



Exam season is very much with us now; Year 10s and Year 12s have had their first week of internal exams and it has been extremely pleasing to see how well so many of them have approached these. There have been numerous conversations about exam technique and the knowledge that is needed for success; there is a real understanding amongst students of the need to work hard to bring about good exam results, and I have been delighted with the attitude of the Year 10s and 12s.

Preparations for success in the summer continue for our Year 11 and Year 13 students. As you would expect, additional opportunities are being given to students as needed to support their current needs; this may be in the form of extra subject-specific interventions or time to enable students to complete coursework. As always, thank you to all of our parents and carers for all of your encouragement of your daughter and/or son.

A reminder, too, to all members of our school community on the importance of attendance; students need to be in school to learn what is required for success in exams, and to learn the many wider skills which are required for employment. As you know, the statistics on the link between school attendance and exam results are clear:

*Statistics from the DfE show the link between absence and attainment at key stage 4. Students who did not achieve Grades 4 to 9 in English and maths GCSE in 2018/19 had an average absence rate of 8.8%, while the average absence rate for students who did achieve this benchmark was 5.2%. Students who achieved grades 5 to 9 in English and maths GCSE had the lowest absence rate on average at 3.7% (Long & Roberts, 2025).*

The equation is very straightforward – the better your school attendance, the better the exam results that will be achieved.

It has been lovely to have so much sunshine this week; students have certainly made the very most of this at break and lunchtime, with the many picnic tables around the site being extensively used. I hope you have a restful weekend, and are able to enjoy some time outside with your friends and family.

#### Upcoming Dates

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April – Year 7 Parents' Evening

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April – Year 11 Drayton Manor Trip

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April – Year 9 and Year 10  
Celebration Assemblies

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April – RSA8 Trust Project – Talk the  
Talk Workshop, Arrow Vale

Thursday 1st May – Year 7 and Year 8 Celebration  
Assemblies

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> May – Year 9 DTP Vaccines

#### Assembly Themes

Assembly focus this week was Eid

w/c 07/04 – Autism Awareness

w/c 28/04 – Term Ahead - Expectations

Please take the time to talk to your child about what they have learnt in Assembly.

Year Team Updates – w/e 04/04/2025

**Year 7:**

We'd like to start this week's update by giving a massive well done to 7G, 7F, and 7B for their exceptional improvement in attendance. Over the past week, 7G has achieved a fantastic 97%, 7F has followed closely with 96%, and 7B has reached an impressive 95%. These results are outstanding and a clear demonstration of the commitment from both students and staff to improving engagement and ensuring students are in school, ready to learn. This is exactly the kind of achievement we want to see from all our tutor groups, and we hope that others will be inspired to follow suit.

However, despite this positive progress in attendance, we have seen a concerning increase in the total minutes late to school and lessons. Last week, the total came to 127 minutes—an increase from the previous week. This is something we must work to improve. Punctuality is key to ensuring that students make the most of their learning time, and every minute counts in lessons when it comes to developing knowledge, skills, and understanding. We encourage all students to make a concerted effort to arrive on time to school and to each lesson, so they don't miss out on valuable learning opportunities.

A quick reminder to all students: **attendance is vital** in order to be entered into the **attendance prize draw** for the final two weeks of term! To be in with a chance of winning, you need to be in school every day. At the end of the term, **two lucky students will be selected** for a special surprise. So make sure you're in school to be involved!

Looking ahead, we have some fun activities lined up for students in the final two weeks of term. There will be exciting opportunities to get involved, so don't miss out—be in school and be part of the action!

On a brighter note, our talented netball team has a fixture against Phoenix on **01/04/25**, and we want to wish them the best of luck in what we're sure will be a thrilling match. The team has been training hard, and we know they'll give it their all. We look forward to hearing how they get on and will be cheering them on all the way!

Additionally, our Brilliant Club is back in action this Wednesday with Tina, as students continue to develop their essays in preparation for their graduation ceremonies. This is a fantastic opportunity for our students to sharpen their academic skills, and we look forward to seeing the outstanding work that will come out of these sessions. It's a pleasure to see the progress being made, and we're excited for the students as they approach the next steps in their academic journey.

Keep up the great work, everyone! Let's continue to focus on our attendance and punctuality while also making the most of the fantastic opportunities we have ahead. Together, we can achieve even more.

