understand the causes of air pollution and to develop strategies to improve air quality.

The project will also involve a series of lessons and activities for students to help them understand the importance of air quality and how they can help to improve it.

For more information, please contact the school or visit the website: [www.southwark.gov.uk](http://www.southwark.gov.uk)

Parent Skills 2Go in partnership with SOUTHWARK ADULT LEARNING SERVICES

## ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL)

CLASSES ARE STARTING!

Come to test your level on **WEDNESDAY 6TH NOVEMBER 2024**  
Time: 10am - 1pm

**CRÈCHE WILL BE PROVIDED (FIRST COME FIRST SERVE BASIS)**

Venue: The Lewington Community centre  
9 Eugenia road  
Rotherhithe SE16 2RU

For details and to register: 02035369609, 07394662602  
[Parentskills2go.org](http://Parentskills2go.org)

## Let's talk PANTS with Pantosaurus! | NSPCC

NSPCC

**PANTS**

- Privates are private
- Always remember your body belongs to you
- No means no
- Talk about secrets that upset you
- Speak up, someone can help

Southwark Council Learning Unlimited

## Online English (ESOL) Course

A FREE 15-week Entry level online accredited course for Southwark residents

Classes will be on **Tuesdays & Thursdays at 10am—12.30pm**  
25th February - 26th June 2025  
(seven-time only)

plus online Conversation Clubs  
This course will take place on Zoom.  
Applicants should live in Southwark

To apply for a place on the course in advance please use this link:  
<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/information-and-services/learning-unlimited/online-english-course>

Spaces are limited so book soon.  
We will contact you to confirm your place on the course.

Free\* 15 week Learning Unlimited course for adults interested in becoming Teaching Assistants Award in Support Work in Schools

Wednesdays 9.30am – 12.30pm  
From 27th February to 25th June 2025

We will contact you after you register to arrange an assessment time. This course will be delivered online using Zoom

What will you have when taking the course?

- The knowledge and skills required to become an effective teaching assistant
- The City & Guilds Award in Support Work in Schools (level 2)
- The opportunity to progress to the Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools or to apply for work as a Teaching Assistant
- Full access to all resources

How much does it cost?  
\*The course is free but there is a non-refundable registration fee of £60.

To apply for a place on the course use the link below to complete the online form:  
<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/information-and-services/learning-unlimited/teaching-assistant-course>

All applicants should have level 2 English.  
Please note you will need to complete a criminal record check before you start the course.  
Places are limited so book soon.

Parent Skills 2Go

## SEWING SKILLS

10 WEEKS DRESSMAKING COURSE FOR BEGINNERS & INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

FREE SEWING MENDING STATION (SUPPORT ON HOW TO MEND CLOTHES)

**BASIC / BEGINNERS SEWING CLASS STARTS WEDNESDAY 15TH JANUARY 2025**

**INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS SEWING CLASS STARTS FRIDAY 17TH JANUARY 2025**

VENUE: THE LEWINGTON CENTRE COMMUNITY CENTRE  
9 EUGENIA ROAD  
ROTHERHITHE SE16 2RU

FOR DETAILS & TO REGISTER  
02035369609, 07394662602  
[Admin@parentskills2go.com](mailto:Admin@parentskills2go.com)  
[parentskills2go.org](http://parentskills2go.org)

crèche will be provided

## Parent/carer support at Robert Browning

With Anna and Toni

We offer non-judgemental and confidential support for parent/carers of children with anxiety and challenging behaviour

Tea/ coffee Morning  
Time: 9:00- 9:45

Upcoming dates:

- 21st January - Welcome back! Meet and greet/catch-up
- 4th February- Managing strong emotions
- 25th February - Calming/relaxation techniques
- 11th March- Understanding anxiety
- 25th March- Reflection week

For more information please contact:  
[anna.geissmann@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:anna.geissmann@groundwork.org.uk)

GROUNDWORK  
CHANGING PLACES  
CHANGING LIVES

Enjoy FREE access to classes

Sign in or download the Southwark Leisure App and click on the 'free online classes' button.

