THE EPCHS BEACON

13-11-26

The weekly round up of school life



READY - RESPECTFUL - SAFE - KIND

"I Have Come So That They May Have Life And Have It To The Full" – John 10:10

HEADTEACHER MESSAGE



Dear Parents and Carers

It has been another busy and inspiring week across our school community, filled with moments of reflection, achievement, and looking ahead to the future.

Remembrance and Community Pride - On Sunday, I was immensely proud to represent our school at the Ellesmere Port Remembrance Service at the local cenotaph. Standing alongside representatives from the armed forces, veterans, and so many members of the Ellesmere Port community was deeply moving. It was particularly wonderful to see so many of our own pupils attending as cadets, conducting themselves with tremendous respect and dignity.

This spirit of remembrance was also reflected in a wonderful email I received this week from Councillors Katie Kendrick and Paul Donovan. They wrote to pass on their highest praise and congratulations to one of our Year 12 pupils, who recently worked alongside a local artist to help create a public remembrance piece in the town. This is a fantastic showcase of talent and community spirit—well done!

Looking to the Future: Careers and Higher Education - We are always keen to broaden our students' horizons, and our pupils have benefited from several enriching sessions recently:

- **Year 9 Sustainability Talks: Last week, our Year 9 students took part in engaging talks delivered by the Inspiration Learning Group and the Cheshire and Warrington Careers Hub. The sessions offered a fascinating insight into the wide range of careers available within the rapidly growing sustainability sector.**
- **Golden Key Society: Our Golden Key Society has welcomed a number of guest speakers, including staff from both Liverpool Hope University and the University of Chester. Students gained a valuable look into university life, as well as some of the exciting global projects these institutions are currently leading.**

A huge congratulations goes out to our Golden Key pupils who recently competed in the English-Speaking Union Schools' Mace competition. They represented the school brilliantly and have secured a well-deserved place in the second round. We wish them the very best of luck as they prepare for the next stage!

Finally, looking ahead to next week, we are looking forward to welcoming families to our Year 11 Parents' Evening. This is a crucial milestone as students prepare for their upcoming examinations, and we value your ongoing partnership. Please note that at all Parents' Evenings throughout this academic year, representatives from Cheshire's Mental Health Support Team will be in attendance. They will be on hand to speak with both parents and pupils about mental wellbeing and the various support services available.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. I hope you all have a restful and enjoyable weekend.

Warmest wishes,

Lorraine Henderson - Headteacher

Tim Beesley - Executive Headteacher

Care for creation





Important Dates

- 16th/17th/18th November – Year 8 and 9 – Paris Maths Trip
- 17th November – Year 7 to 11 – Flu vaccinations (nasal spray)
- 19th November – Year 11 – Parents Evening
- 27th November – INSET day
- 30th November – 11th December – Year 11 and 13 PPEs ('Mock' exams)
- 2nd – 4th December – Year 10 – Savio House Retreat
- 10th December – Year 9 – Parents Evening
- 15th December – Year 12/13 – Christmas rewards trip
- 15th December – Year 11 – 6th Form Taster Day
- 16th December – Year 11 History Trip (Quarry Bank Mill)
- 16th and 17th December – Christmas Pantomime

attend

TODAY

VERITAS ET SAPIENTIA

achieve

TOMORROW



It's always wonderful to celebrate students who use their talents to make a positive difference in the local community. We are incredibly proud of one of our Sixth Form students, whose artistic skills and commitment have contributed to a meaningful project that will have a lasting impact.



Sixth Form Student Helps Create Community Remembrance Memorial



A huge congratulations to one of our students, who has been recognised by local councillors for his outstanding contribution to the creation of the Remembrance Memorial artwork at Little Sutton Train Station.

He volunteered his time to support local artist Vicki Fogarty, dedicating many hours to help create and install the memorial in time for this year's commemorations. His exceptional artistic talent, creativity and attention to detail played a significant role in bringing the project to life, creating a moving tribute for those who have served and sacrificed.

The memorial has been warmly received by the local community and has become a focal point for reflection and remembrance. Residents have praised the artwork and the respectful way it honours those connected to military service.

In a letter to school, Councillors Katie Kendrick OBE and Paul Donovan commended his dedication, describing his willingness to volunteer his time and talents for such an important community project as a testament to his character. They praised his strong sense of community spirit and civic responsibility, noting that he is "a credit to himself, his family and Ellesmere Port Catholic High School."

Final Artwork



We are incredibly proud of his achievement and the positive impact he has made within our local community. His hard work, generosity and talent are an inspiration to others, and we are delighted to see his contribution receiving the recognition it so richly deserves.

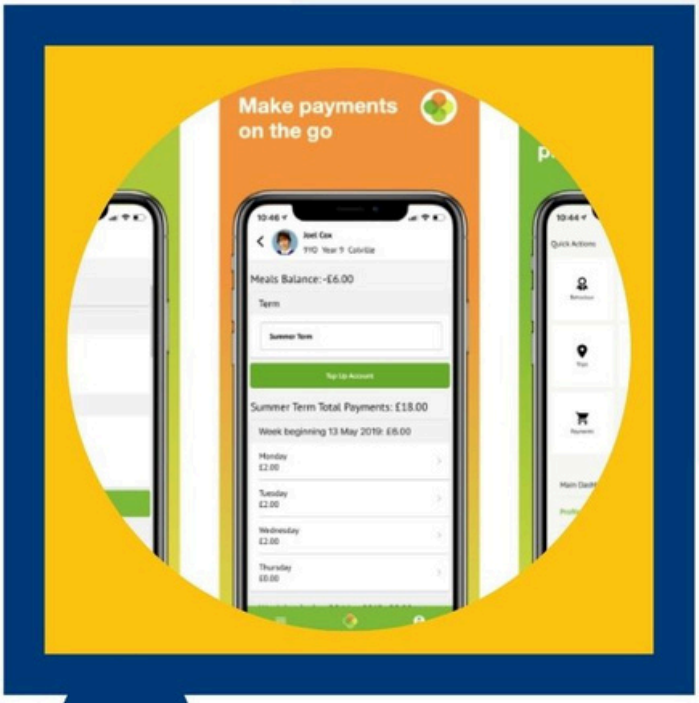
Well done!

