



www.gosforthpark.newcastle.sch.uk

December 19th 2025 Issue 7/7 Autumn Term 2



Merry Christmas



From everyone at Gosforth Park First School





To our GPFS Community

Wow – what an incredible, joy-filled couple of weeks!

A huge well done to our amazing children, who absolutely shone in their nativity performances. It was wonderful to see them up on stage having such a great time. These performances truly showcased **confidence**, **creativity**, **community**, and **challenge**.

It's been lovely to see the progress the children have made since this time last year—the way they support their friends on stage, and their growing confidence whether singing, dancing, acting, or narrating. And what a fantastic way for our whole community to come together and celebrate the children!

A heartfelt thank you to our entire staff team for making these shows possible:

- To Mr Brown for putting up the stage and making sure Ernie the Urn was ready.
- To our office staff for organising events and lists.
- To our incredible teaching and support team for all the hard work behind the scenes.
- And to our cleaning staff for tackling all that glitter and glue!

Thank you also to our kitchen and lunchtime team for a wonderful Christmas Dinner day.

A huge shout-out to our PTFA members for everything you've done—sorting hampers, tickets, teas/coffees, raffle prizes, grotto presents, Christmas Eve bags, wreath making, party snacks, and even arranging for the main man himself to visit!

And of course, **thank you to Santa** for giving up so much of his time during the busiest season of all!

Finally, **thank you to parents, grandparents, and our wider family members** for your support—and for giving us such an amazing bunch of children to work with.

Reminder

School reopens on **Monday 5th January**.



The **PTFA AGM** will be held on **Tuesday 27th January** at **6:15pm** in the community room. We hope you can join us!

Theatre Trip



Our Reception to Year 4 children had a fantastic time at the Gosforth Civic theatre on Thursday watching a 'A Town Called Christmas'.

Huge thanks to all of our parent volunteers who helped out on the day and a huge thanks to our wonderful PTFA who paid for the event.

Miss Bell

Santa's Grotto

How lucky are we! Our special guest visitor on Wednesday was no other than the jolly-man himself... Father Christmas!



What a magical moment. Thank you to the wonderful PTFA for organising our VIP guest

Mrs Lamb



This week our Golden Welly goes to **Miss Bell's class**. They have been working well as part of a team with their friends in penalty shoot-outs, but are also always really keen to help set up and put away our resources outdoors.

Thank you Miss Bell's class!

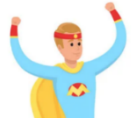
Ms Gasper

Spring Topics

Our topics for next half term are below:

Reception – Super Heroes!

Superheroes inspires, excites and engages all of our young learners. Children are now enjoying achieving what they set out to do and learning to persevere to complete more complex teacher-led challenges. We also learn about the lives of real life superheroes and their important roles within our community.



Year 1 - Pole to Pole

After focusing on the geography of our own locality, **Pole-to-Pole** takes us on a journey around the world! Children will be studying the geography of different continents and oceans and relating hot and cold areas to their distance from the equator.



Year 2 – Home and Away

Home and Away delves deeper into the Geography of our wider world. Year 2 children take a closer look at our locality and begin to compare this to life in Brazil (much closer to the equator!) We begin to name some of the climates that are found around the world.

KS2 – Hola!

This geography-based topic will teach your children about Spanish speaking countries around the world and immerse them in Spanish art and culture. Children are excited to learn more about Spain, share their prior knowledge and show off their language skills!



Mr Hindess

Pre-Loved Uniform

**Take what you want –
pay as you feel!**

We're sure to see another growth spurt after the Christmas festivities! Mrs Davy has an abundance of grey uniform items that she is preparing for new homes in January.

On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of the first week back, these will be set out in the community room with a **'take what you want – pay as you feel'** approach. All monies come back to school to be spent on playground equipment for the children.

Pop in before or after drop off or pick up. We don't want these pre-loved items going into landfill!

Thanks
Mrs Lamb



Wraparound bookings for January closed at midday on Wednesday 17th December. Bookings after **12 noon** will **not be accepted** and there will be **no ad-hoc bookings in the first week of January**. Please note **school inboxes will not be monitored over the Christmas holiday**.

