

Robert Browning, Snowsfields and Tower Bridge Primary Schools

We learn and succeed together



[@towerbridgeschool.bsky.social](https://www.towerbridgeschool.bsky.social) [@snsprimary.bsky.social](https://www.snsprimary.bsky.social) [@robertbrowning.bsky.social](https://www.robertbrowning.bsky.social)

Find us at: www.thebridgesfederation.org.uk

Newsletter 9th May 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

On Thursday 8th May, it was the 80th Anniversary of VE Day, the children spent time together this week sharing food as if they were at a street party and taking part in VE Day activities.

Our year 6 children are well prepared for their SATs which begin on Monday 12th May, breakfast will be provided for the children at 8:30am. It is essential that they attend school on time every day. We wish them all good luck, they have worked so hard.

[Here is a link to the NHS advice on beating exam stress.](#)

A POEM FOR YEAR SIX



DON'T GET STRESSED.

JUST DO YOUR BEST.

REMEMBER, YOU'VE BEEN BLESSED

WITH SKILLS SATS CAN'T TEST.

Have a restful weekend and remember that the school reopens on Monday at 8:45am.



[The Neurodiversity Family Hub](#)

Please find the link [here](#) for the Neurodiversity Family Hub which provides activities for children in three age categories: under 5, 6-11 years and 11-18 years of age. They are based at Mint Street Park Adventure playground. 14 Weller Street SE1 1QU.



Dates For Your Diary



Tower Bridge

W/B 12th May - Year 6 Test Week
Tuesday 20th May - Groundwork coffee morning
Monday 26th May - Friday 30th May - HALF TERM - SCHOOL CLOSED
Monday 2nd June - Back to school - gates open 8.45am
Wednesday 2nd July - Sports Day
Wednesday 16th July (AM) - Sunshine Class celebration assembly

Robert Browning

Monday 12th- Thursday 15th May- YEAR 6 TEST WEEK
Monday 26th May - Friday 30th May - HALF TERM - SCHOOL CLOSED
Monday 2nd June - Back to school - gates open 8.45am

Snowsfields

Week Beginning Monday 12th May - Year 6 Test Week
Monday 26th May - Friday 30th May - HALF TERM - SCHOOL CLOSED
Monday 2nd June - Back to school - gates open 8.45am
Wednesday 2nd July - Sports Day
Tuesday 15th July - Sunshine class Graduation, 10am

Term Dates 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 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](#)



On Thursday we commemorated the 80th Anniversary of VE Day (Victory in Europe).

After learning about the significance of the day, children in Sunshine class decorated biscuits; children in Red and Orange class made scones and enjoyed an afternoon tea. The children in Yellow, Green, Blue and Purple classes made themselves sandwiches. We all wore red, white and blue and enjoyed a tea party altogether in the playground.



Yellow Class and Green Class have taken part in Bikeability Sessions this week in school. The sessions have been designed to help children ride safely in the city.



Green Class and Blue Class have been learning to play Lacrosse in school. They have picked up more PE skills and improved on others. Thank you Emily for organising!



A huge thank you to staff and pupils from Notre Dame school, who came in to work with Year 4 and Year 5 last week. They ran STEM workshops with the classes to model scientific theories with balloons. They all worked so hard, and the pupils had lots of fun learning more science.



Groundwork Update

Thank you to everyone who attended the sessions last term- we hope you found them useful! Dates for this term:

Tuesday 20th May: Ideas for playing with your children

Tuesday 3rd June: Autism and play

Tuesday 17th June: Planning the school holidays.



Red Class Trip

On Tuesday Year 1 had a brilliant trip to the Science Museum, they loved exploring all the exhibits!





Mini Marathon in School



Last week, children across the school took part in the Mini Marathon in school. Some classes ventured to the local parts to take part and they ran two miles! All of the children got very special badges to recognise their efforts. We have noticed that their fitness has really improved this year- with lots more children completing more than the expected distance.



Snowsfields Primary School



This week, our school proudly took part in a very special event – **the 80th anniversary of VE Day**, marking the end of World War II in Europe. The children joined hundreds of schools across the country to take part in the Big Live Assembly, where they heard moving testimonies from veteran soldiers who shared their experiences of the war and the relief and hope that came with its end. It was also a powerful reminder of the importance of peace.



Dressed in red, white and blue, the colours of the Union Jack, the children looked fantastic and truly embraced the spirit of the day. They enjoyed a celebratory tea party, complete with bunting, sweet treats and the sounds of classic 1940s jive music filling the air. A big thank you to our staff and parents for making the day so special.