**100% ATTENDANCE**  
In school on time every day  
No lost learning time  
No concerns

**90% ATTENDANCE**  
Lost learning:  
• half a day a week  
• 4 weeks in a school year  
Attendance concern

**ATTENDANCE MATTERS**

**80% ATTENDANCE**  
Lost learning:  
• 1 day a week  
• 1 half term a year  
Significant attendance concern

**LATENESS**  
5 minutes late every day = 3 days per year absent  
15 minutes late every day = 2 weeks absent per year

## Year 8:

This week has been a remarkable one for Year 8, and we couldn't be more proud of their progress! The drop in lateness to lessons has been a huge success, with the number of minutes late plummeting from a staggering 222 to just 84! This is a fantastic achievement, showcasing their commitment and responsibility. In addition, Year 8's behaviour has been consistently outstanding, earning praise from many staff members across the school. To top it off, their attendance has made a remarkable recovery, bouncing back from a record low of 88.6% last week to an impressive 92.6%! It's been an exciting week of growth and improvement, and we are incredibly excited to see them continue this upward trajectory!



# ATTENDANCE

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



# EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS!

Children are required by law to attend 190 school days per year. The Government states that every pupil's attendance should be at least 95%.

### HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP?

Attendance	Days Absent	Weeks Absent	Lessons Missed
95%	9 Days	2 Weeks	50 Lessons
90%	19 Days	4 Weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 Days	6 Weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 Days	8 Weeks	200 lessons
75%	48 Days	10 Weeks	250 lessons
70%	57 Days	11.5 Weeks	290 lessons
65%	67 Days	13.5 Weeks	340 lessons

89% and below  
Drastic effect on  
academic achievement



95% - 90%  
Cause for concern



100% - 96%  
Excellent



Week 5 was filled with exciting experiences and meaningful moments! Year 8 experienced a thought-provoking assembly by Miss Middlehurst, all about "Women's History." She took us through the inspiring stories of women who made history, breaking barriers and achieving incredible things in their fields. It left us with some big questions to think about: "What women inspire you every day?" and "How can we make our own mark on history by succeeding and achieving in our own lives?" With these powerful reflections in mind, Year 8 is ready to take on the challenges ahead and continue making a difference!

As you know, following the BASICS and getting it right every day truly makes a difference in your learning journey. From this point forward, it's all about taking ownership of your growth and being proactive. The only way is up for Year 8, and we will continue to support you every step of the way! Keep aiming for 10/10 always!

## Year 9:

Week 5 of this academic half term saw some great experiences and opportunities thrown in Y9s way! We started with a really powerful assembly all around "Women's History" delivered by Miss Middlehurst, looking back at some of the most powerful women in History and how they succeeded and achieved in their chosen fields and how they made a difference to History. Following this assembly, it left us all with the questions, "**What women influence and inspire you every day?**" And also, "**What can we do daily to succeed, achieve and make history?**" Some big questions to think about and consider Y9!



At the end of the week, we were lucky enough to have a visitor from Girton College come in and speak with the Y9 family about future pathways and aspirations, really important at this stage of our school journey to think about Higher Education and what it means so this was a great opportunity to have in front of us!



**Attendance was very up and down again last week and we must prioritise getting it back to where we know it can be! Our average took a dip to 87.7% but luckily with hard work from the Year Team and from you students we have got it back up to 90.5% for last week.** Thank you to the many students in our family that despite being unwell, still showed up and gave their best – This needs to continue and we need to aim for 93% and above every day. The 10/10 attitude, effort and attainment in lessons is a true testament to your dedication to your education and your Y9 journey so far. We all need to ensure we are doing this to prove that **attendance matters.**

Over the past week, unfortunately our **minutes late to lessons INCREASED from an all time low of 27 minutes to 41 minutes last week!** We need to ensure that as a whole Y9 family we are growing the sense of responsibility and commitment to your education by walking to lessons with pace and purpose and ensuring that it remains a priority because remember you need to be in those lessons, on time, in order to achieve and succeed!