PARENT INFORMATION

Arbor

Arbor Parent App

Have you downloaded the Arbor Parent App yet?



Just some of the things you can do on the Arbor Portal and Arbor App:

- **Check Attendance**
- **See Behaviour Points**
- **Book Parents Evening Appointments**
- **Update contact details**
- **View the student timetable**

Need more help?
Scan the QR code above to view Arbor's help guide for getting started

Android Go to your Play store and search for 'Arbor'. Click the top option.

GET IN ON Google Play

IOS Go to your App Store and search 'Arbor'. Click the top option. Click Get to download the Parent App.

Download on the App Store

Thank you for your cooperation.

PARENT INFORMATION

Arbor

Medical Information

Please ensure that all medical conditions your child may have are showing on the Arbor App.

This is vital information and should be communicated to school asap. This can be found in each child's main profile page, under 'Medical'.

If you have any issues logging into the Arbor App please let us know by

- Calling the school on 0151 355 2373

or

- Emailing us on admin@epchs.co.uk



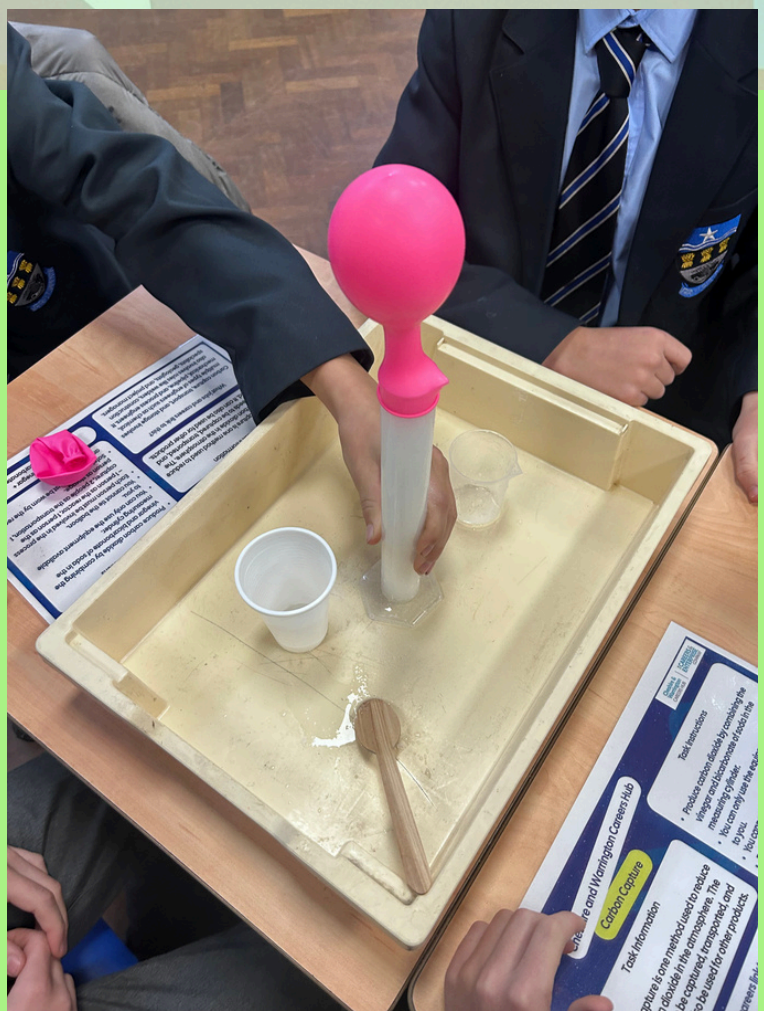


Thank you for helping us ensure accurate records.

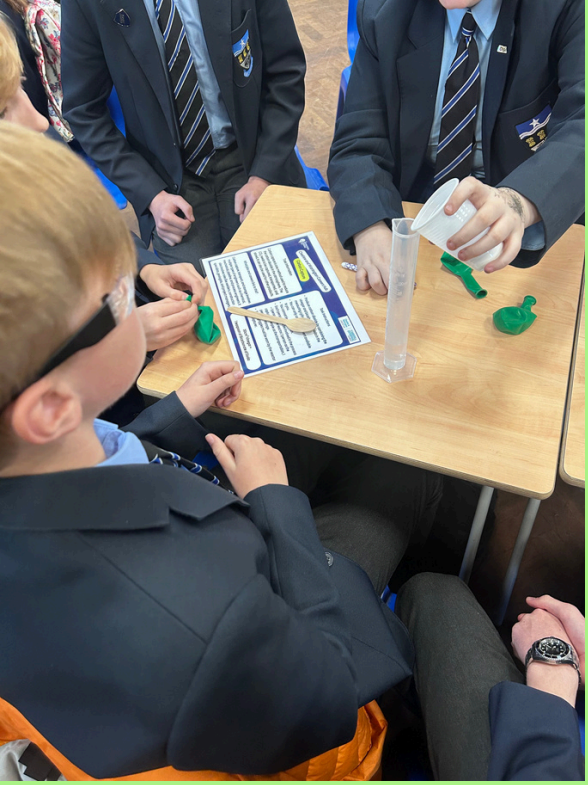
Thank you for your cooperation.

Year 9

Explore Careers in Sustainability



We were delighted to welcome The Inspirational Learning Group and the Cheshire and Warrington Careers Hub into school to work with our Year 9 students and introduce them to the exciting range of careers available in the growing sustainability sector.



