



Weekly News

THURSDAY 2ND APRIL 2026 - ISSUE 27

A Message from Mr Spink and Mrs Wathen

Good afternoon everyone.

Today we break up for our Easter holiday. It has been a busy but productive Spring Term. It is hard to believe that, when we return from the holidays, it will be only 3 weeks until Year 6 SATs, 5 weeks until the Spring bank half term and only 12 weeks until school closes for Summer - where is this year going? Also when we return from the holidays we will have trips, Y4 and Y6 residentials, sports events and much more learning and excitement to come. Keep your eye on the Dates for your Diary section of this newsletter.

Please remember that when you are parking around the school premises at drop-off or pick-up time, you must park safely and ensure you do not block entrances to school. Please also ensure you do not park on any double-yellow lines on the surrounding roads to avoid receiving parking fines.

Have a lovely break. See you on Monday 20th April.

Mr Spink & Mrs Wathen



What a picture...



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DIARY DATES 25/26

Thursday 2nd April 2026 – School closes for Easter

Monday 20th April 2026 – School reopens

Thursday 30th April 2026 – Class Photographs

Monday 4th May 2026 – School closed for May Day

11th - 14th May 2026 – KS2 SATs Assessments for Y6

Friday 22nd May 2026 – School closes for Spring Bank

Monday 1st June 2026 – School reopens



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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 AI VIRTUAL FRIENDS

Artificial intelligence has seen significant development over the recent months, with companies releasing new AI-based software or adding an AI element to existing apps (such as Snapchat). One form of AI that has become especially popular has been the 'AI friend' or chatbot. There are now numerous 'virtual friend' apps available, with other successful platforms likely to adopt it soon.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONTENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

AI chatbots may not always recognise when content is age inappropriate or harmful and should be filtered out. As a result, there's a possibility that children could be exposed to offensive language or explicit material while conversing with their virtual friend. The companies producing such AI solutions are also unlikely to take responsibility for any content that their algorithms generate.

REDUCED SOCIAL CONTACT

An excessive reliance on chatbots for social interaction could potentially cause a child to begin reducing the amount of face-to-face communication they have, leading to social isolation. If young people become dependent on chatbots to provide companionship, it could possibly hinder the development of their real-life social skills.

LACK OF SENSITIVITY

Chatbot software isn't always sophisticated enough to pick up on subtle emotional cues or recognise signs of distress in children, as most humans would. It might therefore fail to respond appropriately. AI misinterpreting what it's being told or replying insensitively to a young user who's already struggling could potentially impact a child's emotional wellbeing or exacerbate any existing emotional issues.

UNINTENTIONAL BIAS

AI companions are only as reliable as the information they've been programmed with. The algorithms they use, therefore, may unintentionally promote bias, stereotypes or discriminatory behaviour. As many chatbots originate from the USA or UK, for instance, they can display a distinctly western-centric worldview. This could lead to children developing skewed attitudes and behaviours if they interact with the AI consistently.

COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS

Although many are now undeniably advanced, AI-powered chatbots still have limitations in terms of understanding complex concepts, context and nuance. Depending heavily on chatbots to help with learning or solving problems may stunt the development of a child's own powers of critical thinking, their creativity and their ability to engage in open-ended discussions with other people.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Chatbots typically collect data about users, including personal information and conversations. This is ostensibly to improve their performance as they gradually learn about our behaviour – but many experts warn that there may be significant risks associated with how this information is stored and used (for instance, the possibility of potential breaches or misuse by third parties).

Advice for Parents & Carers

CHAT ABOUT CHATBOTS

If a child is already expressing an interest in AI apps, then a relaxed, natural chat should help you to discover which ones they're aware of and how they're using them (or are planning to). Discuss these options with children and perhaps do your own research to ensure that you think they're suitable. Once you're totally happy, you could sit and explore the range of AI chatbots together.

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

If a child is keen to engage with AI chatbots, encourage them to do so in a safe environment: ideally in a shared space, so you can easily keep an eye and ear on their progress. Set up appropriate content filtering measures in advance – and gently remind them that you'll be close by and ready to help with any questions or concerns that may arise.

FIND A BALANCE

Work alongside children to establish the right balance in terms of how they might use AI-powered chatbots – and when it's appropriate. It's important to make sure that children still get plenty of opportunities to learn to solve problems for themselves, as well as building their interpersonal skills through face-to-face conversations with friends, family members and teachers.

TAKE CONTROL

As with any form of app or game, when it comes to AI chatbots we'd strongly recommend that you consider employing parental controls (either on the device being used or within the software itself) to manage which apps children can download and interact with. This is particularly important for younger children, who may be more at risk of being upset or frightened by inappropriate content.

RECOGNISE THE RISKS

It's unlikely that most children will have even considered the potential risks attached to having a virtual companion. So it's probably wise to explain some of the possible hazards and challenges of AI chatbots to them. Emphasise that AI isn't a real person (however much it might sound like one) and may occasionally tell them something inaccurate or skewed by bias.

Meet Our Expert

A Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), Gary Henderson is the Director of IT at a large boarding school in the UK, having previously taught in schools and colleges in Britain and the Middle East. With a particular interest in digital citizenship and cyber security, he believes it is essential that we become more aware of the risks around technology, as well as the benefits.



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EPEC – Being a Parent

Because children don't come with instructions 😊



What is EPEC Being a Parent?

Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) Being a Parent (BAP) is a parenting programme designed to help you support child development and outcomes, parenting skills, family resilience and family relationships.

From melt down to magic!



Join like-minded parents and carers in a supportive group, where you are encouraged and supported to explore:

- Positive behaviour management and discipline strategies.
- Managing parent and family stress.
- Understanding and managing children's feelings.
- Parent listening, communication, play and interaction skills.
- Attachment and parent-child relationships.
- Parenting roles, expectations, and culture.

Why is it different?

It is run for parents by parents - Their experiences, backgrounds, skills, and qualities make each session inviting, engaging and fun.

Being a Parent is completely free



Who is it for?

All parents and carers in Leeds who have children up to the ages of 11 years. Before 'Being a Parent' begins there is a welcome session where you can learn more about what is involved and meet the other parents that are interested in joining the group too.

It's your time, no children, just you!



Where and when is it?



**Woodlands Co-op Academy
Foundry Lane, Harehills, LS9 6DA**

- Tuesday 28th April for the Meeting and Greet session
- The group starts 5th May 9:15-11:15
- The group runs over 8 weeks (no group at Half Term)

Please note: there is no transport or childcare available.

Interested in finding out more – **Come along to the Meet and Greet Session** or email Leeds.epec@leeds.gov.uk or call/message **Kerry** (EPEC coordinator) on **07712 215217**



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Cygnet Training

Leeds Family Hubs



EAST FAMILY HUBS

A support programme for parents and carers of children and young people, aged 5-18, who are autistic.

By attending a Cygnet autism support programme, it will give parents and carers an opportunity to develop their understanding of autism and consider ways to support their child.

It also provides the opportunity to meet other people in a similar position and hear about their experiences in an informal but supportive atmosphere.

If you are interested in attending this training or future Cygnet Training, please email:

Family.Hubs@Leeds.gov.uk
and quote 'SEND Specialist
Co-Ords Chapeltown &
Compton'

When:

9:30-12:30 starting May
2026

Friday 8th May
Friday 15th May
Friday 22nd May
Friday 5th June
Friday 12th June
Friday 19th June
Friday 26th June

Where:

The Compton Centre
Harehills Lane
Leeds
LS9 7BG



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