Our school value this week is:
W - Welcoming Everyone



Reading Raffle Winners



Reading
Raffle
Winners



Our core value this week
is: Resilience



Times Tables
Rock Stars

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



Reading
Raffle
Winners





	% present	Lates	Total
Year 1	94.6%	1	150
Year 2	99%	2	225
Year 3	95.8%	10	50
Year 4	97%	2	225
Year 5	95.4%	10	
Year 6	96.9%	7	125

Overall whole school attendance for week beginning 28/4/2025: 96.39%

1st Place Attendance: Year 2

1st Place Punctuality: Year 1



Overall whole school attendance for week beginning: 28/4/2025: 94.78%

1st Place Attendance: Y5

1st Place Punctuality: Y2

	Absence	Lates	Total
Year 1	8	3	96.37%
Year 2	16	2	92.02%
Year 3	5	8	97.92%
Year 4	6	4	94.78%
Year 5	2	3	99.23%
Year 6	8	5	93.98%



	Absence	Lates	Total
Year 1	9	7	175
Year 2	9	13	125
Year 3	0	3	275
Year 4	19	10	100
Year 5	0	7	250
Year 6	9	11	175

Overall whole school attendance for week beginning: 28/04/2025:

96.41%

1st Place Attendance: Y5 & Y3

1st Place Punctuality: Y3

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Find us at: 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/>

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?

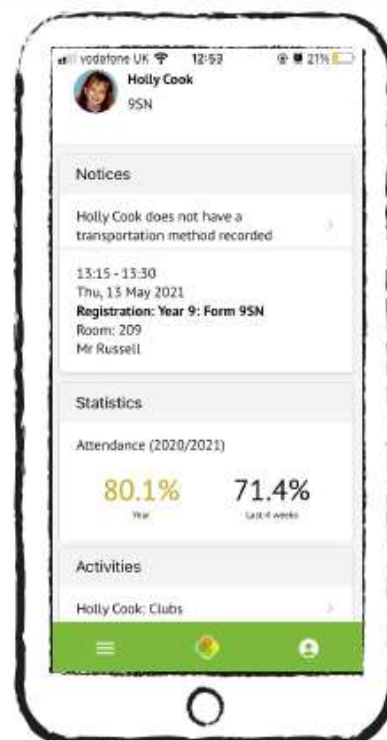
Need help using Arbor?

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.



family
fun



LONDON MARBLE SHOW

SATURDAY 24TH MAY
BERMONDSEY VILLAGE HALL
12 - 6PM



PE & SCHOOL SPORTS NETWORK

FREE GIRLS FOOTBALL

EVERY MONDAY (17:00-18:00)
@ BURGESS PARK ASTRO TURF

WILD CATS | OPEN TO ALL GIRLS AGED 11+ | SQUAD

PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE TO REGISTER



Lewisham Disability Sports Network presents:

Lewisham Inclusive Sports Festival

A free event, accessible to all abilities, for disabled young people and their families, aged 5-25!

Register below or scan the QR code:
<https://bit.ly/LewishamInclusiveSports>

Register Now!

Saturday 27th June
2 pm to 4 pm
Ladbroke Grove
Silverman Rd
SE6 4QX

In Partnership with:
Access Sport | GLL | LGSN | Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust | London Borough of Lewisham | London Borough of Greenwich

Contact: leah@accesssport.org.uk | 020 7993 3093



FREE

AFTERSCHOOL SPORTS

AT MARLBOROUGH SPORTS GARDEN

School's out, time to play!
Children aged 5-11 - join us for **FREE** afterschool sports at Marlborough Sports Garden! Fun, beginner-friendly sessions run Tuesday-Thursday, with free play on Monday and Friday. Choose from football, touch rugby, rollerskating, cricket, volleyball and more.

SPRING 2025
Week 1: Tue 23rd April 2025
Week 2: Tue 30th April 2025
Week 3: Tue 7th May 2025
Week 4: Tue 14th May 2025
Week 5: Tue 21st May 2025

SUMMER 2025
Week 1: Tue 3rd June 2025
Week 2: Tue 10th June 2025
Week 3: Tue 17th June 2025
Week 4: Tue 24th June 2025
Week 5: Tue 1st July 2025
Week 6: Tue 8th July 2025

TIMES
All sessions start from 3.45 - 5.15pm

LOCATION
Marlborough Sports Garden
Ladbroke Grove, NW10 2DB

Call 020 7403 3393 or visit online at www.bst.org.uk/afterschoolsports

BANKSIDE OPEN SPACES TRUST



PE & SCHOOL SPORTS NETWORK

James Michael Partridge
Primary School
Portland Street
SE17 2AR

YEAR GROUPS 1-7

FREE GIRLS FOOTBALL CAMP 2025

09:30 - 15:30
27th - 30th May 2025

PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE TO REGISTER



SOUTHWARK JAGUARS

OPEN TRIALS

MONDAY 19TH MAY 2025

GIRLS FOOTBALL

Scan QR code to register your interest or contact: open.trials@southwarkjaguars.org.uk for more information.