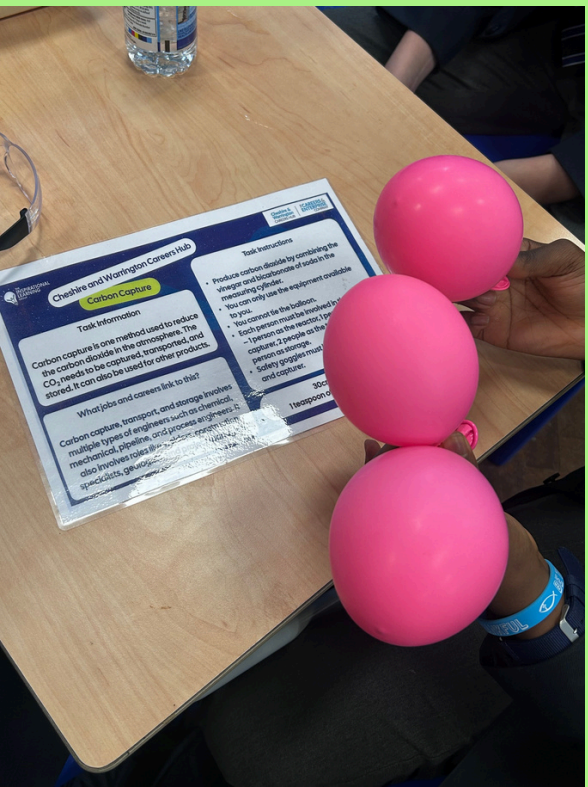
Students took part in a series of engaging, hands-on activities designed to explore some of the challenges and opportunities involved in creating a more sustainable future.



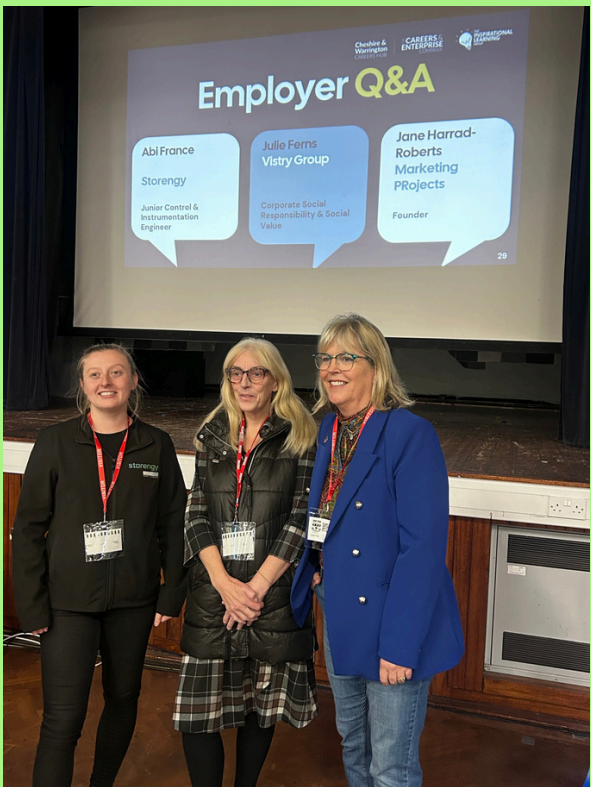
Activities included investigating carbon capture, exploring how we can harness energy from wind, and experimenting with wind turbine blade efficiency to understand how design can influence the amount of energy generated.

The sessions gave students the opportunity to apply scientific and geographical knowledge to real-world challenges, while discovering how innovation, engineering and technology are helping to tackle climate change.

It was also a fantastic opportunity for students to learn about potential future career pathways and understand how the skills they are developing in school could lead to jobs that make a positive difference to the environment.



A big thank you to The Inspirational Learning Group and Cheshire and Warrington Careers Hub for providing such an interesting and inspiring experience for our Year 9 students!



DESIGN TECHNOLOGY



Year 9 Celebrate Día de Muertos Through Creative Mask Making

Our Year 9 Design and Technology students have been showcasing their creativity and craftsmanship by producing these stunning masks inspired by Mexico's Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebrations.

Students explored the cultural significance of this important Mexican tradition before designing and creating their own vibrant and imaginative masks. The finished pieces demonstrate exceptional creativity, attention to detail and a wide range of artistic skills.

The quality of work produced has been outstanding, with students embracing the project with enthusiasm and producing some truly fantastic designs.

Well done to all of our Year 9 students for their hard work, creativity and dedication. The results are amazing!



DESIGN TECHNOLOGY



Year 8 Animal Phonestands Showcase Creativity and Talent

Well done to our Year 8 students who completed their Animal Phonestands this week!

Students demonstrated outstanding creativity, problem-solving and design skills, producing a fantastic range of innovative and eye-catching creations. The quality of work on display was exceptional, with students showing great imagination, effort and attention to detail throughout the project.

We are incredibly proud of the hard work and enthusiasm shown by all involved. Well done, Year 8! ☀️

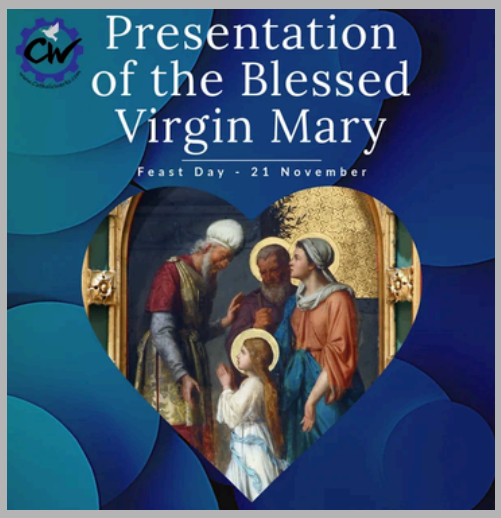
CHAPLAINCY news

November is a special month where we pray for those people who have died. Come to the Chapel to write in the book of Remembrance or place a heart on the tree.