Over 20 adult class programs, Kids Born To Move classes, 2000 plus workouts, plans and challenges. Stream from the web, your mobile and TV.

family  
fun



LORD'S

## NATIONWIDE CRICKET HUBS



We run a network of cricket Hubs that provide free-to-access training and match play to 6,500 state-educated young cricketers at 164 sites across the UK. The Hubs focus on talent: helping promising youngsters who have been engaged through mass participation activities or non-traditional formats to join cricket clubs, develop their hard-ball skills, and access the formal talent pathways. The Hubs also have a transformational impact off the cricket pitch, helping participants to feel happier and more confident, and improving their focus and performance at school.

<https://www.lords.org/mcc/mcc-foundation/mcc-foundation-in-the-uk>

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about JUSTALK KIDS

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

JustTalk Kids is a child's version of the JustTalk app – a highly popular social networking platform – designed for users up to 13 years of age, allowing them to video call, message and participate in group chats. While adults can link their own JustTalk account to their child's and make use of parental controls, it's important to understand the risks associated with the app.

### SUBSCRIPTION FOR PREMIUM ACCESS

While JustTalk Kids is free, there's the option to subscribe to a kids' premium account or a premium family account. At a cost, this feature allows children to have access to more fun features such as games they can play with others in a call, exclusive stickers, a badge denoting them as a premium subscriber, and exclusive ringines and themes.

### RESISTANCE TO CONTROLS

JustTalk Kids endeavours to allow children the sense of having a chat-based app while allowing parents to set controls (either the app or from their own adult JustTalk account). The basis behind this is positive; however, some children are challenging their parents by refusing to use JustTalk Kids, preferring to use the adult version without any restrictions in place.

### KNOWING THE PARENT PASSCODE

After downloading JustTalk Kids, parents can set a passcode which users must enter to add contacts. The parental controls help to manage which content can be viewed and who children can add as a contact; this then allows children to chat with friends in a controlled environment. However, prospective contacts don't have to know a specific username. In theory, someone could type in a random name and then add them as a friend.

### POTENTIAL DATA LEAKS

JustTalk and JustTalk Kids claim to be secure and encrypted, going so far as to state that even the developers themselves won't access your data. However, a security lapse in 2022 highlighted that messages were not in fact encrypted – leading to concerns around the security of the app and the transparency of the development team.

### CYBERBULLYING

Online chats can provide a sense of anonymity, leading some users to post things which they wouldn't normally say in person. Combined with the option of group chats, there's a risk that young people might join in with this kind of behaviour, escalating it further and potentially turning what should be a fun experience into something deeply negative.

### TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME

A report by the UK Parliament Education Committee highlighted a 52% increase in children's screen time between 2020 and 2022 – as well as finding that 20% of children used their smartphones in a manner consistent with screen addiction. Introducing children to social networking apps when they're too young can lead to bad digital habits and a reliance on technology from an early age.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### JUSTIFY THE CONTROLS

If parents allow their child to use JustTalk Kids, they should explain that they're putting parental controls in place to make the app safer. Make sure the child knows not to put their full name on the account and doesn't use a photo of themselves as their profile picture. This type of open discussion will help to ensure that a child is aware of the app's potential risks and knows how to reduce them.

### TALK ABOUT ONLINE FRIENDSHIPS

Young children could be excited to use this app. However, highlight that they must do so in a positive, respectful and responsible manner. While it can be easy to get caught up in a group chat, it's important to talk to others politely and call out any unpleasant behaviour. Discuss the importance of limiting their contacts to people they know in real life and use parental controls to enforce this.

### 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.



### DOS AND DON'TS OF SHARING

Some children might not understand the potential dangers of oversharing online. Set clear guidelines around what is and isn't safe to share on the internet, and discuss the concept of a digital footprint. Children need to understand that the things they say and share online can never be completely erased. Even if they delete it themselves, it can be saved and distributed by others.

### ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION

Apps like JustTalk can sometimes lend themselves to bullying behaviours. Parents should monitor what their child is sending and receiving. Check in with them regularly and encourage them to share their feelings (both positive and negative) at home. Remind them that they can block a contact if someone is treating them disrespectfully.

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The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/justtalk-kids>

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