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, 13 Charnleigh Street, Burgess Park, SE5 0HT

BOOK A PLACE
Email: ben.campbell@southwark.gov.uk
Phone: 07738 860 768

Parent Skills
PARENT SPACE
A QUARTERLY ONLINE & IN PERSON PROGRAM
A 12 WEEK COURSE DESIGNED FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN FROM TWO YEARS TO SCHOOL AGE. THE COURSE IS FREE AND OPEN TO ALL PARENTS AS WELL AS GOOD PARENTS WHO WANT TO IMPROVE THEIR PARENTING SKILLS.

SERIES
THURSDAY 10TH JANUARY 2023 10:30-11AM
WEDNESDAY 14TH APRIL 2023 10:30-11AM
WEDNESDAY 14TH JULY 2023 10:30-11AM

FOR DETAILS & TO REGISTER
• admin@parentskillsgo.com
• parentskillsgo.org

BOOKING
07507443293
07725370083
02030241878
07544423853

PLACED HERE TO IMPROVE SKILLS AND SUPPORT

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

SENsational Stay & Play
Fun FREE groups for children with additional needs or disabilities and their parents/careers

- 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 drop-in sessions for under-5s
Saturday respite sessions for 5-11 years
See timetable on back of this leaflet

For more info visit www.southwark.gov.uk/parenting
Or to book <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/parenting>

Southwark Children and Family Centres

Southwark Young Carers

To get involved, you can refer via our website www.imago.community or scan the QR Code

IMAGO

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.

For further information, please contact our Hub
youngcarers@imago.community
0300 111 1110

Southwark Young Carers is a service of Imago Community
Registered charity number 2238 000

Drug and Alcohol Service **Young People**

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.

Workshops:

- 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

For further information contact:

- Email: Southwark.YoungPeople@cg.org.uk or scan the QR code for a direct link to the event booking page.
- You can call us on: **020 3404 7699**

BOOK HERE

TAP - IN SESSIONS

Free and stand alone information sessions for parents and carers on a range of topics - 'TAP-IN' to the ones you need or complete the set!

Sessions include:

- Digital Safety - how to support children to be safe online
- Agas 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
EARLYHELP@SOUTHWARK.GOV.UK

We hold in person and online sessions throughout the term

Contact the team for next available session

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

For parents of children aged 0 - 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're looking for parents who want to improve their family and community

WHEN IS IT ON?

Thursday 7pm to 8pm
Starting in June - Summer
Friday 10am to 11am - Autumn
Online evening groups (Zoomable)
What time? Where? How?

Please contact us for more info

The Neurodiversity Family Hub

The Neurodiversity Family Hub provide specialised clubs for children & young people with SEND in Southwark, including: Teen Tribe, Junior Tribe and Tiny Tribe

As well as parent/carer support, including:

Parent Connect, Parent Circle, Walk & Talk, My Advocacy Partner and whole family gatherings.

<https://theneurodiversityfamilyhub.org/>

family info

SOUTHWARK SCHOOLS' INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Authentic - Air Quality Monitoring & Engagement Project for students in Year 6 and above

This project will use air quality sensors placed in classrooms and the houses of Southwark children, offering a live insight into the air quality they experience.

Teachers and students will participate in a specially designed curriculum to deepen their understanding of air quality's effects on health and discover strategies to **reduce** harmful emissions.

This initiative builds on existing air quality efforts and provides tools with a dedicated webpage and monitoring device to assist schools in fostering a clearer, healthier educational atmosphere.

School staff and parents can register interest by filling out the form on this link or by emailing: https://forms.office.com/0123456789

environment@southwark.gov.uk
www.southwark.gov.uk

Climate School Action Plan
Check out the Climate School Action Plan Guide which includes a link to improve air quality

Price & Buckland

NEW SCHOOL UNIFORM WEBSITE LAUNCH

On the **11th** of February we will launch our **NEW** website. The URL remains: www.price-buckland.co.uk

Website QR code. This will take you to the homepage to search for your school

Accounts: If you have ordered from our website before, go to the **Account Section** and **re-set** your password. You can use the same password that you have currently.