A reminder of something that Miss Ralph speaks of daily, everything you do now Y9 is part of your journey into your future and you being at school, following the BASICS and getting it right really does make the difference! Options have now been picked and Miss Tanner is finalising the blocks so that we can start to look ahead towards that future pathway of our chosen subjects that will lead to our future careers and adult jobs and journeys! You know more than anyone that it's never too early to start thinking about the skills and experiences that will shape your futures, and you know that Miss Ralph, Mr Bhatti and Mrs Kler will continue to encourage every student to take ownership of their learning journey from now. The only way is up for you all Y9, but remember, education is your power with anything and everything you want to do, but YOU are the only ones that can make it happen! 10/10 always!

#### **Year 10:**

What an incredible week for ATTENDANCE hitting a whopping 96.5% on Thursday with a near 100 minutes gained on lateness to lesson too!

Year 10 we are so so proud of you. We are attacking our mocks this week and our biggest battle as it stands is our PUNCTUALITY to school.

Please can I ask that we are supporting all students in getting into school on time, key messages and information are built into each morning here at Gospel Oak and of course this week students will need to be prepared and sat down in their exams ready to start.

Please help us in creating a streamline, stress free process for all of them.

Year 10, let's do this!

#### **Key items students will need this week**

Exam timetable with their seating plan

Equipment for exams

A bag to put their belongings in

Clear bottle for a drink

Jumper and blazer if the weather drops

## **Year 11:**

### **English**

Remember, large group teaching is now across two sessions a week – Monday and Tuesday. These sessions are for your benefit and allow you to access teaching from members of staff who are also examiners!

Speaking and Listening assessments are under way – you must be prepared. You will receive a slip, in line up, to notify you of when your appointment is. Only a handful of you will be completing these during intervention lessons.

A reminder to ensure completed 'additional' homework questions are submitted to your teacher. Completion of these 'additional' pieces will receive 5 points.

Intervention continues to run on Tuesday. Make sure you are attending to maximise your chance at success!

### **Maths**

There are Masterclasses on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday in the maths corridor. See the signs in maths for details, your teacher will also guide you

Drop in every lunch time in L1 with Mr Brown

Walking Talking Mocks are proven to have a huge impact on exam success. Remember your Maths Homework on Dr Frost maths as part of the walking talking mock process

### **Easter holiday Exam Masterclasses**

Letters will be available later this week; there are Exam Masterclasses running on the first Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the holiday. You will be updated as to when letters are ready, and we look forward to seeing you in school for some additional revision.

### **Attendance**

Was very up and down again last week and we must prioritise getting it back to where we know it can be! Our average took a dip but luckily with hard work from you students we have got it back up. Thank you to the many students that despite being unwell, still showed up and gave their best – We all need to ensure we are doing this to prove that attendance matters. Friday is the day we can make the most gains so please make sure that you make as much effort to attend on a Friday as you do the rest of the week.

## **Sixth Form**

Year 12 have started their mocks this week.

Year 13 have been working hard and revising for their upcoming A levels.

A reminder to be logging on and completing your online learning.

We are still taking applications for anyone that would like to join the Gospel Oak 6<sup>th</sup> Form.

Your sincerely,

Mr Bala

Associate Assistant Principal Post 16

Year 12 student of the week – Varni

Year 13 student of the week – Hasti

Year 12 attendance – 97 %

Year 13 attendance – 96 %

Events –

8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> July - Year 12 work experience



To: Parents / Carers

4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

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**Our Ref:** CM/JL/3794

**Your Ref:**

Dear Parent/Carer,

**Re: Easter Holiday Masterclasses**

We will be offering Exam Masterclasses in a number of subjects to support students in their continued preparations for their examinations and assessments. Interventions will start in classrooms at 9.30am, and finish at 12.00pm and students will be expected to leave the school site immediately on the completion of their session.

Students are not expected to wear school uniform and should bring their own snacks and drinks with them if they wish to do so. Students need to report to Reception at 9.20am.

Please complete and sign the attached consent form if you wish for your daughter/son to take part. Please note that places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis with a maximum of 30 places available in each intervention. Consent forms must be returned to Reception by 11.20am on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April. In the event of interventions being oversubscribed, a message will be sent to you via Arbor to inform you that there are no spaces.

Thank you for your continued support of our work with your daughter/son; teaching staff are reminding students regularly of the importance of continued preparation for their upcoming summer exams for Year 11 and Year 13, and we are grateful for your encouragement of revision as we move closer to these. Year 10 students also have important work to undertake in a number of BTEC subjects. Please remember that Seneca, GCSEPod and Sparx are excellent resources to support progress, along with use of exercise books and revision guides.

