



FRIDAY NEWS

16TH
OCTOBER
2026

The official newsletter of St James CE Primary School

SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD

☀️ **A Wonderful Week at St James!**

It has been another fantastic week at St James, and we would like to say a huge thank you to our families for your continued support!

❤️ **Giving Racism the Red Card**

Thank you to everyone who supported our Show Racism the Red Card day. By coming together to raise awareness, we have shown our commitment to challenging racism and all forms of discrimination. At St James, we believe that everyone deserves to feel safe, valued and respected, and we will continue to promote kindness, equality and inclusion throughout our school community.

🏆 **Year 6 Food Safety Success!**

A huge congratulations to our Year 6 pupils who have achieved their Level 1 Food Safety and Food Hygiene awards! We are incredibly proud of their hard work and achievement. These valuable qualifications have helped them to develop important life skills and an understanding of how to handle food safely and hygienically. Well done, Year 6!

🍩 **Friday Tuck Shop Fun!**

A big thank you to everyone who helped to set up our Friday tuck shop, and to all those who came along to buy a treat! Your support helped to make it a great success.

STARS OF THE WEEK

Reception - Nyrah N

Class 3 - Fatima A

Class 4 - Ruby L

Class 5 - Ashantie M

Class 6 - Lilly-May H

Class 7 - Eshaal M

Class 8 - Scarlett L

Class 9 - Huzayl K

Class 10 - Henry W

Class 11 - Skyler G



VISION AWARD

Reception - F

Class 3 - Zainab Z

Class 4 - Mehmal M

Class 5 - Philip O

Class 6 - Jean S

Class 7 - Ariella K

Class 8 - Jaiden T

Class 9 - Skylar B

Class 10 - William H

Class 11 - Liliana C

THINGS COMING UP

Tuesday 20th October - School Photographs

Wednesday 21st October - Bonfire & Firework Safety assemblies in class.

Wednesday 21st October - Movie Night (Years 1, 2 & 3) @ 3:30 pm

Thursday 22nd October - Movie Night (Years 4, 5 & 6) @ 3:30 pm

Friday 23rd October - School finishes for a one-week half-term.

Monday 2nd November - Return to school.

Monday 2nd November - Swimming lessons start for Years 4 and 6. Information letters will go out soon.

WB 9th November - Parent Consultations - phone calls. Please sign up to Class Dojo as appointments will be made via this.

Tuesday 10th November - Reception Stay & Learn @ 2:15 pm

Wednesday 11th November - Class 11 Remembrance Assembly @ 2:45 pm

Friday 13th November - Trsust Service for Year 5 & 6 at Bolton Parish Church

Friday 13th November - Children In Need (Non-uniform)

Monday 16th November - Swimming lessons start for Years 3 and 5. Information letters will go out soon.

WB 16th November - Anti-Bullying Week

Monday 16th November - Odd Socks Day

Wednesday 25th November - Worship Play Super Learning Day

Tuesday 1st December - Cafe Church @ 3:30 pm

Gold Scroll

Asoomi F

Milena P

Ayeza R

Mia R

Fatima A

Ivy R

Ivy H

Oakley S

Miruna M

Sudais K

Yusuf A

Ghofran G

Sally G

Charley H

Humayl H x 3

Olivia B

Hudson A

Daniel O

Teddy C

Mehmal M

Caleb D

Jason L

Ashantie M

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI COMPANIONS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

AI companions are programmed to be endlessly agreeable, attentive, and available 24/7. Unlike human friendships, an AI companion never disagrees, sets personal boundaries, or gets tired. Young people (especially those experiencing loneliness, social anxiety, or low self-esteem) can quickly develop an unhealthy emotional attachment, viewing synthetic software as their 'best friend' or a surrogate romantic partner.

DANGEROUS MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE

AI chatbots possess no genuine empathy, professional clinical knowledge, or moral reasoning. While developers state these tools are not therapists, vulnerable teenagers often turn to them in crisis. Chatbots have previously hallucinated unsafe medical guidance, validated depressive spirals, and failed to safely escalate disclosures of self-harm or suicidal ideation to real-world protective services.

DATA HARVESTING & OVERSHARING

Because conversational bots simulate warmth and understanding, children often lower their guard and treat the chatbot as a trusted friend. They may disclose sensitive personal information, including full names, school details, private family problems, or secrets, unaware that their conversations are being logged, may be analysed by third parties (including advertisers), or used to train future AI models.

DISTORTED SOCIAL SKILLS

Navigating real-world friendships can be messy, involving dealing with conflict, compromise, boredom, and awkwardness. If a teenager spends hours interacting with an AI that is tailored specifically to validate and flatter them, they may become impatient with real-world relationships. Over time, this can lead to social withdrawal, heightened anxiety in peer groups, and isolation: a vicious circle of growing online dependency coupled with a heightened sense that relationships in the 'real world' are too challenging to maintain.

INAPPROPRIATE OR EXPLICIT CONTENT

While most mainstream platforms feature safety filters and guardrails, young people frequently discover 'jailbreak' prompts to bypass them. Some companion platforms subtly nudge users towards mature themes, romantic roleplay, or sexually suggestive conversations. In worse cases, third-party apps with weak safety checks have been found to generate sexually explicit text or intimate images.

"FREEMIUM" UPSELLS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many companion platforms operate on a freemium model. While basic chat is free, features like voice calls, uncensored responses, custom avatars, or 'deeper bonding' tiers are locked behind expensive monthly recurring subscriptions or in-app token purchases. This can lead to significant hidden costs and pressure on young people to spend money to maintain the 'friendship'.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALK OPENLY ABOUT FAKE RELATIONSHIPS

Demystify how these tools work. Explain to young people that an AI companion has no feelings, memories, or consciousness; it is simply calculating the next most mathematically probable word based on its training data. It is helpful to explain to them the mechanics of large language models so that they understand how they are trained and how they are designed to always flatter and be helpful.

ENCOURAGE REAL-WORLD CONNECTION

Ensure technology habits do not replace face-to-face peer socialisation, sports, hobbies, and family time. Create healthy boundaries at home (such as keeping phones and tablets out of bedrooms overnight) to prevent late-night, unmonitored attachment loops with conversational chatbots when young people are at their most vulnerable.

AUDIT PRIVACY SETTINGS & AGE LIMITS

Check which companion apps are installed on your child's phone or tablet. Many dedicated companion apps carry an App Store rating of 17+, while platforms like Character.ai set a minimum age of 13+ (or 16+ in the UK/EU). Review the privacy settings together: turn off data-sharing toggles, disable model training where possible, and ensure location permissions are blocked.

REINFORCE WHERE TO GET REAL HELP

Make sure young people know that a machine can never replace professional pastoral or mental health care. Remind them of the trusted adults they can turn to at school - such as their Form Tutor, Head of Year, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) - as well as dedicated youth support services like Childline (0800 1111) or Shout (text 85258).

Meet Our Expert

Darren Coxon is the Founder and Executive Director of Kompass Education, a consultancy specialising in supporting educators, students and parents in making wise choices with AI. His book *Ethical AI and Education*, co-authored with Clara Hawking, will be released later in 2026 by Taylor and Francis.



The National College®

See full reference list on our website



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