Thank you
Mrs Carrick

Pre-Loved Uniform

| PRE-LOVED ITEMS WE CAN SELL | | PRE-LOVED ITEMS WE CAN NOT SELL |
|---------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|
| OFFICIAL SCHOOL JUMPERS/HOODIES | £2.50 | NON – OFFICIAL JUMPERS |
| OFFICIAL SCHOOL CARIGANS | £2.50 | NON – OFFICIAL CARIGANS |
| OFFICIAL SCHOOL POLOS | £1.50 | NON – OFFICIAL POLOS |
| GIRLS CHECKED DRESSES | £1.50 | GREY BOYS TROUSERS |
| GREY PINAFORES | £1.50 | GREY TAYLORED GIRLS TROUSERS |
| GREY SKIRTS | £0.50 | GREY BOYS SHORTS |
| GREY GIRLS SOFT TROUSERS | £0.50 | DAMAGED OR MARKED ITEMS |
| SCHOOL BAG (NEW STYLE) | £2.50 | |

Items are sold from 1 Park Drive, Melton Park NE3 5QB, with a drop off box in front of the garage. Please only drop off items on the list that can be resold.

Please REMEMBER items must not be marked as they are unable to be sold on. You can text me Natasha Davy (Parent) on 07736276653.



This is the pre-loved uniform drop off area in the main entrance to help us to reuse, recycle and re-love uniform for the benefit of our children and community.



Huge well done to Alice for winning the Junior singing award at her Razzamatazz awards presentation!



Well done to Thea and Alanna who have both achieved their 1000 metre badges in swimming!



TIMES TABLES ROCK STARS

Our activity is not very high this week on TTRS, KS2 please keep practising your times tables over the holidays to help you with your Maths work in the new year. our top coin earners this week are Arisa K and Jacob A.



It's been a close race this week in KS1 for top of the leader board – well done **Mr Patterson's class!** Keep practising hard over Christmas and look out for any special Christmassy robot outfits!

Our top coin earners this week are:

- ★ Miss Pope – **Hazel T**
- ★ Mr Edwards – **Arlo S**
- ★ Miss Tate – **Ada W-B**
- ★ Mr Patterson – **Finn O-G**
- ★ Mr Hindess and Mrs Armstrong – **Alice B**
- ★ Mr Guest – **Alfie R**
- ★ Miss Bell – **Gerard C**

Have a wonderful Christmas everyone!
Miss Pope.

Attendance

Our whole school attendance to date this academic year is **96.7%** which is down on last year's **97.2%**.

Our classes of the week this week are **Year 2 Mr Patterson** with **98.9%** and **Year 2 Miss Tate** with **97.2!**

Well done everyone!
Mrs Lamb

Starting School in September 2026!

Applying for Places

Nursery Application forms for places in September 2026 will be available on the school website and from the office from Friday 9th January 2026.

The closing date for applications is 27th March 2026 at noon.

Offer letters will be emailed out on Wednesday 1st April 2026.

The deadline for accepting a place is Friday 24th April.

Nursery visit dates

- ★ Tuesday 20th January 4:00pm
- ★ Wednesday 21st January 4:00pm
- ★ Thursday 22nd January 9:30am
- ★ Tuesday 27th January 4:00pm
- ★ Wednesday 28th January 4:00pm
- ★ Thursday 29th January 9:30am

Reception Applications for September 2026

Applications open: 1st September 2025

Applications close: 16th January 2026

National offer day: 16th April 2026

Further information can be found at

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/apply-school-place/applying-reception-places>

Middle School Applications for September 2026

National Offer Day: 2nd March 2026

Further information can be found at

[Applying for Transfer places | Newcastle City Council](#)

Mrs Lamb



With the festive season almost upon us, we know it's not always the most wonderful time of the year for everyone. We know that Christmas and New Year can be a challenging time for many families for many different reasons. We have pulled together some resources on a range of different topics in one handy place for you to use or share with loved ones.

- [The NHS](#) - 999 and 111 services are available for emergency and urgent mental health matters, while the website also has details of care on offer
- [If U Care Share](#) - The charity has a range of resources on its website, including a 24/7 confidential Crisis Messenger for anyone struggling
- [Hub of Hope](#) - A searchable online resource which provides suggested services for a range of mental health and addiction issues based on location
- [The Samaritans](#) - The long-running charity offers 24/7 support by phone, email or its Self-help app
- [NHS](#) Support for Domestic Violence and Abuse
- [NHS](#) Addiction Support

- [Struggling at Christmas](#) Get free, safe and anonymous support from kooth.com. We have a range of flyers from Kooth on Loneliness, Loss, Social Anxiety and Family Difficulties which we'll send out on Parent Pay.
- [EDNE](#) Eating Distress North East (EDNE) offers independent confidential services to people affected by eating distress across the North East
- [Free digital mental wellbeing support](#) for adults across the UK is also available at quell.io
- [Education Support](#) offers help with the mental health and wellbeing of teachers and education staff in schools, colleges and universities and can be contacted on 08000 562 561
- [Cruse](#) Bereavement Care (CRUSE) is a national charity committed to promoting the well-being of bereaved people. Patients may contact the national Helpline seven days a week (various times) which is run by trained bereavement volunteers who offer emotional support to anyone affected by grief, calling free on 0808 808 1677.

