

NEWSLETTER

Dear Parents and Carers,

The end of the term is here. We wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Thank you again for all the generous donations of food and toiletries for the local foodbank.

Enjoy the break and stay safe. We look forward to seeing you all back on Tuesday 7th January.

Asda Cashpot for Schools

Please support Greet when you shop. For more info please go to <https://www.asda.com/cashpotforschools>

Urgent Safeguarding Alert

Following the recent sudden unexpected death of a baby the Child Death Review Team would like to share the National Child Mortality Safety Alert related to nappy sack safety:

Nappy sacks can be dangerous to babies and young children

Please share with anyone interacting with families of young children...

Nappy sacks can be extremely dangerous to babies and young children and can easily cause suffocation if near the mouth and nose – their flimsy material means that they are 'sucked in' against the nose and mouth and prevent breathing.

RoSPA says that, while parents are aware of the danger of plastic bags generally, they may not consider nappy sacks to be as dangerous. But they are. RoSPA's website describes a typical scenario:

"Nappy sacks are stored within the baby's reach, close to the baby's cot, including under the mattress. This method of storage is often for convenience. In some of the cases, the nappy sacks have been left near to or in the baby's cot for ease of changing the baby's nappy in the night." This is extremely dangerous. Also, nappy sacks are often stored away from the baby's sleeping area, but they can be accessible without realising it; they can fall into close reach or babies can reach or climb for them.

If used, we recommend that nappy sacks are never left in a child's room or where they can be accessed.

More information can be found on RoSPA: [Nappy Sacks - RoSPA](#)

Unsafe sleep

2024 has seen BSOL CDOP see an increase in unsafe sleep related deaths of babies. Unsafe sleep environments have included babies being put to sleep on sofa's, on double beds, co-sleeping with parents and siblings and parents/carers falling asleep in the bed whilst feeding their baby.

The safest place for a baby to sleep is in the feet to foot position in a clear cot/ Moses basket, in their parents' bedroom, on a flat, firm mattress.

Toy Safety: The Child Accident Prevention Trust have produced a fact sheet to share with parents and to use for your own consideration about Toy Safety:

[Toy safety fact sheet | Child Accident Prevention Trust](#)

Christmas Safety: Christmas is a time when your home and setting is likely to be full of people, and it's in the excitement of the season that accidents can easily happen. Please find below useful hints and tips to use at this time of the year to keep children, and yourselves, safe:

[6 simple safety tips to keep children safe this Christmas](#)

Applying for Reception September 2025

Children born between 1 September 2020 and 31 August 2021 are eligible to start school in September 2025. **Parent/carers have up until 11.59 pm on 15 January 2025 to apply.** However, those who apply late are less likely to be offered one of their preferred schools. Please see the document attached.

A list of emergency numbers for over the Christmas period.



Below is a list of support agencies for your information

Agency	Support Offered	Contact
Birmingham Children's Trust	Concerns for a child safety Information and advice service	0121 303 1888 0121 675 4806 (Out of hours)
Samaritans	Emotional support Addiction support	116 123 https://www.samaritans.org
National Domestic Violence Helpline	Domestic abuse	0808 2000 247 Emergency 999
Women's Aid	Domestic abuse	Contact their free Helpline on 0121 685 8887 Monday to Friday, 9:15am to 5:15pm. Emergency 999 44 – 48 Bristol Road Birmingham B5 7AA
Shelter Birmingham	Housing	0330 175 5121 5th Floor, Gateway House, 50-53 High Street, Birmingham B4 7SY
Birmingham City Council	Homelessness	0121 303 7410
NHS	Non-emergency medical advice	111
Contact	Support for Children with disabilities.	0808 808 3555
DWP Benefits	includes Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support	0800 055 6688
NartheX	Food Bank	For opening times: 0121 753 1959 www.sparkhill.foodbank.org.uk
LWP	Short term crisis	https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20017/benefits_and_support/308/help_in_a_short-term_crisis
Balsall Heath Church Centre	Food Bank	0121 708 1398 (every Monday 1:00pm-3:00pm)
Sultan Bahu Trust	Food Bank	0121 440 4096 (every Friday 10:00am-12:00pm)

We wish you a Happy holidays! We hope you enjoy this time with your loved ones and have a wonderful winter season!





