



FRIDAY NEWS

5TH
SEPTEMBER
2025

The official newsletter of St James CE Primary School



We have been delighted to welcome the children back to school and hope they have enjoyed a happy and settled start with their new teachers.

We began the term with our exciting 'Inflatables Day', where pupils had the chance to play, laugh and bond with their new classmates on bouncy castles. It was wonderful to see the children enjoying themselves, building friendships and embracing the start of the year with such positivity.

This was followed by our fantastic Rock Kidz session on anti-bullying. The children had a brilliant time singing, dancing and rocking out together while dressed as rock stars, all while learning the important message of kindness and respect. It was inspiring to see them so engaged and full of energy.

These events are just the beginning of what we have planned this year to encourage excellent attendance, positive relationships and a love of school – so watch this space for details of what's coming next!

We are also thrilled to welcome new members of staff to the St James family:

- Miss Berry (Class 4)
- Mrs Afzal (Class 5)
- Miss Blackledge (Class 6)
- Miss Carter (Class 6)
- Miss Young (Class 3)

I am sure you will join us in making them feel at home in our school community.

"With God, there is no limit to what you can do. There is no obstacle you can't overcome. Through Him all things are possible."
(Matthew 19:26)

Reminders

MEET THE TEACHER

Looking ahead, our 'Meet the Teacher' events will take place during the week beginning Monday, 15th September. These sessions will give you the chance to meet your child's new teacher, see their classroom and hear more about the routines, expectations and events for the year ahead.

A Microsoft Form will be sent out next week for you to book your place at one of two available sessions (you only need to attend one). If you are unable to join us, please don't worry – a parent information leaflet will be provided, and teachers are always happy to speak with you via the school office or at the end of the day.

We are looking forward to an exciting year ahead and working in partnership with you to ensure every child thrives.

UNIFORM

We are delighted to see so many of our children in the correct school uniform this week. It was so encouraging to see them come back to school in fresh uniforms with an eager attitude to learn.

It was also great to see so many children in the correct PE kit during Inflatable Day. Please remember that PE kits can stay in school so that it is always ready for PE lessons and any unexpected sports activities.

Jewellery should not be worn by children in school. If children do wear earrings, they must be studs and not loops. This is to keep them safe when moving around school. No child should be wearing rings or necklaces in school.

False nails are not permitted in school.

CLASS LIST

Nursery - Mrs Finch

Class 1 - Mrs Whitton

Class 2 - Mrs Pilling

Class 3 - Miss Symonds

Class 4 - Miss Berry

Class 5 - Mrs Afzal

Class 6 - Miss Blackledge

Class 7 - Miss Rashid

Class 8 - Miss Thomas

Class 9 - Miss Costello

Class 10 - Miss Casserley

Class 11 - Miss Collins

Class 12 - Mr Mitchell



DOG ON THE PLAYGROUND

Please remember - NO DOGS on the school premises.



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about VPNs

VPN use among UK teens is on the rise – with a noticeable uptick following the introduction of the Online Safety Act's age-verification rules. A VPN – or virtual private network – can boost online privacy by hiding internet activity and masking the user's location. But while this technology has legitimate uses, it can also allow children to bypass safety filters and access inappropriate content. This guide covers what parents and educators need to know about VPNs and how to keep young people safe.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

BYPASSING RESTRICTIONS

VPNs are commonly used by young people to get around blocks on school networks or parental controls. This could include accessing social media, gaming sites or adult content that would otherwise be filtered out.

ACCESSING INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

When a VPN is active, content filters can no longer see which sites a child is visiting. This means they could access inappropriate content without detection. This also makes it harder to intervene when a child is engaging in risky behaviour, as it may be difficult to detect it's happening.

REDUCED TRANSPARENCY

VPNs may make parental monitoring software ineffective, stopping parents from monitoring their child's activities, including their ability to identify potentially harmful or inappropriate content or online contact. This in turn may prevent parents from protecting their children from attempted sextortion or other online threats.

FALSE SENSE OF ANONYMITY

Children believing that VPNs make them 'invisible' online may seek to explore unsuitable internet content, including content which might otherwise be blocked. This may result in them seeking and accessing increasingly inappropriate – or even harmful – content.

INCREASED EXPOSURE TO MALWARE

Many free VPN apps are poorly regulated and may carry hidden malware. Young people installing unverified software could unknowingly open up their device (and home network) to spying, data theft, computer viruses, or even remote access by criminals.