Feast Day of the Week

21ST NOVEMBER- PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Mary's parents, Saints Joachim and Anne, had been childless and promised to consecrate their child to God if blessed with one. When Mary reached the age of three, they brought her to the Temple in Jerusalem to fulfil this vow.



ROSARY IS SAID EACH BREAKTIME IN B11. PLEASE MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO COME ALONG.

Singing group will be in B11 on a Tuesday lunchtime. We have been invited back to Hollymere so we are now starting on our Christmas songs.

INVITATION TO MASS

We will be going to Mass at church every Monday lunchtime, so please see Angela for a letter.

COMMUNITY

There are lots of exciting events taking place in our local parishes. Please check out the website. Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church | Roman Catholic Churches of Ellesmere Port and Hootton (rcchep.co.uk) Please contact your Parish Priest if you would like more information on the Parish Sacramental programme.

Gospel of the Week

This week's Gospel is Matthew 25:14-30

This week's Gospel is the parable of the talents. God has given each of us gifts and talents and we should not be afraid to use them.

Youth SVP will be on during lunchtimes on Thursday in B11.

Each Friday we will have a Chapel sweet sale on the yard by Mr Patel's room to fundraise.

Cheshire Mental Health Support Teams in Schools & Colleges

NHS
Cheshire and Wirral Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust



How we support children, young people, caregivers and schools & colleges

- Early mental health support for children and young people
- Help with anxiety, low mood, worries and emotional wellbeing
- Advice and support for parents and carers
- Working with schools to promote positive wellbeing
- Connecting families with specialist services when needed

We'll be at parents' evening!

Come along and have a chat with us to find out more about the support we offer.



mymind.org.uk

MHST will be at all Parents Evenings, no need to book

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School

Presence, Progress and Participation

Winter Ready...

As we head into the winter months, please make sure you are prepared for the colder weather when coming to school.



A warm, waterproof coat is recommended.



No hot water bottles or blankets at school.



If you are riding a bike, high visibility clothing, lights and a helmet are strongly recommended.



Be prepared, stay safe and help us all enjoy a happy and healthy school!

GOLDEN KEY GOES GLOBAL: EXPLORING GREENLAND WITH DR DAN ALLEN

Our Golden Key Society students were delighted to welcome Dr Dan Allen from Liverpool Hope University for a fascinating talk exploring Greenland and its growing importance on the world stage.



An award-winning academic whose research has been presented at the House of Lords, Dr Allen leads an international research partnership, SafeHarbour Greenland, working alongside researchers and local communities to improve the lives and rights of children in Greenland.

Drawing on his own experiences, Dr Allen introduced students to the extraordinary country, exploring its culture, the impact of climate change, international politics and why Greenland has become such an important focus of global attention.

The session encouraged students to look beyond the headlines, consider different perspectives and think about the lives of young people growing up thousands of miles away.

And the learning doesn't stop there! We are now working towards establishing a pen-pal partnership with students in Greenland, giving our Golden Key members the opportunity to build friendships, exchange experiences and discover what life is really like for young people in another part of the world.

A huge thank you to Dr Allen for sharing his knowledge, experiences and enthusiasm with our students. We are excited to see where this connection might lead!

GOLDEN KEY SOCIETY THROUGH TO THE NEXT ROUND OF THE ESU SCHOOLS' MACE!

A huge congratulations to our Golden Key Society debating team, who represented Ellesmere Port Catholic High School at the first round of the English-Speaking Union Schools' Mace competition on Monday evening and successfully secured a place in the next round!



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Our students were fantastic ambassadors for our school. While we are incredibly proud of the team's success, what stood out most was the way they conducted themselves throughout the evening. They listened attentively to every debate, asked intelligent and thought-provoking questions, congratulated speakers from other schools and even made new friends along the way.

It was also particularly lovely to be joined by a former Golden Key student, now studying English Literature at the University of Liverpool, who came along to support and encourage the team.



The evening was a wonderful reminder that debating is about so much more than winning. It is about listening, learning, challenging ideas respectfully and celebrating the achievements of others.

We are immensely proud of our students, not just for what they achieved, but for the kindness, curiosity and character they demonstrated throughout the competition.

Bring on Round Two!

Extra CURRICULAR



Music Department

MUSICAL THEATRE EXAMS REHEARSALS



Please speak to Miss R before attending

TUESDAY LUNCH

M8

HEAD OF YEAR HEROES

Congratulations to all of our Head of Year Heroes this week!

We are celebrating for reasons such as:
✅ Kindness towards another student
✅ Great resilience and determination to do well in school, always wearing her uniform with pride
✅ Always meeting our expectations, every day, every lesson- 100% attendance, always in the correct uniform and shows respect to everyone



We are incredibly proud of your hard work, dedication and achievements. Keep up the fantastic work!



TEENS ACTIVELY TURNING TO SOCIAL MEDIA APPS/PLATFORMS TO SOURCE DRUGS

Drug Sense UK
Tackling Drug Abuse in the Work Place, Schools, Colleges and the Home

Online drug dealers do not rely on traditional, overt communication to contact young teens. Instead, they weaponise the native features, visual culture, and algorithms of apps like Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp and TikTok and many more to fly under the radar of automated safety systems.

Dealers systemically target, contact, and groom young teens in the UK through several calculated digital touchpoints:

1. The Visual Bait: Feeds and Stories
Dealers maintain a highly active, public digital presence using "throwaway" or temporary profiles https://news.sky.com/story/one-in-four-youngsters-exposed-to-illegal-drug-ads-on-social-media-11804202

Algorithm Hijacking: Dealers use tailored hashtags.(see typical emojis used below).
When a teen interacts with a single video or post about vaping or fitness, algorithms naturally push drug-related advertisements into their public discovery feeds.