Yours faithfully,

Miss C Middlehurst  
Senior Vice Principal

## Easter Masterclasses

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor Group: \_\_\_\_\_

I give my consent for my daughter/son to attend the following intervention sessions in school. My daughter/son will report to school Reception at 9.20am, and interventions will start at 9.30am in classrooms and end at 12.00pm; my son/daughter will be responsible for making their own way to and from school and will leave promptly at the end of the session. I understand that my daughter/son does not need to wear school uniform for these sessions. Emergency contact and medical information held in school will be used if needed, and I will ensure that school is updated if this has changed.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent/Carer)

Date	Year Group and Subject	Please tick if attending
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Maths	
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Maths (Higher)	
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Y13 BTEC Sport Unit 1	
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE PE	
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 Hospitality	
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Fine Art	
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Photography	
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Y10 and 11 BTEC Dance	
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Y10 and Y11 BTEC Music	
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Chemistry (Triple Science)	
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE English Language	
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE English Literature	
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 BTEC Sport Component 3	
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Y12 and Y13 BTEC Sport Unit 1	
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Y10 and 11 BTEC Dance	
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Y13 A-level Maths	
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Fine Art	
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Photography	
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE RE	
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> April	Y10 and 11 BTEC Dance	
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Statistics	
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Further Maths	
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Fine Art	
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Photography	
Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> April	Y11 GCSE Psychology	
Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> April	Y10 and Y11 Health and Social Care Component 1	



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To: Parents/Carers

**Our Ref:** CM.KH.3252

**Your Ref:**

4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Dear Parent/Carer,

**Re: Year 10 Revision Homework Summer Half-Term One**

Students working hard, both at school and at home, brings about success. I have been delighted with how Year 10 students are approaching their current internal exams, and I look forward to reviewing their results to support next steps over the coming weeks. To support this process, our Directors of Learning and Standards have identified specific home-based revision activities which Year 10 students will need to complete during the first half of the summer-term; these activities complement their in-class learning and run alongside homework which will continue to be set.

Students will be provided with a paper booklet next week which contains all of the activities that they need to complete; this information can also be found by visiting the school website – [Year 10 Revision Homework Booklet](#) and I thank you in advance for taking the time to look at this so that you are able to encourage your daughter/son to complete the relevant learning.

If support is needed with access to devices so that online learning platforms can be accessed, please do let us know. The Sixth Form area is available for Year 10 students after-school if they wish to have a quiet space for their wider learning and the Learning Resource Centre (often referred to as the 'Library') is open at break-time and lunchtime.

Please contact us via [Gospel Oak School - Contact Us](#) if we can support in any way.

As always, thank you for your ongoing support of the work of the school.

Yours faithfully,

**Miss C Middlehurst  
Senior Vice Principal**



To: Parents/Carers

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4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

**Our Ref:** MC.KH.3237

**Your Ref:**

Dear Parent / Carer,

**Re: Transition to Cashless Catering**

We are pleased to inform you that Gospel Oak School will be moving to a cashless catering system from 16th June.

This change is designed to enhance efficiency, improve security and provide a more convenient experience for both students and parents/carers. All cash loading machines will be removed from the school (Please see picture below):



Key Benefits of Cashless Catering:

- **Faster service** at mealtimes, reducing queuing times.
- **Secure and convenient payments** without the need for cash.
- **Parental control** through online top-ups and transaction tracking.
- **Encourages healthy choices**, as parents/carers can see meal selections.

How It Works:

- Parents/carers can top up their son's/daughter's account via School Gateway.
- Students will use a PIN, biometric system to pay for meals.
- Daily spend limits can be set to manage meal purchases.

Should you require support in setting up your School Gateway account, this can be provided by contacting our Finance team by emailing [finance@gospeloakschool.co.uk](mailto:finance@gospeloakschool.co.uk) who will be able to help you navigate through this process.

We appreciate your support with regards to this change.

If you have any queries with regards to this process, please contact us via [Gospel Oak School - Contact Us](#)

Best regards,



**Mr M Clapham**  
**Estates Hub Manager**



To: Parents/Carers

4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Dear Parent/Carer,

**Re: CRST Arts Award 2025**

We're excited to share a fantastic opportunity available to students across our school and the wider Trust: the CRST Arts Award 2025. This new initiative has been created to celebrate the creativity, imagination and artistic talents of young people across the Central Region Schools Trust (CRST).