RISK OF MALICIOUS VPN PROVIDERS

Although VPNs may increase privacy from network or service provider filtering and monitoring, this results in providing user and usage data to VPN providers. Some VPN providers may track user activity and sell that data to advertisers – or worse, malicious third parties. Not all VPNs are trustworthy.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EXPLAIN THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF VPNs

Explain how VPNs can help protect user data and therefore may be appropriate when using public or other unsecured Wi-Fi, or while dealing with sensitive corporate or personal data.

EXPLAIN THE RISKS OF VPNs

Discuss online risks, including harmful, disturbing, and criminal content. Inform children about criminal contact, such as sextortion, and how VPNs may restrict adults from monitoring children's internet use and helping them avoid these risks.

FREE ISN'T FREE

Discuss the risk of 'free' VPNs and how they may sell or use people's data, which adds privacy risks. Additionally, discuss the potential for added malware in VPN downloads, and how these compromise devices and apps, leading to potential fraud or theft.

CHECK DEVICES FOR VPNs

VPNs can be installed as both apps and browser extensions, so regularly check these on the devices used by the young people in your care. If they have been using VPNs, discuss it, listen to their reasoning, and inform them of the associated risks. In some cases, it may be appropriate to block VPN use via parental controls and other settings.

DISCUSS ONLINE BOUNDARIES

Reinforce the importance of keeping safe online and how filtering and monitoring helps keep young people safe – explain this to them rather than just 'being strict'. Encourage an open conversation around what they're accessing and why.

Meet Our Expert

This guide has been created in collaboration with Gary Henderson, director of IT at a large independent school in the UK, an ambassador for the Association of Network Managers in Education and the Vice Chair of the Independent Schools Council Digital Advisory Group.



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10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

SUPPORTING CHILDREN GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

Returning to school after the summer holidays can be both exciting and daunting for children of all ages. Different routines, classes, schools, and academic pressures can cause anxiety or uncertainty. Parents play a vital role in easing this transition. This guide will help you support your child emotionally, mentally, and practically as they return to school.

1 RE-ESTABLISH ROUTINES



Gradually shift back to school-time routines a week or two before term starts. Regular bedtimes, wake-up times, and mealtimes can help children feel more secure and reduce the shock of change when school begins. Having a routine creates predictability and stability, helping to reduce anxiety while improving sleep and concentration.

2 TALK ABOUT FEELINGS



Encourage open conversations with children about their feelings. Ask them how they feel about returning to school, such as what they're looking forward to and anything they might be feeling unsure or worried about. Validating their emotions can help reduce anxiety and show them it's okay to talk about their emotional wellbeing.

3 SUPPORT WITH SLEEP



Children need adequate sleep for concentration, brain function, memory, and emotional regulation. Establish a wind-down routine without screens at least an hour before bed, and encourage relaxing activities like reading or listening to calming music.

4 LOOK OUT FOR SIGNS



Some children hide their anxiety. Watch for changes in their behaviour, such as withdrawal, stomach aches, and irritability. If worries persist, speak with their teacher or the pastoral team early to ensure your child receives support.

5 REFRESH SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



Help children reconnect with school friends by arranging playdates or video chats in the week before school starts. Familiar faces and social interactions help the transition and provide emotional comfort on that first day back.

6 CREATE A CALM MORNING



Mornings set the tone for the day. Plan ahead with a consistent morning routine that allows time for breakfast, getting dressed, and talking calmly about the day. Avoid last-minute rushing to reduce stress for everyone.

7 FOCUS ON POSITIVES



Talk about the fun and interesting parts of school - seeing friends, favourite subjects, or exciting activities. One simple but powerful change parents can make is swapping "How's your day been?" for "What's been good about your day?" This invites more of a positive, open response. Focusing on positives can help shift children's anxious thoughts and reframe school as a safe and engaging place.

8 VISIT OR VISUALISE SCHOOL



If possible, encourage visits to the school grounds before the first day, especially if it's a new school. Walking the route or even looking at photos of classrooms and teachers can make the environment feel familiar. The school website is always a great go-to place for this. This is particularly helpful for younger children or those with additional needs.

9 PLAN AHEAD TOGETHER



Involve children in preparing for school - buying supplies, packing their bag, or choosing lunch options. This gives them a sense of control and builds excitement. Use checklists or calendars to prepare together, helping reduce last-minute stress.

10 STAY POSITIVE AND PRESENT



Children pick up on your outlook. Stay calm, positive, and present, especially during drop-offs. Avoid lingering goodbyes, and let them know you'll be there at pick-up. A consistent, reassuring presence builds their confidence and resilience.

Meet Our Expert

This guide was created by Jo Morton-Brown, an Emotional Health Practitioner with nearly 15 years' experience supporting children and young people's mental health. She produces uplifting YouTube content for pupils and trains adults to better support young people's wellbeing, with a mission to help every child feel valued and understand their emotions.



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