E-Commerce Styling: They post high-definition videos of cannabis flower, branded vape cartridges, or blister packs of prescription pills directly on Instagram Stories or TikTok clips. The presentations mimic legitimate lifestyle brands, complete with professional packaging, background music, and user reviews, which minimises a teen's perception of danger.
https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/apr/07/drug-dealers-instagram-tinder-young-customers

2. Code Obfuscation (The Emoji Language)
Because major applications run automated content-moderation software to flag words like "cocaine," "Xanax," or "deal," traffickers rely on a universally understood emoji code language. This keeps messages looking innocuous to parents and baseline tech filters monitored by law enforcement or third-party tracking apps

The Seller Indicator: The electrical plug emoji (🔌) or a crown (👑) is used in bios or direct messages to signify: "I am the supplier / the plug"

Substance Identifiers: (Typical Emojis used)
🍁 or ❄️ - Universal drugs / Cocaine
💊 or ⚡ - Ecstasy / MDMA / Prescription pills
🌳 or 💨 - Marijuana / THC vapes
Logistics Indicators: Rocket ships (🚀) signal high potency. Petrol pumps (⛽), delivery cars (🚗), or a parachute (🪂) indicate local drop-offs or postal shipping options
** Also see link page 3 below for full list of popular 'emojis'

3. Exploiting "Safe Space" Features
Once a teen shows interest—either by liking a post, following an account, or leaving a comment—the dealer takes the initiative to contact them directly

Disappearing DM Functions: Dealers prefer Snapchat or Instagram direct messages because features like "view once" photos or disappearing chats leave no permanent evidence. It ensures that if a parent looks through the teen's phone later that evening, the conversation history is completely blank.

F**unnelling to Encrypted Channels**: Once initial contact is secured on mainstream apps, dealers immediately command the teen to migrate to heavily encrypted messengers like Telegram, Signal, or WhatsApp. These platforms cannot be easily monitored by law enforcement or third-party tracking apps

4. Digital Grooming and "County Lines" Exploitation
In more sinister scenarios, UK gangs utilize social networks for tactical exploitation and recruitment into drug trafficking networks (known as County Lines). Fake Connections: Gang members intentionally add vulnerable local teenagers under the guise of starting a romantic relationship or friendship.

The Debt Trap: They frequently offer the teen free vape liquids, luxury clothing, or minor substances to build trust. Once hooked, the dealer fabricates an unresolved "debt"—such as claiming a package was lost—and threatens physical violence unless the teenager pays it off by delivering physical packages across town or hiding illegal inventory in their school locker

5. Automated "Bot" Proximity Scanning
Dealers often deploy automated scripts or location-based features within specific apps to identify underage users within a strict geographic radius. By filtering for local schools or popular hangout spots via public map tags, dealers can send generic, copy-pasted "menus" directly to nearby teenagers' inboxes

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-66175144 - Charanpreet Khaira (BBC Wales Investigates) July 2023 – details of how reporter set up fake account on Snap Chat – masking as a 15 year old girl. Report details wide how easily it is to source drugs, and links into County Lines and 'Grooming' concerns.

Back in 2016 – The Royal Holloway
In the first study of its kind, Dr Leah Moyle from the School of Law at Royal Holloway, working in collaboration with academics from the University of Liverpool and Griffith University, explored the way in which smartphones are revolutionising the way people buy and sell drugs in the digital age.

The research team conducted an international online survey of over 350 drug users, aged between 18 to 60 years old (with the average age of participants at 18 years old) which revealed that more than three quarters (76%) of respondents said they regularly used Snapchat for buying drugs, whilst 21% favoured the image sharing site, Instagram. The research concludes that the combination of social media platforms as advertising spaces and encrypted messaging apps has opened up a relatively easy and safe space for the drugs economy to flourish.

Speaking of her research, Dr Moyle from Royal Holloway, said: "Whilst our results show that buying from a known and trusted person is still the preferred access method for most drug users, it seems likely that app-usage will continue to grow in this market, especially amongst young people.

https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/about-us/news/drugsforsale-the-rise-of-the-social-media-drug-dealer/

Note: In addition to the 'emojis' listed in above – please be aware 'local dealers may introduce their own emoji codes'.

Dave Parvin (Drug Sense UK) - Engage – Educate- Empower

Drug Sense UK
Tackling Drug Abuse in the Work Place, Schools, Colleges and the Home

COMMUNITY



NEWS

for your information

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 WHATSAPP

AGE RESTRICTION 13+ In the UK

WhatsApp is a free messaging app owned by Meta, that allows users to send messages, share multimedia, make calls, and participate in group chats. In September 2026, WhatsApp announced new optional parental controls for teenagers, including privacy settings, group notifications, and restrictions on AI content, which parents and educators should be aware of.



GROUP CHAT PRESSURES

Group chats help young people stay connected, but they can also leave them feeling excluded or overwhelmed. Negative comments can escalate quickly, and frequent notifications can create a sense of needing to be constantly available. WhatsApp's new parental controls notify parents when teenagers join or leave groups, or when a group grows significantly in size.

HARMFUL CONTENT ON CHANNELS

WhatsApp Channels allow users to receive updates from public figures, organisations, and content creators; however, some Channels may expose young people to misinformation, harmful ideologies, or age-inappropriate material. New optional parental controls allow adults to restrict which Channels teenagers access, including limiting them to approved Channels.

SCAMS TARGETING YOUNG USERS

Scammers may use WhatsApp to trick young people into sharing personal information, sending money, or sharing security codes. They may impersonate friends or family members, using convincing stories about emergencies or urgent requests for help. New parental controls can help manage who contacts teenagers; however, they cannot prevent all scams or fraudulent messages.