December 2024

Food Support

Food Justice Network map of all food related support available across the city of Birmingham, from food banks, pantries, community cafes, and more. Website: <https://theaws.co.uk/food-provision-database/>

Sparkhill Food Bank— Appointments by referral only. Mon 13:00 - 15:00, Balsall Heath Church Centre, B12 9JU. | Wed 10:30—12:30, St John's Church, B11 4AE. Tel: **0121 708 1398** or go to: <https://sparkhill.foodbank.org.uk/>.

Highfield Hall Food Bank—Please call in advance of visiting to request a food parcel. Tel: **07470 153525**. Email: info@highfieldhall.org.uk. **Closed 24th -26th December and 31st-2nd January 2025.**

Birmingham Christmas Shelter— Offering food, warmth, shelter and companionship. St Catherine of Sienna Catholic Primary, B15 2AY. Tel: **07864 991 951**. Email: enquiry@birminghamchristmasshelter.org

Domestic Abuse Support

Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid— Offering support to women and children affected by domestic violence and abuse, including information and support with refuge and housing options. Their telephone helpline is open 7 days a week 9.15am - 5.15pm and webchat is open Monday to Friday 10am - 4pm. Phone: **0808 800 0028**. Website: www.bswaid.org.

Men's Advice Line—Telephone/webchat emotional support, practical advice and information for men. Mon-Fri 9am-5pm. Call: **0808 801 0327**. Email: info@mensadvice.org.uk. Website: <https://mensadvice.org.uk/>

National Domestic Abuse Helpline—Free 24 hour helpline for women who have experienced domestic abuse. Tel: **0808 200 0247**.

Mental Health Support

Birmingham Mind—Adults can get support from MIND 7 days a week! Call: **0121 262 3555**. Email: help@birminghammind.org. For urgent help, contact Forward Thinking Birmingham on **0300 300 0099**.

Kooth—An online wellbeing community for young people aged 11—25years, with forums, guides and counselling available. Website: <https://www.kooth.com/>

Pause—Mental health call back telephone support for 0-25yrs. Tel: **02078414470**. Email: ask-bean@childrenssociety.org.uk. 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, **closed Sundays and Bank Holidays**. If you are in crisis contact the Access Centre on **0300 300 0099**.

Samaritans—Offering support 24/7, 365 days of the year. You can get in touch about anything troubling you, no matter how big or small. For the quickest response, it's best to phone on their free phone number. Samaritans also has a free self help app, here. Website: www.samaritans.org, Phone: **116 123**. Email: jo@samaritans.org.

Forward Thinking Birmingham—For urgent help for adults, telephone **03003000099**.

Other

St Pauls Children's Centre— Call: 0121 464 6349.

Springfield Children's Centre— Call: 0121 777 2722

Hall Green Families Early Help Team— [SELF-REFERRAL FAMILY CONNECT FORM](#)
Parents can self-refer into our service whilst nurseries/schools are closed.

Household Support Fund Team—
CLOSED from 23rd—26th December and 31st December—2nd January. No applications will be processed.

Sparkbrook Children's Zone—

All Clinics will be **closed between the 23rd December - 1st January**. Opening on 2nd January and appointments can be made by you GP practice.

Wishing all of the families and professionals working across Central district a happy Christmas and a safe and healthy 2025!

Families can still self-refer into Early Help by clicking [here](#).

School term dates

Spring Term 2025 (06/01/25-11/04/25)

TRAINING (School closed for children): **Monday 6th January**

SCHOOL OPENS TO PUPILS ON 7TH JANUARY 2025

TRAINING (School closed for children): **Friday 14th February**

Half-term: **Monday 17th February - Friday 21st February**

TRAINING (School closed for children): **Monday 31st March**

Term ends: **Friday 11th April**

Summer Term 2025 (28/04/25-21/07/25)

Term Starts: **Monday 28th April**

Half-term: **Monday 26th May - Friday 30th May**

BANK HOLIDAY (School closed for children): **Monday 5th May 2024**

TRAINING (School closed for children): **Friday 6th June**

TRAINING (School closed for children): **Friday 4th July**

TRAINING (School closed for children): **Monday 21st July**

Term ends: **Monday 21st July**

Are you concerned about the rise in cost of living? Help is available!

The rise in cost of living is a significant challenge for many, especially during the colder winter months. It's understandable to feel overwhelmed but remember that you are not alone.



To learn more about how to make the most of your money, including how to reduce your energy bills, how to budget and save, discover benefits you may be eligible for, find a food bank, or for general cost of living advice and support, check out the council's [cost of living support webpage](#).