Wishing you a peaceful and safe Christmas from the whole GPFS Family.

Mrs Lamb



Rainbow Wraparound

Bookings must be made during the booking window which opens on the 10th of each month and closes on the 20th of each month, for the following month.

| | Booking opens 12 noon | Booking closes 12 noon |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| October bookings | September 10 th | September 20 th |
| November bookings | October 10 th | October 20 th |
| December booking | November 10 th | November 20 th |
| January bookings | December 3 rd | December 17 th |
| February bookings | January 10 th | January 20 th |
| March bookings | February 10 th | February 20 th |
| April bookings | March 10 th | March 20 th |
| May bookings | April 10 th | April 20 th |
| June bookings | May 10 th | May 20 th |
| July bookings | June 10 th | June 20 th |

Parents must make their own bookings on the school cloud system. The only exception to this is families using vouchers. If you are emailing dates for voucher bookings, you must include

- Your child's name
- The day and date
- The sessions required (breakfast, until 5pm, until 6pm).

If you would like to, you can book sessions in advance for the entire school year.

If you do wish to book the same sessions for the entire school year, please email Mrs Carrick at wraparound@gosforthpark.newcastle.sch.uk

Block bookings can only be made via email or through school cloud (not text message).

Please email wraparound@gosforthpark.newcastle.sch.uk for any wraparound queries, **NOT the admin inbox or Mrs Carrick directly, as this will delay any response and may result in you missing the booking window.**

Please ensure all block bookings are made/requested before the booking window closes. We cannot guarantee any block bookings after this date.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Thanks

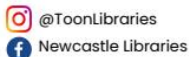
Mrs Carrick

wraparound@gosforthpark.newcastle.sch.uk

NEWCASTLE LIBRARIES

CHILDREN & FAMILIES NEWSLETTER
WINTER 2025/2026

Keep up to date with all things Toon Libraries:



Event booking:
www.eventbrite.co.uk/newcastlelibraries.com



Christmas Crafts

Monday 22 December at 11am
Fenham Library & Kenton Library
Monday 22 December at 12pm
Blakelaw Library @ Leisure United
Monday 22 December at 2pm
West End Library, Cruddas Park Library, Denton Burn Library, East End Library
Tuesday 23 December at 11am
Outer West Library, Walker Library, City Library & High Heaton Library
Wednesday 24 December at 11am
Newburn Library & Gosforth Library
Wednesday 24 December at 1pm
Blakelaw Library @ Leisure United

Free,
drop in, and
suitable for the
whole family!



BOOK BINDING WORKSHOP

Saturday 14 February, 11am - 1pm

Ever wondered how books are made? In this 2 hour workshop, experts from the Society of Bookbinders North East help you make your own journal. You can even emboss your own name on the front cover!
Suitable for children aged 7+. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.
Free session, but booking essential. Booking via Eventbrite.

Whatever Next!

31 January, City Library,
10.30am and 12.30pm



We're celebrating National Storytelling Week with one of our favourite stories - Whatever Next by Jill Murphy.

Baby Bear uses his box to fly into space - what story will you tell using your cardboard box and your amazing imagination?!

Book your free place via Eventbrite for this story and craft session, suitable for children aged 4-11.



Early Words Together

Outer West Library, starts Monday 12 January, 10.30am
High Heaton Library, starts Tuesday 13 January, 2pm

National
Literacy
Trust

Change your story

First Words Together

Fenham Library Starts Friday 16 January, 10am

These sessions are a fun, free way to help parents develop their skills and confidence to support early language development in a home learning environment. First Words Together is suitable for children up to the age of two and Early Words Together focuses on children aged between 2 and 3 years old.

You will be signing up to attend 5 weekly sessions with a different focus and theme each week. You'll also get resources to take away with you. Book your free space via Eventbrite.