This year's theme is "Our World, Our Future", encouraging students to explore and respond to big ideas such as the environment, sustainability, technology, dreams, identity and culture. The theme is intentionally broad, giving students the freedom to approach it in their own unique way.

Students can choose to work in one of four categories: Fine Art (including drawing, painting and mixed media), 3D Design (such as sculpture or model making), Photography (digital or traditional) or Food Art (creative food design or presentation).

To enter, students simply need to take a clear photograph of their finished piece and email it to **CRSTArtsAward@crst.org.uk**. The deadline for submissions is **Friday 6th June at 3.00pm**.

All students who enter will receive a certificate to recognise their effort and creativity. Gold, Silver and Bronze winners will be selected in each category and key stage, and the winning entries will be rewarded and showcased in a virtual gallery to celebrate their achievements across the Trust.

We would love your support in encouraging your son/daughter to take part. This is a brilliant opportunity for them to express themselves, develop their creative thinking and be part of something inspiring on a Trust-wide scale.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please don't hesitate to contact the school, or follow the competition on Instagram: @CRSTArtsAward for updates and inspiration.

Thank you for your continued support. We can't wait to see what our students create!

Kind regards,

**Mrs M Martin**  
**Assistant Principal**  
**Trust Director of Arts**



To: Parents / Carers

4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Dear Parent/Carer,

**Re: End of spring Term 2025**

We are now approaching the end of a very successful spring term and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support of the school. We are pleased that the behaviour in lessons and around the school is continuing to improve and that the number of students absent from school is significantly lower than this time last year. I am pleased with the students' response to the focus on attitude to learning and delighted to see the improvements in the quality and quantity of their class and homework. We are confident that this will help improve attainment and achievement.

I am delighted to announce the appointment of some new teachers for later in the year: Mr Hackett (director of learning and standards-computing and IT) will join us at the beginning of June 2025; and the following members of staff will join us in September 2025: Miss Church (teacher of geography), Mr Hussain (teacher of science/chemistry), Mr Kumar (director of learning and standards-art & design), Miss Shipley (teacher of business), Miss Stanley (teacher of science/biology), Miss Webb (director of learning and standards-geography) and Mr Wickham (teacher of maths). I am delighted these new members of staff have chosen to work at Gospel Oak School as I am very confident they will contribute significantly to the school's improvement journey. There are no teachers leaving us at the end of the spring term.

I would also like to let you know of the end of term arrangements and those for the start of the summer term. School will finish at 3.00pm for all year groups on the last day of this term, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April. The school will re-open for all students on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April at 8.30am. Please note that we have recently published the term dates for 2026/27 on our website at [Gospel Oak School - Term Dates](#).

Please do contact the school via the 'Contact Form' at [Gospel Oak School - Contact Us](#) should you have any questions.

I wish you all a very happy Easter break.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr S Brownlow**  
**Executive Principal**

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**Our Ref:** SBr.KH.3248

**Your Ref:**



To: Parents / Carers

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**Our Ref:** HN.KH.3247

**Your Ref:**

4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Dear Parent / Carer,

**Re: Free School Meals**

The Government gives money to all schools to help students from lower income families do their very best. This funding is called the 'Pupil Premium'. We receive this additional funding for each student on our roll registered as eligible for free school meals (FSM). This is currently £1050 per student. We are using this money to help our students achieve the best possible grades in their GCSE examinations. Being eligible for a FSM clearly has a benefit to the student-namely, a free high quality meal. This saves parents/carers over £500 per year. Another benefit to the student is help with the costs of school trips.

We therefore strongly encourage eligible parents/carers to apply for this status. No one will know who has registered and it will not affect any other benefits being claimed. The eligibility criteria for free school meals is explained below.

**What is the eligibility criteria?**

Your son/daughter may be entitled to free school meals if:

- your annual income is less than £16,190; and
- you claim Child Tax Credit (\*Not Including Working Tax Credit) only; and

\*Please note you will not qualify for free school meals if you receive any amount of Working Tax Credit. Before applying please check your latest Tax Credit Awards Notice if you are unsure.

