



NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2025

ABBOTSWELD PRIMARY ACADEMY

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Abbotsweld Primary Academy, we are committed to ensuring that every child receives the best possible education. One of the key factors in your child's success is regular and punctual attendance at school. Every day in school is a day filled with learning, progress, and valuable social experiences that cannot be replaced.

Research shows that good attendance is directly linked to higher achievement. Children who attend school regularly:

- ✓ Make better progress in their learning and build strong foundations for future success.
- ✓ Develop important friendships and social skills that help them grow in confidence.
- ✓ Form positive routines that prepare them for secondary school and beyond.
- ✓ Take advantage of every learning opportunity without falling behind.

Even missing just one day can have a significant impact on a child's learning. Consider this:

- ✗ 90% attendance means missing 19 days of school in a year—that's nearly four weeks of lost learning!
- ✗ Missing just two days per month can add up to a whole year of lost education by the time your child finishes primary school.

We understand that children may occasionally be unwell, but we encourage families to:

- ◆ Schedule appointments outside of school hours whenever possible.
- ◆ Ensure children arrive on time—being late can disrupt their learning and that of others.
- ◆ Only keep children home if absolutely necessary—mild colds or tiredness can often be managed at school.
- ◆ Communicate with us if you're facing challenges with attendance—we're here to support you.

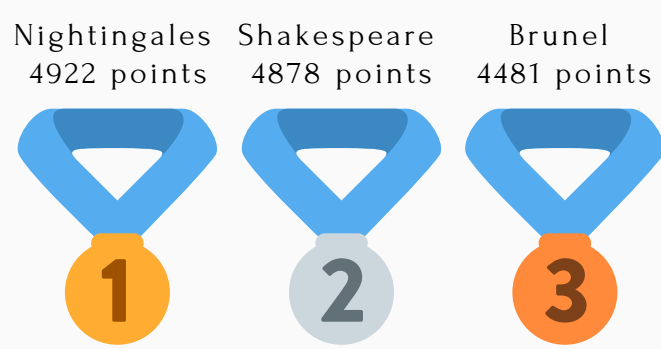
Thank you for your continued support.

Mrs Benson

Winter Olympics

Well done to all of our children who participated in our Winter Olympics. The teamwork, effort and respect was wonderful to see from all.

The results are...



Online Safety

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 IN-GAME CHAT

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Video games are continuing to grow in popularity – including, of course, among children and young people – and the emergence of gaming communities has been accelerated by the inclusion of chat functionality across many different titles. While in-game chat isn't inherently a bad thing, it can create some concerns about online safety and the people that children might be interacting with.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHAT

There are a number of ways that gamers commonly chat with one another online. As the name would suggest, in-game chat happens within the game itself. There's also party chat: a group voice conversation that console users can have with anyone on the same platform. This tends to be more commonly used by players who already know each other. Finally, many gamers – especially on PC – will chat via a third-party app such as Discord.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

Whether it's text- or voice-based, in-game chat is frequently open to all players to use. Many games default to making it an opt-in function, but some don't: meaning a child could start seeing messages within the game from people they're playing with, regardless of whether they know those individuals or not. While most strangers won't necessarily have ill intent, there are some who may behave inappropriately when chatting to a child – intentionally or otherwise.

DANGER OF GROOMING

It's been reported that some young gamers have encountered older players online who pretend to be a lower age to manipulate children, sending gifts in exchange for chatting and sending photos. Just as on any messaging platform, it's good to advise young people to avoid speaking to strangers; emphasise that they shouldn't accept gifts from anyone online that they don't know.

BULLYING AND ABUSE

While some in-game chat can turn toxic because of how a match plays out, others turn that way because of people who engage in trolling – in essence, behaving in an offensive and abusive way simply to cause pain or get a rise out of whoever they're talking to. These 'trolls' often lean on racial slurs, anti-LGBT sentiment and other hateful rhetoric; they normally feel most confident preying on younger, more impressionable gamers.

POTENTIAL FOR PRIVATE CHAT

If a player would like a re-match with a stranger after meeting them in the game, they can send a friend request, or use the party chat together in the future. For the most part, this is harmless – but it might lead to messages being exchanged in private. This could then escalate to the sharing of private information, and potentially attempts to manipulate or scam younger players.

COMPETITIVE ATMOSPHERE

Certain games are very competitive, and players can sometimes get upset if they feel a teammate is underperforming, an opponent won unfairly, or they're just a bad loser. This can lead to unpleasant messages that stray away from playful 'trash talk' and wander into the territory of bullying. Some players have been known to get incredibly abusive in situations like this, and the impact of this on a young gamer's emotional wellbeing could be severe.

Advice for Parents & Educators

LOCK-DOWN IN-GAME CHAT

In-game chat can often be disabled in the game's settings. This allows children to play without risk of contact from strangers – but it will need to be done in each individual game. Text chat appears in the corner of the screen in many titles, so it's normally easy to take a quick glance and see what's being said. With voice chat, explain to children what behaviour is inappropriate, so they can spot the dangers themselves.