UNWANTED CONTACT AND LOCATION SHARING

WhatsApp allows users to share their live location, profile information, and Status updates. Without appropriate privacy settings, this information could expose young people to unwanted attention or reveal their whereabouts. New parental controls enable adults to manage certain privacy settings, including who can view account details and add teenagers to groups.

DISAPPEARING AND HIDDEN MESSAGES

WhatsApp features such as disappearing messages and Chat Lock can make conversations harder for adults to identify. Although these tools are designed to protect privacy, they may also make it harder for adults to recognise inappropriate exchanges or harmful behaviour. WhatsApp's new parental controls do not give adults access to teenagers' private messages or calls.

COMMERCIAL AND AI CONTENT

WhatsApp includes advertising in parts of its Updates section and offers Meta AI, an integrated AI assistant. Young people may encounter sponsored content, misleading AI responses, or information which is unsuitable for their age. New parental controls offer a stricter 'Limited Content' setting for Meta AI; however, this cannot guarantee that every response will be accurate or appropriate.



Advice for Parents & Educators

EXPLORE NEW PARENTAL CONTROLS

WhatsApp's new optional parental controls are being rolled out gradually, giving families more ways to manage teenagers' privacy and interactions. Teenagers will need parental approval using a parent-set PIN to relax any protected settings. Keep the conversation open and set up the controls together, remembering that parents can adjust or switch them off at any time.

MANAGE CHANNELS AND AI

Explore the new settings for Channels, Status updates, and Meta AI. Parents can restrict Channels to approved selections or prevent teenagers from viewing them. They can also choose Meta AI's stricter 'Limited Content' option, which restricts certain topics. Remind young people that AI can produce inaccurate information and encourage them to question responses rather than accepting them at face value.

MONITOR GROUP ACTIVITY SAFELY

New parental controls notify adults when teenagers join or leave groups, or when a group grows significantly in size. These alerts can help identify potentially concerning interactions without revealing private messages. Encourage young people to discuss unfamiliar groups, uncomfortable conversations, or pressure from other members and that they can leave, mute, or report if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

PRIORITISE TRUST AND COMMUNICATION

Parental controls should support conversations about online safety, not replace them. Explain that WhatsApp's new features do not give adults access to private messages or calls, helping teenagers understand that their privacy remains protected. Reassure young people that they can speak openly about upsetting content, unwanted contact, or pressure from other group members.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian Government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



See full reference list on our website

#WakeUpWednesday®

The National College®

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 11.11.2026

Energise

by Endorphins

Group based sessions for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.







Join the Energise family today!

Enjoy a range of fun & inclusive activities and games for children and young people with SEND. Our sessions take place throughout the UK on Saturdays, during school holidays and after school.

Scan the QR code below to find a session close to you.

If you would like to find out more or to book a space, please contact us:
E: bookings@endorphins.uk
T: 0330 1332642

SCAN ME:

Pride in Place funding survey

I am writing to share an important local initiative regarding the Pride in Place funding. This scheme provides £20 million over 10 years to spend on our local town centre to improve facilities and public spaces.

If you live in Ellesmere Port, we would love to hear your views and ideas on how best to invest this funding to make a lasting, positive impact for our families and community.

Please can you fill in this short survey to have your views heard.

Click here for survey

Best regards,

Farhan Patel

wysa
Use Wysa, Feel Better

NHS
Cheshire and Wirral Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust

Exams test your knowledge. Stress tests your mind.

Big exams? Big pressure? You don't have to deal with it alone.

Exams can feel like everything. Constant revision, pressure to get good grades, teachers checking in, parents asking how it's going... all while you're trying to have a life outside school. If you're stressed, losing sleep, struggling to focus, or just feeling low about it all, that doesn't mean you're failing. It just means you're human.

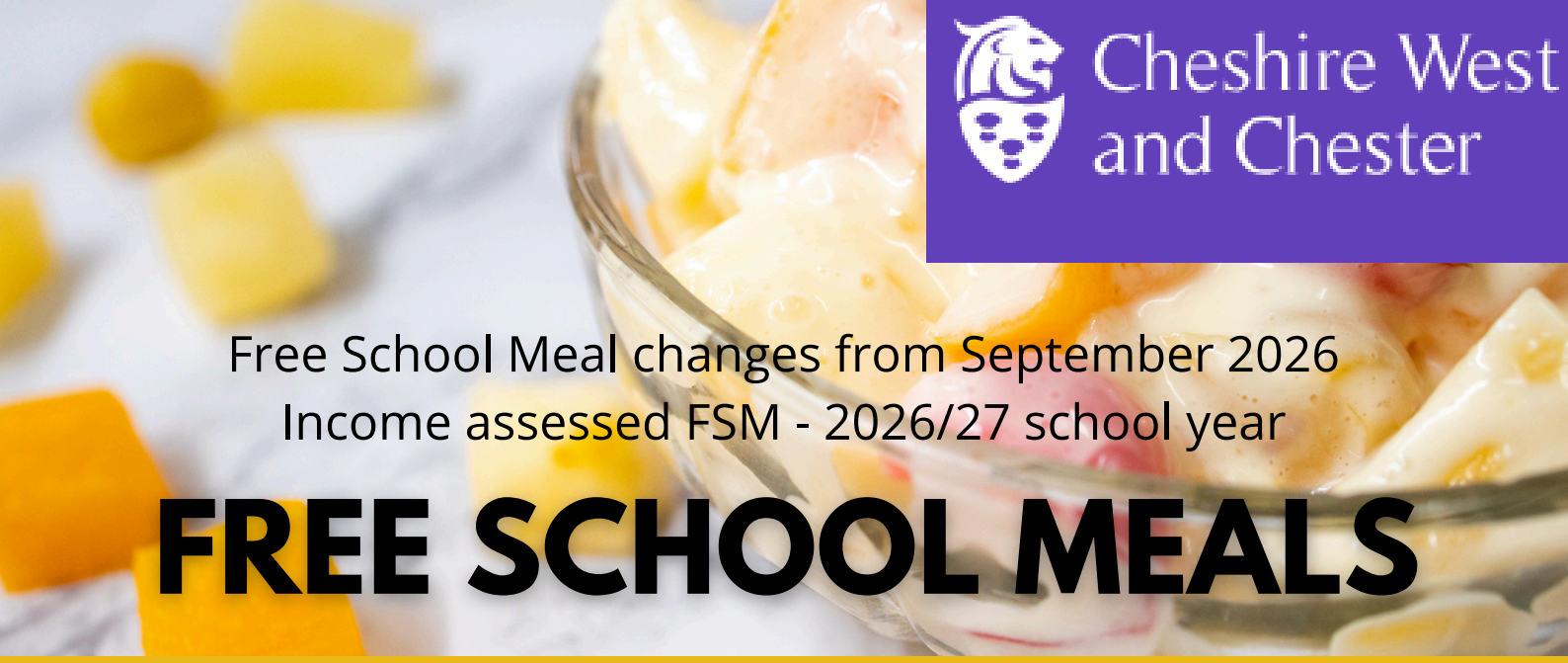
Wysa is a free, confidential app for young people aged 16-17 to chat anytime (yes, even late at night), get tools for exam stress, and much more. No sign-ups, no awkward conversations, just a safe space to sort out what's going on in your head.