SATS WORKSHOPS

Fenham Library, Tuesday 17 February, 11am
Gosforth Library, Wednesday 18 February, 11am
City Library, Thursday 19 February, 12pm
West End Library, Friday 20 February, 11am



Join Explore Learning for an hour long session designed to help Year 6 children gain confidence in the run up to SATS tests. This workshop aims to improve SATs preparation, aid familiarisation with SATs papers and help develop exam techniques. Book your free place via Eventbrite.

GAME CHANGERS

Read, play, craft and make friends at our Game Changers social clubs for 7-11 year olds (under 8s must be accompanied by a grown up)!

Whether you want to try a new board game, help create a book display, or have some company while you do your homework, you'll find plenty to keep you busy.

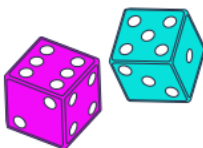
Monday: Fenham Library (3.30pm)

Tuesday: Outer West Library (3.30pm)

Wednesday: Newburn Library (3.30pm)

Thursday: High Heaton Library (3.30pm)

Saturday: Kenton Library (11am), Denton Burn Library (11am), West End Library (10.45am), Cruddas Park Library (11am)



STORYTIMES

Enjoy a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, explore what the library has to offer, make friends and listen to stories that will encourage young children to develop a life-long love of books.

Under 5s, term time only.

Mondays: Fenham Library 10.30 am, City Library 10.30am, West End Library 2pm
Tuesdays: Gosforth Library, 11am
Wednesdays: Blakelaw Library, 10.30am
Thursdays: High Heaton Library 10.30am, Kenton Library 10.30am
Fridays: Gosforth Library 10.30am, Newburn 10.30am, East End Library 11am
Saturdays: Cruddas Park Library 10.30am, Walker Library 11am

LEGO CLUBS

This is a term time weekly drop-in and we provide all the materials. The clubs are for children aged 4 and up, and children must be with a parent or carer.

Mondays: Kenton Library - 3.30pm-4.30pm,
West End Library - 4pm-5pm

Tuesdays: Gosforth Library - 3.30-4.30pm

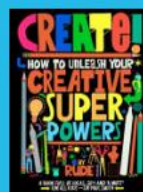
Thursdays: Walker Library - 3.45pm-5pm,
City Library - 4pm-6pm,

Fridays: Fenham Library - 3.30pm-4.30pm

Saturdays: Newburn Library - 10.30am-12.30pm, East End Library - 11am-12pm,
High Heaton Library - 11am-12pm,
Denton Burn Library - 11am-12pm, Cruddas Park Library - 11am-12.30pm,
Outer West Library - 11am-1pm



New Books - Available Now!



Visit libraries.newcastle.gov.uk to search for books, find out where they are, make a reservation (for free!) and select which branch you want to collect your book from!





The Twelve days of Wellbeing

from Boxing Day to Twelfth Night

Boxing Day
(26th December)



Twelfth Night
(6th January)



5 Ways to Wellbeing:

1. Connect; 2. Be active; 3. Take notice; 4. Give; 5. Keep learning!





1. A Partridge in a Pear Tree

Learn the verses for the 12 days of Christmas and put an action to go with each. Can you teach your family?

5. Keep Learning

2. Two Turtle Doves

Do 2 kind things for someone else today.

4. Give

3. Three French Hens

**Practise deep breathing:
Breathe in through your nose
Hold for 2 seconds
Breathe out slowly through your mouth
Repeat 3 times**

1. Connect

4. Four Calling Birds

Find 4 things that you can give to a charity shop that someone else can have and enjoy.

4. Give

5. Five Gold Rings

Draw a ring and inside it, write or draw 5 of your strengths.

1. Connect

6. Six Geese A-Laying

Go on a nature walk. Practise your deep-breathing and find 6 interesting, natural objects.

1. Connect

7. Seven Swans A-Swimming

Try something new or start a project to teach others about something you are interested in.

5. Keep Learning

8. Eight Maids A-Milking

Write a list of 8 little jobs you can do to help out at home over the week.

2. Be Active

9. Nine Ladies Dancing

Create your own exercise or dance routine with 9 different moves.

2. Be Active

10. Ten Lords A-Leaping

Look up at the sky at night - can you spot 10 stars? Perhaps you might spot a planet or a shooting star.

3. Take Notice

11. Eleven Pipers Piping

Listen quietly to a piece of relaxing music. Notice the instruments playing and how it makes you feel.

