

Friends of St Ed's

NEWSLETTER

Spring term I

Happy new year!

We welcome back our families after the Christmas break to a short but busy half term, leading up to the start of Lent.

We pray for our GCSE and A Level students, who sit their mock and external vocational examinations in January. We ask the Holy Spirit to grant them calm, wisdom and confidence as they demonstrate their God-given talents.

We are absolutely thrilled to announce that the St Edmund's A-Team are the official City Dodgeball Champions!

We entered two strong teams into the recent City Tournament, and both squads represented the academy brilliantly, showcasing incredible skill and sportsmanship throughout the day.



Key dates this half term

January 2026

Monday 19th - Friday 30th January - Internal mock exams, years 11 and 13

Tuesday 20th - Year 9 mass

Wednesday 28th - Year 9 vaccinations

Thursday 29th - Year 9 progress evening

February 2026

Tuesday 3rd - Parent partnership event

Wednesday 11th February - Deanery Vocations Mass

Wednesday 11th February - Drama trip, years 11 and 13

Thursday 26th - Year 10 mass

Parent partnership event

Our next parent partnership event will be on

Tuesday 3rd February

9am - 10.30am



Join parents and staff for a hot drink and a sample of the food available to students at break times.

To reserve a place, please email Mrs Letheren
aletheren@stedmunds.org



Care for creation Catholic Social Teaching



Each year the academy community will be focusing on one area of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Our strand for this year is:

Care for creation

There are a number of ways that we will be doing this:

- a focus in lessons, where appropriate
- staff teams will set themselves a CST target for the year
- our fundraising charities for the year (Operation Noah and CAFOD)

More information about Care for creation can be found here:

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/catholic-social-teaching#5r22bd6yjYlNwFMuFPfJki>

If you have any other suggestions of how we can promote this area of CST in the academy, please let us know.

SAFEGUARDING SPOTLIGHT

GROUP CHATS

Group chats are a hugely popular way for children to stay in touch with their friends, whether via messaging apps, social platforms or games. These online groups can help them feel connected, strengthen relationships and encourage creativity – but they also come with certain risks. From teasing and exclusion to privacy worries and inappropriate content, children can experience a wide range of challenges in group chats. (National College)

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is one of the most popular instant messaging apps, used by over 2 billion people in 180 countries. They can connect with people individually or join group chats where lots of people can contribute. While these platforms can be a great way for your child to stay connected with their friends, we have recently noticed an increase in issues that have arisen from group chats which have a large amount of children in them. To use WhatsApp, your child must be at least 13 years-old.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF WHATSAPP?

Inappropriate content

WhatsApp messages are end-to-end encrypted which means that the content cannot be monitored. This means that your child could see or hear harmful or upsetting content.

Pressure to respond

Features that allow other users to see when your child is online, if they have read a message or when they were last active on the app could make your child feel pressured to respond even when they don't want to.

Location sharing

The live location feature means that your child could reveal their current location to others. This feature can be used in groups as well as individual chats so your child could reveal this information to people that they don't know if they are in the same group. From Settings, tap Privacy and Live Location. Manage the individual settings here or turn off entirely through device settings.

SAFEGUARDING SPOTLIGHT

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF WHATSAPP?

Oversharing

Privacy features, such as disappearing and 'view once' messages, might mean that your child feels safe to reveal private information or images. However, there is always a risk that an unintended person might see what they have sent, for example if they are with the recipient.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the act of sending threatening or taunting text messages, voice messages, pictures and videos, with the aim to hurt and humiliate the receiver. They can also include messages that threaten physical harm, blackmailing or excluding people from something. The group chat option is great for keeping in touch with one another but there is the potential for people to be hurt by others with their comments or jokes.

