Friday 13th December 2024

Cherrywood News

Message from Mrs Lewis

Only one week left of term and it is going to be a busy one. Please remember that Tuesday will be full of Christmas celebrations. Children can come in wearing their Christmas outfits, we will be eating our Christmas lunch and also performing two concerts. We will also be holding our Christmas Market at the very end of the day. Please remember to bring your money with you to buy some sweet treats.

Please also remember that school will end at 3.15pm on Friday 20th December and there will be no child care available.

I am sending out a separate letter today with information about spring term clubs. Please get your responses back as early as possible next week so that we can allocate spaces.

Best wishes

Attendance

Congratulations to Larch Class for achieving the best attendance for a second week

Data for 2nd December to 6th December	
Ash	87.85%
Chestnut	95%
Elm	83.33%
Larch	95.45%
Oak	93.21%
Pine	94%
Sycamore	92.28%

DATES FOR THE DIARY

- **Thursday 19th December—Chestnut (Y1) Class Exhibition—9.30am—rearranged date**
- **Monday 16th December—2.45pm online safety workshops with your child in their class**
- Tuesday 17th December Cherrywood's Christmas Day of Fun:-
  - ⇒ Wear Christmas Jumpers
  - ⇒ **Carol Concert—9.30am & 2.30pm performances**
  - ⇒ Christmas Lunch
  - ⇒ **Christmas Market**
- **Friday 20th December—Last Day of Term—3.15pm collect as usual**
- **Back to School Tuesday 7th January 2025**

Parents are invited to attend these dates.

INSET DAYS:

Monday 6th January 2025—School Closed to Pupils

Monday 23rd June 2025—School Closed to Pupils

Celebrations —

We are pleased to announce this week's -

	Value Ambassadors	Stars of the Week
Ash Class	Kyle	Ash Class
Chestnut Class	Ayon	Leon
Elm Class	Scarlet	Jeena
Larch Class	Ayush	Anabel
Oak Class	Lexie	David
Pine Class	Kacie-Jane	Hadi
Sycamore Class	Freya	Jamie

Play Leader Awards	Key Stage 1
	Ali

Our Value Ambassadors—recognised for showing great resilience



Stars of the Week — recognised for their efforts this week



Play Leader Awards for children demonstrating the school values in their play





Last week Cherrywood's choir made everyone feel festive singing carols at the Church of the Good Shepherd





Question of the week with a safeguarding message



This week our **School Council** asked if you knew what your child is taught to keep safe online. 95% of you said yes—which was great to hear.

Please do still come along to join your child in class on **Monday 16th December at 2.45pm** to join in with their online safety learning.

Christmas Concert - Tuesday 17th December

Christmas Concert tickets were issued and sent home in envelopes with your child today. We have managed to allocate tickets to everyone who requested them, including most of those who asked for extra tickets. We do not have any further tickets available.

We would like to please ask that you arrive at the school back gate at 9.15am if you are attending the morning performance and 2.15pm if you are attending the afternoon performance. This is so that we can get everyone into the hall and seated for a prompt start at 9.30am and 2.30pm respectively.

Morning and afternoon tickets are colour coded accordingly and you will need your ticket with you to attend..We look forward to seeing you all there!

Festive Gifting Rules

What is the five Christmas gift rule?

Christmas can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially with wanting to purchase lots of gifts for our children. If you sometimes feel like this it might be nice to try and stick to the five gift rule:-



* ***Something your child wants***
* ***Something your child needs***
* ***Something your child can wear***
* ***Something your child can read***
* ***A little surprise—this can be something to do or make, or even something as a family***



Children selected from Year 1 and 2 took part in an inter school sporting event with children from two local schools.

They thoroughly enjoyed themselves and represented Cherrywood well.













Thank you to the year 6 children who were excellent sporting leaders and ran the sessions really efficiently.















A very big thank you to Alice's Grandad, Mr Kearns, for giving our bench an impressive 'glow up'. The children have noticed it now matches their school uniform.!





Pine Class were visited by members of Rushmoor Rotary Club this week. They were each presented with their own dictionary which they will use during their time at Cherrywood.