REPORT POTENTIAL OFFENDERS

Most games offer a robust means of reporting other players, so you can flag an account as potentially harmful. This normally leads to the account not being matched with yours in the future and, if that person's conduct breaks any of the game's rules, they may be banned from playing entirely. This is done within the game itself, so each title has a slightly different process, but these tend to be designed for simplicity.

CONSIDER OTHER CHAT OPTIONS

If a child wants to play with people they know, consider using party chat or a third-party service like Discord. This allows everyone involved to chat on a private server and even enjoy each other's company while playing different games. It's also far more secure, as anyone looking to join will need to request and be granted access – normally by whoever is hosting the chat.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Make sure children understand the differences between being competitive and being abusive. Talk about what constitutes unusual or inappropriate behaviour from strangers online. Be clear that if anything ever concerns or worries them, they should tell a trusted adult as soon as possible. Empower children to identify the risks of in-game chat for themselves and reassure them they won't get in trouble for seeking help if anything goes wrong.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is the Editor in Chief of GGRecon and has been working in the games media industry for five years. He's also a parent and therefore understands the importance of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his work has been published at sites including IGN, TechRadar, and plenty more.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at nationalcollege.com/guides/in-game-chat

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Community News



CHANCE TO SHINE STREET

IT'S FREE!

- SOFT BALL CRICKET
- FUN GAMES & COACHING
- NO EQUIPMENT NEEDED
- WEAR WHAT YOU WANT
- ALL GENDERS WELCOME

STREET CRICKET IS FUN, FAST AND FREE! SO WE ARE STARTING A CLUB:
 EVERY THURSDAY FROM 18TH JAN 2024
 PASSMORES ACADEMY, SPORTS HALL
 5.00PM - 6.00PM FOR AGES 8-16

**WANT TO FIND OUT MORE OR REGISTER YOUR CHILD?
 CONTACT IAN GRAY AT ESSEX CRICKET
 IAN.GRAY@ESSEXCRICKET.ORG.UK
 07815 202266**



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Rainbow services

WE West Essex Health and Care Partnership

Essex County Council



Community News

Spring 2025



Weave a Wheel

Use a wide range of materials to weave a wheel to take home and also add to our collaborative weaving project on a real bicycle wheel. A coloring activity will be available for younger siblings.

Tues 18 Feb, 10am/11am/1pm and 2pm
Book on our website, ages 6+

Paint in Motion

Draw inspiration from the museum's collection of bicycles and tap into your inner Futurist artist to create a painting. Experiment with different techniques to capture a bicycle in motion.

Thurs 20 Feb, 10am-12pm & 1pm-3pm
Free drop-in session, all ages

Active Travel with Sustrans

Bring your cycle along for a free safety check, or book onto one of our cycle skills sessions. There will be giveaways and cycle accessories available to purchase at a discounted rate.

Thurs 20 Feb, 10am -12pm
Book on our website, ages 7+

Harlow Poetry Open

Celebrate World Poetry Day 2025 with us by participating in a competition that highlights Harlow's writing talent. This year's theme is 'Home,' and there will be various workshops available alongside.

Deadline Mon 3 March
Visit our website for details, ages 7+

Terrific Tudors this Easter

Join us for a variety of Tudor-themed activities, such as crafting clay jugs, miniature painting, growing a small garden, and creating collages. Plus, our popular annual Easter Egg Hunt returns!

Tues 8 April - Sat 19th April
Visit our website for details, ages 4+

Enchanted Garden

Our Walled Gardens will be transformed into a magical enchanted garden, filled with wonder at every turn. Enjoy storytelling, trails, meet the Fairy Queen and much more.

Sat 31 May, 11am - 3pm
Booking available soon

To book please visit: www.harlowmuseum.com/whats-on/

Opening Times:

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

9:30am - 3:30pm (last entry 3pm)

Free car park at rear

Harlow Museum & Walled Gardens
Muskham Road, CM20 2LF

01279 446 222

harlow.museum@harlow.gov.uk



Fundraising time

Please support us in raising funds for Abbotsweld.

You can support us and raise money every time you shop online? And the best part - it doesn't cost a penny!

Easyfundraising, is a free fundraising platform that lets us earn donations when we all shop online. With 8,100+ brands to choose from, including Tesco, Sainsbury's, John Lewis & Partners, Sports Direct, ASOS, M&S, Boots, Just Eat, and Booking.com, there's something for everyone.

Here's how it works:

Download the easyfundraising app,

Sign up,

Start your shopping journey and the retailer you shop with will send us a free donation based on your spending - with no additional cost to you.

Registering yourself takes just 2 minutes and all you need is your email address. I have attached our QR code which you can scan or please access via this link - <http://efraising.org/X1j5ISjppY>

So, why wait? Support by registering today! Download the app, join, shop, and make a difference!



Scan, join, shop: To unlock the Bonus for
Abbotsweld Primary Academy Harlow



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Academies Trust