

St Martin's Newsletter



Autumn TERM 2026/2027

Friday 16th October

Attendance

Well done everyone! This week's whole school attendance is 95.1%. Remember anyone arriving at school after 8:50 am will be marked late. Let's be an attendance HERO!

			
	Attendance	Lateness	Purple Points
Nursery	97.37%	1	Not started
Reception	94.84%	3	3.7
Year 1	91.59%	7	16.1
Year 2	99.61%	3	16.6
Year 3	98.57%	1	15.7
Year 4	94.76%	3	10.0
Year 5	91.17%	7	15.9
Year 6	95.48%	3	14.2

Year 2 and Year 5 won the bonus break this week.

St Martin's Stars

Well done to all our certificate winners this week!

			
	Shining Star	Purple Tie	Our Values
Nursery	Lottie W	Bonnie C	Blair W
Reception	Paddy K	Max C	Mason T
Year 1	Tina O	Frankie B	Maleea K
Year 2	Hunter K	Maddison M	Amira A
Year 3			
Year 4	Addison H	Josh E	Blake B
Year 5	Freddie MP	Ava F	Ava F
Year 6	Tyler R	Evie S	Sophie S

Safety Advice

This online safety guide explores the risks of [AI companions](#) for young people, including emotional dependency, inappropriate content, privacy concerns and mental health.

Message from Mrs Ming

We have completed our first half term already! I had a lovely couple of days at Burwardsley with our Year 3 children on the first residential of the year. We made lots of special memories and had plenty of fun along the way!

We break up for half term at normal time on Tuesday and return on **MONDAY 2nd November at 8.40am**. Children should come **dressed as Rockstars** that day as we welcome back **ROCKKIDZ** who will be doing antibullying workshops with the children throughout the day. Merchandise will be available at the end of the day.

We also have parents' evening during the first week back. If you have not yet booked a slot you can do this through the Arbor app. Children will finish at 1.30pm on Wednesday but afterschool club is available to book.

Remember school is closed on Friday 6th November for Staff INSET training.

Have a lovely half term everyone.



Parent Notice Board

Monday 19th October - Parents meeting for PGL 9am

Monday 2nd November - RockKidz Whole school
Wednesday 4th November - Whole school Mass 10am
Wednesday 4th November - Parent's evening 1.40-6pm
EARLY CLOSE
Friday 6th November - INSET DAY

Clubs

There will be no clubs the first week back after half term

School Lottery

CONGRATULATIONS to last week's winner
 10/10/2026 Mr D who won £3.25 2 weeks in a row!

You can buy [tickets here](#)

This month you can win
the brand-new iPhone 18 Pro Max 512GB!
 and recently a school and parent won 10k to share.
 The **more tickets bought the bigger the prize**



Catholic Life and Reflection

The Wednesday Word is a resource for parents to use when discussing the [weekly Gospel](#) with their families. All parents and families are welcome to join our whole school for Mass to celebrate St Martin's Feast day on **WEDNESDAY 4th November at 10am**.

The friends of St Martin's are hoping to put on a few fun fundraising events for the children. All the money raised goes towards things like paying for visitors to come into the school and subsidizing school trips, so parents pay less. If you are interested in helping, let the office know and we will pass on your details.

Future events include

Christmas Film night – Thursday 17th December

Christmas Fayre – Monday 21st December

If you would like to Buy a stall for the fayre also let us know.

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. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI COMPANIONS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Powered by generative AI models like ChatGPT and Google Gemini, AI companion apps and virtual chatbots such as Character.ai, Snapchat My AI, Replika and Talkie, allow users to create, customise, and chat to synthetic avatars around the clock. While many young people use them for harmless entertainment, creative writing or homework help, these tools are designed to simulate genuine human empathy, emotional bonding and deep friendship.

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

AI companions are programmed to be endlessly agreeable, attentive, and available 24/7. Unlike human friendships, an AI companion never disagrees, sets personal boundaries, or gets tired. Young people (especially those experiencing loneliness, social anxiety, or low self-esteem) can quickly develop an unhealthy emotional attachment, viewing synthetic software as their 'best friend' or a surrogate romantic partner.

DANGEROUS MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE

AI chatbots possess no genuine empathy, professional clinical knowledge, or moral reasoning. While developers state these tools are not therapists, vulnerable teenagers often turn to them in crisis. Chatbots have previously hallucinated unsafe medical guidance, validated depressive spirals, and failed to safely escalate disclosures of self-harm or suicidal ideation to real-world protective services.

DATA HARVESTING & OVERSHARING

Because conversational bots simulate warmth and understanding, children often lower their guard and treat the chatbot as a trusted friend. They may disclose sensitive personal information, including full names, school details, private family problems, or secrets, unaware that their conversations are being logged, may be analysed by third parties (including advertisers), or used to train future AI models.

DISTORTED SOCIAL SKILLS

Navigating real-world friendships can be messy, involving dealing with conflict, compromise, boredom, and awkwardness. If a teenager spends hours interacting with an AI that is tailored specifically to validate and flatter them, they may become impatient with real-world relationships. Over time, this can lead to social withdrawal, heightened anxiety in peer groups, and isolation: a vicious circle of growing online dependency coupled with a heightened sense that relationships in the 'real world' are too challenging to maintain.

INAPPROPRIATE OR EXPLICIT CONTENT

While most mainstream platforms feature safety filters and guardrails, young people frequently discover 'jailbreak' prompts to bypass them. Some companion platforms subtly nudge users towards mature themes, romantic roleplay, or sexually suggestive conversations. In worse cases, third-party apps with weak safety checks have been found to generate sexually explicit text or intimate images.

"FREEMIUM" UPSELLS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many companion platforms operate on a freemium model. While basic chat is free, features like voice calls, uncensored responses, custom avatars, or 'deeper bonding' tiers are locked behind expensive monthly recurring subscriptions or in-app token purchases. This can lead to significant hidden costs and pressure on young people to spend money to maintain the 'friendship'.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALK OPENLY ABOUT FAKE RELATIONSHIPS

Demystify how these tools work. Explain to young people that an AI companion has no feelings, memories, or consciousness; it is simply calculating the next most mathematically probable word based on its training data. It is helpful to explain to them the mechanics of large language models so that they understand how they are trained and how they are designed to always flatter and be helpful.

ENCOURAGE REAL-WORLD CONNECTION

Ensure technology habits do not replace face-to-face peer socialisation, sports, hobbies, and family time. Create healthy boundaries at home (such as keeping phones and tablets out of bedrooms overnight) to prevent late-night, unmonitored attachment loops with conversational chatbots when young people are at their most vulnerable.

AUDIT PRIVACY SETTINGS & AGE LIMITS

Check which companion apps are installed on your child's phone or tablet. Many dedicated companion apps carry an App Store rating of 17+, while platforms like Character.ai set a minimum age of 13+ (or 18+ in the UK/EU). Review the privacy settings together: turn off data-sharing toggles, disable model training where possible, and ensure location permissions are blocked.

REINFORCE WHERE TO GET REAL HELP

Make sure young people know that a machine can never replace professional pastoral or mental health care. Remind them of the trusted adults they can turn to at school – such as their Form Tutor, Head of Year, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – as well as dedicated youth support services like Childline (0800 1111) or Shout (text 85258).

Meet Our Expert

Darren Coxon is the Founder and Executive Director of Kompass Education, a consultancy specialising in supporting educators, students and parents in making wise choices with AI. His book *Ethical AI and Education*, co-authored with Clara Hawking, will be released later in 2026 by Taylor and Francis.



The National College