Contents: You can then see previous orders and manage your account.

Any Questions? Call us on 0159 640827

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 26th February to 23rd June 2025

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

What will I get from attending the course?

- The knowledge and skills required to become an effective teaching assistant
- The City & Guilds Award in Support Work in Schools (Level 1)
- The opportunity to progress to the Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools or to apply for work as a Teaching Assistant
- Free course FALDs form - <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/learning-unlimited>

How much does it cost?

*The course is free but there is a non-refundable registration fee of £50.

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

All applicants should have level 2 English.

Please only pay attention to competency in English when applying for work as a Teaching Assistant.

Offers are subject to completion of application form and assessment.

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 times each)

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/learning-unlimited>

Spaces are limited so book soon.

We will contact you to confirm your place on the course.

Let's talk PANTS with Pantosaurus! | NSPCC

NSPCC



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

Parent Skills 2024

SEWING SKILLS

10 WEEKS DRESSMAKING COURSE FOR BEGINNERS & INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

FREE SEWING MENDING STATION
(limited to one per household)

BASIC / BEGINNERS SEWING CLASS STARTS
WEDNESDAY 16TH JANUARY 2025
10AM TO 12PM
COST PER PERSON £20

INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS SEWING CLASS STARTS
FRIDAY 17TH JANUARY 2025
10AM TO 12PM
COST PER PERSON £30

VENUE: THE LEWISTON CENTRE COMMUNITY CENTRE
8 EUGENIA ROAD
ROTTERHAM S66 2BU

FOR DETAILS & TO REGISTER
0203285609, 0738460362
admin@parentskills24.co.uk
parentskills24.co.uk

FREE YEAR 6 LITTLE FISH THEATRE SUMMER PROGRAMME

FOR SOUTHWARK CHILDREN
28TH JULY - 8TH AUG 2025 (MON-FRI)
AT RYE OAK PRIMARY SCHOOL

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK A PLACE FOR YOUR CHILD
EMAIL: INFO@LITTLEFISHTHEATRE.CO.UK

TO FILL IN A BOOKING FORM
CLICK THE LINK BELOW OR
SCAN THE QR CODE

<https://bit.ly/413nERW>

ART **DRAMA** **Music** **DANCE**

Free Home Fire Safety Visits

A fire can start in any room and the effects can be devastating, even a small fire in your home can lead to substantial damage and expensive repairs. The LFB want to stop fires from happening and that is why we offer free home fire safety visits to help keep you and your loved ones safe.

What happens during a home fire safety visit ?

Our firefighters or trained staff will visit you at home, at a time that suits you and carry out a risk assessment. They will give you advice based on your home and individual needs, this includes; information on how to **prevent** fires, the importance of smoke alarms to **detect** a fire and your **escape** plan in the event of a fire.

A visit can take up to 90 minutes or longer if needed and we will fit free smoke alarms if required.

Specialist alarms can be fitted for people who may have a delayed response to escape for example; strobe light and vibrating pad alarms for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

How to book a Home Fire Safety Visit:

Freephone: 0800 028 4428

Email: smokealarms@london-fire.gov.uk

Text /SMS: 07860 021 319

<https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/home-fire-safety/>

Worried about a relative, friend or neighbour ? Although everyone is eligible for a free home fire safety visit, some people with health problems or lifestyle behaviours can have an increased chance of a fire happening. To help you we have listed some of these examples below:

- **Increased risk factors can include:**

Anyone that smokes; overloaded electrical sockets or poor wiring; unsafe use of candles or naked flames; previous fires or near misses; cooking left unattended; hoarding of any kind or someone who lives alone.

- **They are less able to react because of:**

Mental health conditions such as dementia or learning difficulties; no smoke alarms are fitted or they don't work; alcohol dependency or drug misuse (prescribed or recreational); physical health issues including sensory impairments eg; hearing or sight.

- **They have a reduced ability to escape:**

Mobility issues due to a physical disability; age-related problems or as a result of a long-term illness; escape routes are not kept clear or are blocked due to actions such as hoarding or conditions that affect decision making.

If you know anyone who has **any combination of these risk factors**, give them our details to arrange a free home fire safety visit or simply ask them if they would like you to book a visit for them.

Remember -This is not an exhaustive list, if you are unsure please contact us for extra advice.

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 chat, 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 (within 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 SCREENTIME

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.

#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

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

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