For additional support, download the following resources:

- [leaflet for advice and support on the cost of living](#), which is available in 11 languages
- [cost of living booklet for more information and advice](#) on how to keep your home safe and other helpful tips
- [cost of living toolkit for young people and their families](#)

If you are experiencing immediate problems this winter, please call [0121 303 1116](tel:01213031116), Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm.

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

SAFETY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Currently, children are growing up in an immediate and throwaway culture when it comes to content that's consumed online. So much material is now deliberately created to be shorter in nature – and may often contain hidden elements such as advertising, or extreme political and cultural views. With complex algorithms built to keep people on their phones and engaging with social media content, it's becoming increasingly difficult to reduce time spent on these platforms.

1 REDUCE DOOMSCROLLING

It's concerningly common for young people to spend hours 'doomscrolling': trawling through social media and aimlessly viewing every post they see, many of which might make them feel sad or anxious. Social media can be useful for keeping in touch with friends and family, as well as staying up to date on current events. However, it's important to use it with a clear purpose, instead of endlessly scrolling through content, which could lead to young people accidentally discovering harmful material.

2 TALK ABOUT THE CONTENT

It's important to keep apprised of the kind of content that a young person is being exposed to. Discussing what they're watching online can help you understand why they're using social media in the first place. Furthermore, ensure that children are aware of hidden content, such as advertising of a product – and that they know how to spot that the creator is being paid to talk about it.

3 FIND POSITIVE ASPECTS

Despite all the concerns, there's plenty of wholesome content on social media. It's worth spending time with children to help them find something suitable and enjoyable. Perhaps you'll even discover a joint interest, and you can enjoy the content alongside the child. As part of this, you should also point out why certain things shouldn't be given attention, explaining why it isn't suitable and why it's been created in the first place.

4 REDUCE SCREENTIME

Young people can sometimes be unaware of the exact amount of time they spend looking at social media. Smart phones don't just have the capacity to monitor screentime; they also record how much time is spent on each app. Consider setting targets to reduce this and support children to meet these goals, gradually reducing the amount of time spent on different apps.

5 FILL THE VOID

Monitoring and reducing screentime can create a lot of free time to fill, and young people can even face withdrawal symptoms when made to step away from their phones. To mitigate this, consider what offline activities you could introduce the child to, and what they would enjoy. This can ensure that young users will permanently cut down on their screentime, rather than temporarily doing so while they know it's being monitored.

6 REDUCE NOTIFICATIONS

One way in which social media platforms keep people coming back is through notifications. The algorithms behind these apps track people's daily habits, including the times of the day where they're most likely to engage with the platform. This data is then used to deliver specifically timed notifications to draw them back in. To avoid young users being exposed to this tactic, simply turn off notifications for the app in their phone's settings.

7 LIVE IN THE REAL WORLD

Overexposure to social media can distort someone's perception of the real world – from body norms to social conventions. This filtered environment can make it hard for young people to distinguish reality from online content, which is now becoming even more difficult with the rise of AI. To mitigate this concern, take time to teach young people how to discern truth from fiction, both on and off social media.

8 DIGITAL DETOX

Encouraging young people to take a 'digital detox', from even just a couple of the apps that they use, can result in an overall reduction of screentime and less exposure to potentially harmful content. Alternatively, rather than avoiding the app entirely, encourage children to take a 'digital detox' from content creators and influencers, and instead, keep in touch with friends and family – which is generally a far healthier use of these platforms.

9 MODEL GOOD BEHAVIOUR

Consider the habits that you're demonstrating to your children. How much time do you spend on your phone? How much do you 'doomscroll'? Comparing your own usage with the child's could put things into perspective for them – or if it turns out that you're also overusing social media, it can turn screentime reduction into a joint mission, which you and the child can work on together.

10 BE CLEAR ON THE "WHY"

Research shows that young people can become addicted to social media. There are many schools that are moving towards being 'phone free' due to the negative impacts of using social media and phones continuously. It's important to explain to young people why managing screentime is important. Set out the benefits and ensure they have all the relevant information, so it's not just seen as a punishment.

Meet Our Expert

John Insley is a senior leader in a Birmingham secondary school and has vast experience in leading schools over the past 15 years – including the development of computing curriculums across primary and secondary schools, writing e-safety policies and supporting schools with computing and e-safety advice.



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Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/top-tips-for-safety-on-social-media>

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