The children enjoyed signing each other's copies and are making use of them on a daily basis now.

Thank you so much to SENDelight Gifts for donating some sensory toys and resources to The Nook. We would also like to thank the parent who organised this for us. It is greatly appreciated and we know that many of our children will benefit from using these resources.



Safeguarding Alert!

Artificial intelligence is probably *the* hot topic in technology circles and amongst children of a certain again right now. The questions to ask now: What are the clearest risks around AI-powered 'virtual friends' which are springing up all over the internet?

There's **Character AI,** Replika and Kuki, for instance, while Snapchat has recently got in on the act with My AI – and search engines like Bing and Google have developed their own versions. Are these machine intelligences suitable online companions for young people?

What is Character AI?

Character AI is a Chabot service that can generate human-like text responses based on user's customisations. The service uses Artificial Intelligence to create believable responses.

Minimum requirements

According to Character AI terms and conditions, users must be 13 or over to be able to use the service.

Is Character AI safe to use?

Like with any AI tool, Character AI learns from the people who interact with it. Unfortunately, this can lead to inappropriate and harmful content. The platform has no parental controls.

5 tips to keep your child safe using AI:

- Regularly check-in on their use of any AI app. - Which characters are they talking to and how? Do they have any potentially harmful personalities? These check-ins are a part of regular online safety and help children develop their understanding of harmful content.
- Together, review the privacy and safety features - Go through the app together so you both know where and how to report harmful content. Also, review the Terms of Service and Community Guidelines to make sure your teen knows what they should report.
- Consider their maturity as well as age - Not every teen has the critical thinking and media literacy skills to use Character AI. So, consider whether your child has the skills to manage potential harm before allowing access.
    - Use parental controls in the app store, on devices and on your network to restrict access to Character AI if you don't want them to access it. However, remember to also talk about why you're doing this.
- Discuss the appropriate ways to use AI tools - They should not upload their own voice or images to protect their privacy. Equally, they should not upload the voices or images of friends, family members or other real people. An exception for voices might be if they like to voice act and want to upload a fake voice.
- Set limits around usage - This could include setting time limits, defining where they can use the app and agreeing on how they can use the app. For example, you might limit them to an hour in a common area at home. You might also let them use it for learning or practising skills but don't want them having casual conversations with Chabots.

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI VIRTUAL FRIENDS

Artificial intelligence has seen significant development over the recent months, with companies releasing new AI-based software or adding an AI element to existing apps (such as Snapchat). One form of AI that has become especially popular has been the 'AI friend' or chatbot. There are now numerous 'virtual friend' apps available, with other successful platforms likely to adopt it soon.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONTENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

AI chatbots may not always recognise when content is age inappropriate or harmful and should be filtered out. As a result, 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 possibly 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 chatbots originate from the USA or UK, for instance, they can display a distinctly western-centric worldview. This could lead to children developing skewed attitudes and behaviours if they interact with the AI consistently.

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, their creativity and their 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 warn that there may be significant risks associated with how this information is stored and used (for instance, the possibility of potential breaches or misuse by third parties).

Advice for Parents & Carers

CHAT ABOUT CHATBOTS

If a child is already expressing an interest in AI apps, then 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 children and perhaps do your own research to ensure that you think they're suitable. Once you're totally happy, you could sit and explore the range of AI chatbots together.

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

If a child is keen to engage with AI chatbots, encourage them to do so in a safe environment: ideally in a shared space, 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 children 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 still get 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 children can download and interact with. 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 them. Emphasise that AI isn't a real person (however much it might sound like one) and may occasionally tell them something inaccurate or skewed by bias.

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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A Gentle Reminder for the Holidays

Matching pyjamas don't make a magical Christmas

Perfect decorations can't replace the warmth of a happy home.

A messy kitchen means memories were made.

It's okay if traditions are simple—they're yours, and that's enough.

There's no 'perfect parent' at Christmas, only one who loves.

Years from now, they'll remember the hugs, laughter, and love - not the gifts.

Your presence will always outshine any present.

Let kindness, connection, and joy be your guide this season.

MHM MENTAL HEALTH MOVEMENT