Disappearing content

WhatsApp has a feature which allows messages to be sent and only be viewed once. Unfortunately, this allows users to send inappropriate and abusive content which cannot be re-opened once seen. This means there is no evidence of what has been sent. It also means that if you check your child's phone you won't see a complete picture of what they have viewed. You can never really know what has been sent or received by your child's account

LOCKED CHATS

Be aware of chat lock. Chat lock is a feature which allows WhatsApp users to keep their chats in a separate locked folder, with its own secret code. This allows users to hide conversations, even if someone checks their phone and messages. This could include messages about harmful behaviours such as self-harm and inappropriate sexual content. This feature means your child can hide conversations from you. To find visible locked chats (standard):

1. Open the WhatsApp app.
2. Swipe down on the main Chats screen, locked chats will appear at the top.

SAFEGUARDING SPOTLIGHT

NEXT STEPS AND FURTHER ADVICE

Encourage Open Communication

Discussing online safety with young people doesn't have to feel like a chore. Approach the topic with curiosity and openness, with regular conversations about what you hear in the news or what their friends are doing online. This can create a comfortable space for them to share, often making it easier for young people to open up about their own situations and encourage critical thinking.

Set Privacy Settings

Work with your child to set privacy settings that ensure only their contacts can add them to groups and view their information. When added to a group, users will have the option to exit the group, block it or report it – ensure your child knows how to do this. Remind them that friends can still add them to group chats, so discuss how to handle invitations they receive.

Adjust Auto-Saving Settings

WhatsApp can automatically save images to the user's camera roll unless adjusted in the settings. This could lead to young people unintentionally storing harmful or illegal images sent in group chats. To disable automatic downloads:

- Step 1 – Go to WhatsApp Settings then tap Chats.
- Step 2 – Next to Media visibility, tap the toggle. When grey, photos and videos will not be automatically saved to your child's device.

Screenshot, Report, and Block

If a young person is added to an inappropriate group chat, take a screenshot of the evidence* and report it directly to the platform. Encourage them to block any concerning users and to speak to a trusted adult or an organisation like Childline on 0800 1111.

*NEVER screenshot an indecent image of a child.

(Safer Schools)

Click [here](#) to access the 'Whatsapp Privacy Guide - Controls & settings' from Internetmatters.org

SAFEGUARDING SPOTLIGHT

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 GROUP CHATS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

On messaging apps, social media and online games, group chats are one of the most popular ways that children connect. Group chats allow messages, images and videos to be shared in one place and help friendships flourish; however, they also come with a number of risks.

TEASING AND BULLYING

Children of all ages are keen to fit in socially, and group chats can sometimes complicate that process. While group chats can foster connection, they can also give way to mean comments or jokes at someone's expense, especially when others join in for laughs. When bullying happens publicly, in front of friends and classmates, it can intensify the emotional impact – adding to embarrassment, anxiety and feelings of isolation for the child being targeted.

UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Children often can't control who is added to a group, which can lead to privacy concerns. Sharing personal details in group chats can be dangerous, and children have no control over what others do with the material they send. Some members of the chat might even decide to use such information maliciously.

PEER PRESSURE

Children may feel they have to constantly stay engaged just to be included and keep up with the conversation. In some cases, they might partake in inappropriate behaviours – like sharing explicit photos, jokes or teasing – just to fit in. Group settings can also encourage children to act in ways they normally wouldn't, or stay silent when they know something is wrong, out of fear of being excluded. Some children may find it difficult to leave toxic group chats.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some group chats may include inappropriate language or imagery. Even if a child isn't actively participating in the conversation, they may still be exposed to this content simply by being part of the group. Some apps have disappearing messaging features, where content is only available once or for a few seconds, which makes it harder for children to report something they've seen.

EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

Exclusion in group chats is common and can take several forms. Sometimes a new group is created specifically to leave one child out on purpose. In other cases, the chat may happen on an app that a child doesn't have access to, making it impossible for them to join in. This can cause feelings of being left out – even unintentionally.

VIDEO AND LIVE CHATS

Many popular apps allow children to engage in live streaming with interactive chats or have group video chats. Anyone can be added to these streams, and often children tag peers in the comments and have conversations which are unmoderated. There's a risk of being exposed to inappropriate or violent content and offensive language, either in the group videos or via the group chats.

Advice for Parents & Educators

CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats can become an arena for children to compete for social status. Help children consider how people might feel if they behave unkindly. If a child does upset someone, encourage them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

SET SOME GROUP CHAT RULES

Discuss safe group chat practices, such as asking a peer for consent before adding them to a group chat, or leaving a group chat if a stranger is added. Tell children that if they're added to a group they didn't agree to beforehand, it's OK for them to leave immediately.

BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If a child encounters inappropriate content or feels uncomfortable in a group chat, encourage them to block and report the sender and leave the group. Make sure children know it's OK to leave a group chat if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Group chats are an excellent way for children to connect and feel like they belong. However, remind them that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded. Instead of responding to the person who's upset them. Validate their feelings and empower them by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. You can also encourage children to speak up if they witness others being bullied.

PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

It's vital for children to be aware of what they're sharing and who might potentially see it. Ensure they understand the importance of not revealing personal details – like their address, their school, or photos they wouldn't like to be seen widely. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they can't be certain where it might end up or how it might be used.

SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Being bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be an irritating distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to children that they can still be part of a group chat while disabling notifications. In fact, it would be healthier for them to do so, helping them avoid the pressure to respond immediately.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant at BCyberAware, who has developed anti-bullying and cyber-safety workshops and policies for schools in Australia and the UK. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government, comparing the internet use and online behaviours of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



The National College

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/www.thenationalcollege

@wake.up.wednesday

@wake.up.weds

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St Edmund's Catholic Academy

To Love and Serve the Lord

Chaplaincy in Spring Term 1 2026

Liturgical Dates

Tuesday 6th January

Epiphany

Sunday 11th January

The Baptism of the Lord

Monday 12th January

Ordinary Time begins

Saturday 24th January

St Francis de Sales -

(English Dept. Patron)

Sunday 25th January

**Sunday of the Word of
God**

Tuesday 27th January

Holocaust Memorial Day

Wednesday 28th January

St Thomas Aquinas

Monday 2nd February

Candlemas

*O God, who in the work of
creation commanded the light to
shine out of darkness: we pray
that the light of the glorious
gospel of Christ may shine into
the hearts of all your people,
dispelling the darkness of
ignorance and unbelief, and
revealing to them the knowledge
of your glory in the face of Jesus
Christ. Amen.*

We are in **Christmastide** moving into
Ordinary Time from 12th January

Our Gospel Values for this half-term are

Humility and Gentleness

Livestreamed Mass and Adoration

Weekly mass taking place every Monday in the Chapel at 1:15pm and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament every Friday at 12:45pm will now be livestreamed for parents or carers. Follow this link to tune in: <https://www.stedmundscloud.co.uk/livemass/>

St Ed's Larder

The Larder is available to any families in need of supplies. To access, drop into school with a shopping bag or send us an email. You can also make cash donations for our termly food deliveries to our most at risk families via Parent Pay. We will then do the shopping on your behalf.

Jubilee Year - "Pilgrims of Hope"

The Jubilee Year, "Pilgrims of Hope", officially ended on 6th January, the Solemnity of the Epiphany. However, like all Holy Years, we do not simply forget them when they officially finish. We pray that the Holy Spirit continues to inspire us to be Pilgrims of Hope until we all reach our true and eternal home.

Year Group Masses

On Tuesday 20th January year 9 will be celebrating their year group Mass.

On Thursday 26th February year 10 will celebrate theirs.

Both of these will take place at 9am in the Arena, with Fr Gerry as our principal celebrant.





Black Country Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Join us for...

GAME & CHILL

Join the Reflexions team for a fun day where children, young people and families can enjoy their favourite board games together – a chance to make friends, connect and share laughs in a relaxed, supportive space.

Parents to accompany children under 13
years old



10:30 - 16:00



Wolverhampton Art Gallery
Lichfield St,
Wolverhampton WV1 1DU



DATES:

Wednesday 18th February	Wednesday 29th July
Wednesday 1st April	Wednesday 5th August
Wednesday 8th April	Wednesday 12th August
Wednesday 27th May	Wednesday 19th August
Wednesday 26th August	

What People Loved!

- ★ The environment was inclusive and staff were kind and accommodating, looking forward to more of this'
- ★ 'Big impact on my families mood, we've all been happy to be here'
- ★ 'I was a bit stressed and now I feel more relaxed'

For additional information or brief sign up form to register your attendance, please email bchft.reflexions@nhs.net or feel free to pop in!