3. Take Notice

12. Twelve Drummers Drumming

**Plan 12 things you will do for the rest of January to:
1. Connect; 2. Be active;
3. Take notice; 4. Give;
5. Keep learning!
1,2,3,4,5**



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SETTING UP APPS, GAMES AND SOFTWARE

Millions of new phones, tablets, laptops and games consoles will be nestling under Christmas trees this year. However, even if parents and carers have gone to the trouble of setting up these new devices and enabling the safety features, there are still potential hazards in the apps, games and software that children will want to install and use. Knowing what to look for and discussing those risks with your child may help avoid any nasty surprises this Christmas. Here are our top tips for ensuring that unwrapping this year's presents doesn't unleash any unexpected dangers.

TAKE NOTE OF AGE RATINGS

Back when most games were bought in shops, checking the age rating was easy: it was on the front of the box. Now that most games are downloaded, it's tougher – but not impossible. All reputable download stores show a game's age rating at the point of purchase, and you can check the suitability of a specific title your child wants to play at videostandards.org.uk/RatingBoard/games.

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'FREE' ISN'T ALWAYS FREE

The games market has changed radically in recent years. Many titles are free to download, but then tempt players to pay for cosmetic items (as in Fortnite) or to unlock additional content. There can be huge peer pressure for children to pay for these items. Agree a budget for in-game purchases before the game is downloaded, and make sure children can't authorise in-game purchases by themselves.

DISABLE IN-APP PURCHASING

It's not wise to leave children with devices that can make in-app purchases without your permission. Ideally, set up computers, consoles and phones so child accounts need an adult's authorisation to buy anything. On shared devices (like iPads, which don't allow user accounts), check the settings to ensure that in-app purchasing requires the account holder's password, fingerprint or face ID.

CHECK THE SPECS

To avoid let-downs, check a game's specs before buying – especially for PC or Mac, where games often need a particular graphics chip or processor to work. Sites like systemrequirementslab.com can scan your computer to see if it will run certain games properly. On consoles, make sure you're buying the right version: some newer Xbox or PlayStation games won't play on older consoles.

MONITOR IN-GAME COMMS

Voice chat with friends is part of the fun of modern gaming – but danger lurks here too. Many titles have open chat systems, meaning that children could speak to strangers or hear adult language and verbal abuse when games get particularly competitive. Using a shared family area (as opposed to alone in bedrooms) for online gaming is a good way to keep an occasional ear on what's being said.

BE WARY OF GIFTS

Titles like Roblox, Minecraft and Fortnite have in-game currencies, which can be earned through progress in the game – but can also be bought with real money. A common scam is for a young player to be offered currency if they click a link, visit a certain site or contact another user directly. Warn your child about such offers; they should show you if they're in any doubt over an in-game gift.

APPS ARE AGE RATED, TOO

Like games, apps in the major stores have age ratings, too – so you can see in advance whether an app's appropriate for your child. Additionally, phones' parental control settings allow you to set age limits, preventing young ones from downloading unsuitable apps themselves. These ratings aren't infallible, however: we've seen TV apps featuring adult shows with an age rating of 3, for example.

CONSIDER STORAGE

Most apps and games will tell you in the online store how much space they need on a device. Check this carefully – especially with games, which can run into hundreds of megabytes and beyond. If you don't have enough free storage on a device to run the game or app, you won't get a refund from the store. You can normally check a device's available storage space through the settings menu.

WATCH OUT FOR IMITATORS

Even in the official stores, untrustworthy rogue apps can slip through the net. Common tricks are apps or games that have a slightly different name to the genuine article (Fortnight rather than Fortnite, for instance) or use logos which deliberately look very similar to the official app. To avoid downloading these imitations, read the app's description and check who the publisher is listed as.

LEGAL APPS THAT BREAK THE LAW

There are many apps that are perfectly legal but enable illegal activity – streaming apps which let people watch football matches, say, without paying for Sky or BT Sport. Prosecution for using such apps is rare, but they can lead to risky behaviour like viewing rogue streams on sites teeming with malicious links. Watch for children installing unusual apps with 'TV', 'stream' or 'sport' in the name.

IN-APP REGISTRATION

It's common for apps and games to ask users to register; entering personal details like email address, date of birth and other information you might not want your child to divulge. Ask them to get your permission before giving any personal info to an app – and consider using your details rather than the child's, so they're not targeted by marketing spam or put at risk of having their data stolen.

STAY UPDATED

Most games and apps are subject to regular updates, which not only offer new content and features but also provide critical security improvements. Children tend to ignore such updates – usually because they don't understand why they're important, or they simply want to get straight on with gaming. Check your child's devices periodically to make sure these updates are being installed.

