



HLA News

Friday 2nd December 2022



Dear Families,

We have had a great week at Highfield, Christmas has finally arrived!

This week our staff decorated the school and classrooms with lots of tinsel and glitter. The students arrived on Tuesday morning and were amazed at the decorations and lights. There were lots of 'wow's' and excitement to see the decorations.

Over recent weeks we have had some concerns raised with us about student's activity online outside of school. We have been doing lots of online safety education and learning in response to this. I need to remind parents and carers to be vigilant to what their children are accessing online. If there is something occurs that causes difficulties please ensure that this is reported to the platform developers or the police if deemed that serious. We benefit from being informed so that we can do some work with students about this in school. Ultimately though it is the responsibility of parents to manage these difficulties as they happen in the home setting. Please remember we have a weekly tip at the bottom of each weekly newsletter which will help.

We want to say a huge thank you to all of the parents and carers who offered to help us with our path to our sunken trampoline. DK Patio's and Fencing were kind enough to sort this for us in less than a week and at a substantially low cost. Now our students can access this great facility in most weathers.

Could I also ask parents and carers to be considerate of the time that they are on site at the beginning and end of the day? Parents should not arrive before 8.30am and 2.30pm respectively please. Students learn across many areas of the campus and when there is movement on site at different times of the day this can be a distinct distraction to students as well as a safety issue.

Students in Eagles class have done some great learning in Yoga over the past few weeks. I dropped into a lesson this week and I was very impressed. The students were following instructions fantastically and were naming anatomically correct body parts such as clavicle and scapula. Amazing work!

S4 have been busy with their learning this week too. They have collaboratively made a French advent calendar applying their modern foreign language knowledge. We cannot wait for the countdown to begin.

This week has been a challenging one with staffing due to winter illnesses. As yet we have not had to take the decision to close any classes however this may become an option if staffing becomes unsafe. As always the health and safety of all concerned is of the highest priority. We are currently advertising for a Level 1 Teaching Assistant vacancy so please do share this news far and wide. We are adding to our team so that we can continue to provide the very best for our learners.

Wishing you a great weekend – so who is putting their decorations up this weekend?!

With all best wishes,

Yvonne Skillern

Head of School



Important Information



- On Tuesday 6th December Upper School students will be hosting our Christmas Fayre. Invitations have already been circulated to invited guests. Students will be having the opportunity to visit the fayre to buy crafts and play games so please send them in with some pennies next week.
- This week we will be recording Sleeps til Santa with our students – we are all so excited! We will let you know when to tune in to listen out for our performance!
- We are still looking for more willing volunteers to join our parents and carer group SOHLA. There will be a formal meeting after Christmas but if you want to get in touch in the meantime please email office@highfieldlittleport.org and your message will be sent on to our co-chairs.
- We are a nut free school so please do not send in any products containing nuts.

Mental Health Tip of the Week:

Disconnect from electronics and social media

Consider adding an electronics free time to the day. Taking time to unplug from the stream of emails and alerts will allow you to interact with people face to face and will help reduce the many feelings of 'missing out' that social media can stir up.

Online Safety Tip of the Week:

TextMe is a free texting and calling service. Users can send texts, voice messages, pictures and videos to any phone number in more than 40 countries.

The app is free and available to install on any Apple or Android device. On registration, it assigns a 'new' mobile number to each user, effectively making them anonymous. TextMe is recommended for people above 10 years old, but there is currently no way to determine a user's actual age: children under 10 could easily bypass this age criteria, since no verification is required to download the app.

In the guide, you'll find tips on a number of potential risks such as predators, visible location and in-app purchases.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about **TEXTME** **13+**

TextMe is a free texting and calling service. Users can send texts, voice messages, pictures and videos to any phone number in more than 40 countries. The app is free and available to install on any Apple or Android device. On registration, it assigns a 'new' mobile number to each user, effectively making them anonymous. TextMe is not recommended for children below 13 years old but there is currently no way to determine a user's actual age; children under 13 could easily bypass this age criteria since no verification is required to download the app.

Visible Location

Like many communications apps, TextMe has a feature which allows users to share their location with other people. This function presents a risk if children are not careful about who they share their whereabouts with. It would make it much easier, for instance, for online predators to establish roughly where a child lives and – even more dangerously – discover their current location.

Exposure to Advertising

Users can earn points on TextMe by watching adverts, completing surveys or playing games within the app. Points can then be exchanged for extra calling minutes or more messaging credits. The desire to accumulate points could result in children spending longer hours on the app and heighten their exposure to advertising content; some of which isn't always age appropriate such as dating websites and dieting products.

Protection for Predators

Messages and phone calls using TextMe cannot be traced. Indeed, texts and calls made through the app do not even appear on an itemised phone bill. This means that not only can children communicate with other users without their parents knowing, but also if they were to be approached by a predator via the app, it would be difficult for even the authorities to establish the offender's identity.

Anonymous Users

Users are allocated a 'new' phone number on joining TextMe, separate to any they might already have. This creates a potentially dangerous degree of anonymity, rendering it impossible to know exactly who your child is chatting with. The feature could facilitate online bullying, harassment or sexting, while some people are concerned that it essentially turns any device into a burner phone – often used in illegal activities.

In-App Purchases and Subscriptions

TextMe is free but does also offer a premium subscription service which removes adverts and unlocks extra calling minutes. The subscription renews automatically on expiry, potentially meaning a rolling charge. Additionally, there is a range of bundles available as in-app purchases for increased minutes and extra text credits, which children could easily purchase inadvertently.

Advice for Parents & Carers

Keep Locations Private

Try to help your child understand why using TextMe to share their location might not be safe. Even sending it to a genuine friend from their everyday life could be hazardous if they're in a group chat which also includes people they don't really know. In general, it's important to explain to your child that revealing their whereabouts to someone they have only spoken to online is never a good idea.

Set Spending Limits

Given that TextMe offers numerous options to buy extra minutes and text credits, or take out a premium subscription, it would be wise to set your child a spending limit in advance if you do decide to let them download the app. Alternatively, you could remove any payment methods that are linked to their device, so they cannot make in-app purchases – either deliberately or unintentionally.

Monitor Digital Wellbeing

TextMe actively encourages users to fill in surveys, play games and watch adverts to earn themselves more credit for calling and texting. This can easily result in children spending an unhealthy amount of time on the app. Should you allow your child to download TextMe, you might first want to establish restrictions on how long they can use it for each day.

Discuss Online Dangers

It may be wise to discourage children from downloading anonymous messaging apps given the lack of transparency. However, if you do feel that your child is mature enough to use TextMe, it's safest to talk to them about the possibility of predators contacting them through the service. Make sure they know to tell a trusted adult immediately if a stranger asks for personal details or invites them to meet offline.

Leave, Block and Report

If you discover that a young person is in a group TextMe chat that is making them uncomfortable, or they have been added to a group they do not want to be part of, encourage them to leave. There is an option to block any user who is sending them unwanted messages (swipe on that conversation, tap 'More' and then 'Block'), while any instances of harassment can also be reported via email.

Meet Our Expert

Parven Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Click: a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.



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