Looking after your mental health won't replace revision. But it will make it easier to get through it.

Here's how Wysa can help

- 24/7 support from an empathetic AI chatbot trained in evidence-based techniques
- A library of science-backed self help tools for stress, sleep, motivation, and more
- AI-detected crisis escalation pathways gently guide users toward immediate support options
- Daily check-ins to help build mental fitness, and a personal roadmap tailored to your wellbeing goals





Cheshire West and Chester

Free School Meal changes from September 2026
Income assessed FSM - 2026/27 school year

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

As you will be aware, Central Government has changed rules regarding Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility effective from September 2026.

Since 1 April 2018, all existing FSM claimants have continued to receive free school meals whilst Universal Credit is rolled out, regardless of any change in household circumstances that would have normally ended eligibility. However, this protection will end at the close of the 2025/26 school year, and households must meet the new eligibility criteria for FSM to continue receiving this support.

From the start of the 2026/27 school year, all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit will be entitled to receive FSM. However, there will be 2 categories of Universal Credit based FSM :
Targeted FSM: which continues to be based on the existing threshold, covering pupils who are in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less
Expanded FSM: a new category covering pupils who do not qualify for targeted FSM, but who are in households receiving Universal Credit with annual household earnings above £7,400.

Cheshire West and Chester Council have completed checks over most existing FSM households to determine their eligibility and which category they may fall into. Each of these households will receive a letter informing them of the outcome of this check (or inviting them to reapply if their details could not be checked).

If you receive Universal Credit and do not currently qualify for FSM due to earning over the threshold of £7,400, but would now qualify from September 2026, you can now apply in advance

To apply for free school meals please follow the link

https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/free-school-meals

Immediate help and support for young people

If young people are in need of immediate support please sign post, or help to access the following:

List of services: Home Page - Directory of What Works

Further services:

Koala North-West – Provides early-help family support, similar to a family intervention worker. Families can access this service without a referral to Children's Social Care. Support is offered to families with young children.

School Nurse – Attends once a month and can support pupils with self-harm, exam stress, emotional health, low mood, healthy relationships, anxiety, body image, and issues relating to social media.

Cheshire Young Carers – A referral can be made if a child has additional responsibilities at home that are impacting their wellbeing or attendance at school.

Headspace is an easy-to-use app that helps make meditation and mindfulness simple. By spending just a few minutes a day on the app, users can learn practical skills to support their wellbeing. Headspace offers hundreds of guided meditations covering topics such as stress, anxiety, sleep, and focus.

Calm is an app that supports people experiencing stress and anxiety through guided meditations, sleep stories, breathing programmes, and relaxing music.

MindShift is designed specifically for teenagers and young people, offering tools and strategies to help manage anxiety.

Bereavement-specific bank of resources:

Traumatic Bereavement - UK Trauma Council

Home SUPPORTING BEREAVED CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE - Grief Encounter

Hope Again

About us - Amparo (suicide specific support)

Family members in prison:

Banardo's offer support for children and young people regarding family imprisonment: Barnardo's | Children's charity | Barnardo's

PSS offer support for anyone who has a relative in prison or in the past: While their parent is in prison in Merseyside (Prisoners' Families) | PSS

Post-16 help and support:

https://www.talkingtherapies.cwp.nhs.uk/self-refer

They offer self-referral to people aged 16 and over, registered with a GP in Central, South and West Cheshire.