Your son/daughter may also qualify for free school meals if you receive any of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Universal Credit - To qualify if you are in receipt of Universal Credit, your net earned income (after taxes and deductions 'take home pay') must be below £616 per month under the Universal Credit allowance you receive. This will be confirmed on your latest online Universal Credit statement when you received it. If your net earned income shows above the £616 figure you don't qualify.
- Employment and Support Allowance (income related)
- Guaranteed Pension Credit (including Child Tax Credit)
- Income-based Job seekers Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

## Parent's with No Recourse to Public Funds 'NRTPF'

For parent's with no recourse to public funds, you will need to apply directly to the school and must meet the relevant Government set eligibility groups. These can be found on the following link; [NRTPF - Eligibility Criteria](#)

Applications are made to through Sandwell council ([Free school meals - MySandwell](#)). You will be asked to create an account and submit a few details in order to apply. Should you require any support at all with your application please do not hesitate to let us know as we would be happy to help. You can contact us by phoning the school and asking for the finance team who will guide you through the process.

Yours sincerely,



**Hayley Nutting**  
**Vice Principal**

At The National College, our WakeUp/Wednesday 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](https://nationalcollege.com).

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about INSTAGRAM

AGE RESTRICTION  
**13+**

Instagram remains one of the world's most popular social media platforms, especially among teens – with around 70% of 13 to 17-year-olds using it. Owned by Meta, Instagram allows users to share photos and videos, create interactive 'stories', broadcast live, send private messages and follow others. With regular updates and new features, it's essential for parents and educators to stay informed about how children are using the app – and what the risks are.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### EXCESSIVE SCREEN TIME

Instagram's design encourages prolonged use through endless scrolling of trending content and generating a fear of missing out (FOMO). Children can quickly lose track of time browsing posts from friends, influencers, and strangers, which may disrupt their day-to-day activities.

### AI CHATBOT CONCERNS

Meta's AI, which is available on Instagram, allows users to chat with an in-app chatbot. While often helpful, it can blur boundaries for young users, who may ask for or read content that is inappropriate or see it as a real friend or confidant. Privacy issues also arise, as conversations may not be as secure or private as children assume.

### RISKS OF GOING LIVE

The livestream feature allows real-time broadcasting to followers – or anyone, if the account is public. This increases the chance of unwanted contact from strangers and pressure to act in ways that gain attention, including engaging in inappropriate behaviour. Viewers may also post offensive or harmful comments during live sessions.

### THREADS INTEGRATION

Threads is Instagram's sister app for public, text-based conversations. Posts from Threads appear in users' Instagram feeds and can lead children to view, share, and comment on public conversations with strangers. The content may not always be age-appropriate and can be misleading or false.

### SCHEDULED MESSAGING

Instagram's newer ability to schedule direct messages means that children could receive messages late at night or early in the morning. This can disrupt their sleep or keep them preoccupied before the school day even begins.

### EXCLUSION AND LOW SELF-WORTH

Feeling left out online can have a real emotional impact. Being left out of photos, receiving fewer likes, being unfollowed, or being ignored in chats and comments can leave children feeling excluded, which often hurts as much as in real life. There is a risk this can lead to reduced self-esteem and a sense of not belonging.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### USE INSTAGRAM'S SUPERVISION TOOLS

Instagram's built-in Family Centre lets parents monitor how much time their child spends on the app. Specialised 'teen accounts' are private by default and offer controls on who can message them. Make sure that children use their real age when registering their account to ensure they have these protections.

### OPEN UP THE CONVERSATION

Talk regularly to the children in your care about what they enjoy on Instagram – and what makes them uncomfortable. Encourage honest chats about filters, body image, and online approval. Reassure them that they don't need to edit their appearance or chase 'likes' to feel valued.

### SET BOUNDARIES FOR THREADS AND AI

Parental controls on Instagram also apply to Threads. These allow parents to monitor time spent in the app, check follower lists and adjust exposure to sensitive content. Discuss AI features, too, therefore helping children understand that chatbots aren't real people and should be used with care.

### BE MEDIA-SAVVY WITH INFLUENCERS

Parents should follow a few of the influencers their child watches, so they can better understand the content they're seeing. Use this as a springboard to talk about the difference between genuine recommendations and paid promotions – and how online personalities can shape opinions and behaviour.

### 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.