The service exclusively offers evidence-based, short-term talking therapies designed to help with common mental health concerns, such as:

Low Mood
Anxiety or worry
Stress
Depression

TERM DATES

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School

Term Dates 2026-27

Autumn Term 2026	
Inset Day	Tuesday1st September 2026
School Opens	Wednesday 2nd September 2026
School Closes	Friday 23rd October 2026
Half Term	
School Opens	Monday 2nd November 2026
Inset Day	Friday 27th November 2026
School Closes	Friday 18th December 2026
Christmas Holiday	
Monday 21st December – Friday 1st January 2027	

Spring Term 2027	
School Opens	Monday4th January 2027
School Closes	Friday 12th February 2027
Half Term	
School Opens	Monday 22nd February 2027
School Closes	Thursday 25th March 2027
Easter Holiday	
Friday 26th March (Bank Holiday) – Friday 9th April	

Summer Term 2027	
School Opens	Monday 12th April 2027
Bank Holiday	Monday 3rd May 2027
School Closes	Friday 28th May 2027
Half Term	
School Opens	Monday7th June 2027
School Closes	Friday16th July 2027
Summer Holiday	
Monday 19th July – Tuesday 31st August	

Inset Days: Monday 19th July - Wednesday 21st July

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School

Term Dates 2027-28

Autumn Term 2027	
Inset Day	Wednesday 1st September 2027
School Opens	Thursday 2nd September 2027
School Closes	Friday 22nd October 2027
Half Term	
School Opens	Monday 1st November 2027
Inset Day	Friday 26th November 2027
School Closes	Friday 17th December 2027
Christmas Holiday **Monday 20th December – Monday 3rd January (Bank Holiday)**	

Spring Term 2028	
School Opens	Tuesday 4th January 2028
School Closes	Friday 11th February 2028
Half Term	
School Opens	Monday 21st February 2028
School Closes	Friday 31st March 2028
Easter Holiday **Monday 3rd April – Monday 17th April (Bank Holiday)**	

Summer Term 2028	
School Opens	Tuesday 18th April 2028
Bank Holiday	Monday 1st May 2028
School Closes	Friday 26th May 2028
Half Term	
School Opens	Monday 5th June 2028
School Closes	Tuesday 18th July 2028
Summer Holiday: Wednesday 19th July – Monday 4th September **Staff Inset: Wednesday 19th July – Friday 21st July**	

CONTACT US

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School, Capenhurst Lane, Whitby, Ellesmere Port CH65 7AQ

0151 355 2373

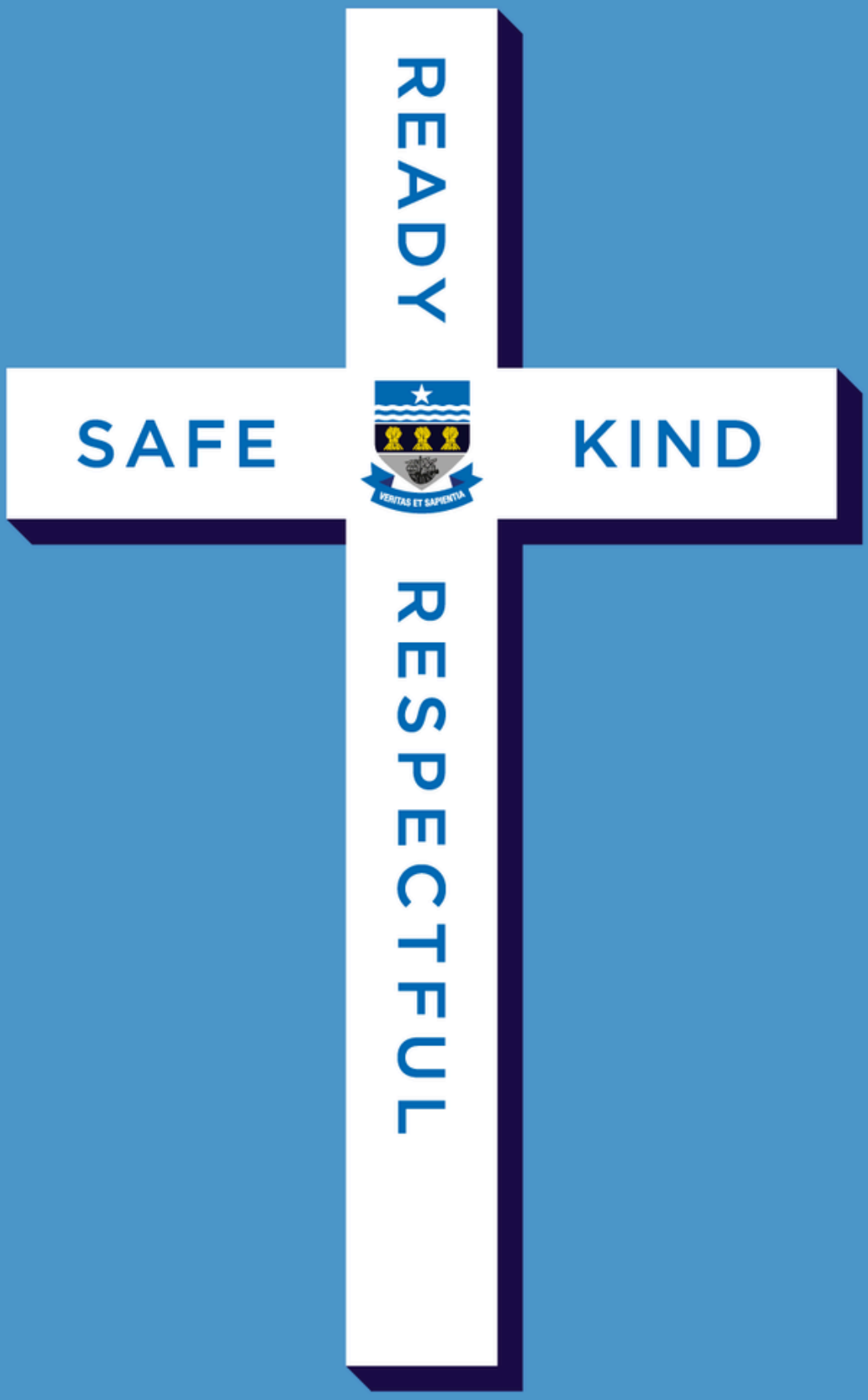
admin@epchs.co.uk

Monday – Thursday: 8:00 AM – 3.30PM

Friday: 8:00 AM – 3.15PM



Our Lady Help of Christians
Catholic Academy Trust



"I Have Come So That They May Have Life And Have It To The Full" – John 10:10