Meet Our Expert

Barry Collins has been a technology journalist and editor for more than 20 years, working for titles such as the *Sunday Times*, *Which?*, *PC Pro* and *Computeractive*. He's appeared regularly as a technology pundit on television and radio, including on *Newsnight*, *Radio 5 Live* and *ITV News at Ten*. He has two children and has written regularly about internet safety issues.



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The 12 Online Safety Tips of Christmas FOR CHILDREN WITH NEW DEVICES

Christmas is almost upon us once again, and soon some lucky children will be excitedly tearing the wrapping off a new mobile phone, tablet or games console. For some of them, it will be the first time they've owned a device that connects them to the online world. Even for older children, a new device means new corners of the digital landscape to explore – and, unfortunately, new risks to be aware of.

We've put together our top tips so that you can guide your young ones in enjoying their new digital gifts safely and responsibly throughout the year to come. Merry Christmas!



1. ALWAYS SET A PASSWORD

If your child's new device has a password protection feature, use it! It helps to keep their private information safe and will deny others access to their device without permission. Your children's passwords should be something memorable to them – but something which other people can't guess (it's also a good idea for parents to write it down in case it gets forgotten!).

2. SET UP 'PARENTAL CONTROLS'

This really is an essential when your child gets a new device, so they're protected from the outset. Most phones, tablets and consoles allow you to customise their settings to determine which games your child can play, how they can communicate (and who with), what content they can access and so on. It will give you peace of mind that they can't inadvertently do something they shouldn't.

3. PAY ATTENTION TO AGE RATINGS

One of the first things children want to do with any new device is play games and explore apps. Before they download anything or install a new console game, check its age rating. Many popular games and apps have content that's not suitable for younger ages. The safest long-term solution is to adjust the device's settings so they can only download and use games and apps appropriate for their age.

4. KEEP NUMBERS AND DEVICES PRIVATE

Make sure your child understands that they should never share their phone number with someone they don't know or accept a friend request from them. They should also appreciate that it's a good idea to mainly keep their device out of sight, never lend it to a stranger, and never put it down somewhere that other people could steal it or take it to use without asking.

5. HAVE 'THE MONEY CONVERSATION'

Before your children start using their new device in earnest, talk to them about in-app purchases and other ways that money might be spent through their device. Once they understand, you might want to agree on a spending limit and reassure them that they can come to you if they're uncertain, or if they have made a purchase by accident.

6. DISCOURAGE DEVICE DEPENDENCY

Of course, children who've just got a new device will naturally want to spend as much time on it as possible. But whether they're zapping bad guys, watching videos or connecting with friends, it's easy for them to get attached very quickly. Gently remind them that having family time, going outdoors and getting some exercise are still fun, too. And the device will be there when they get back.

7. EXPLAIN SECURE WIFI NETWORKS

Your home WiFi is protected by a password that only your family knows, whereas public networks (like those found in coffee shops, for example) can be accessed by anyone. It's important that your child grasps this difference because, if they're using a portable device on an unsecured network, then a hacker could access their personal information without them even knowing.

8. LIMIT SCREEN TIME

Using a device for too long, especially just before bed, can interfere with a child's sleep quality and reduce their concentration and overall enthusiasm. It might be helpful to agree on certain times of day when they don't use their device. Most devices' settings let you specify a screen-time limit, helping your child to stay fresh and focused in order to perform well at school.

9. ONLY PAIR WITH KNOWN BLUETOOTH DEVICES

Your child may want to connect to another device via Bluetooth, so they can listen to music wirelessly or share pictures and videos with nearby friends. But if they use Bluetooth to link with a device that they don't know, they're at risk of a stranger being able to see their personal information or having someone transmit a virus onto their device.

10. TURN LOCATION SETTINGS OFF

It's safest to disable the device's location services (if it's a portable device) so your child doesn't inadvertently make other people aware of where they are. You can usually do this via the device's privacy control settings. Turning location settings off not only means your child's whereabouts can't be tracked by others, it also significantly extends battery life.

11. STAY AWARE OF THE SURROUNDINGS

It's quite common to see adults not looking where they're going while engrossed in their phone. Children are even more easily distracted. In some cases, children have been hit by cars or cyclists because they were staring at their device and lost track of where they were. Remind your child that screens and walking don't mix. If they need to use their device, they should stop in a safe place first.

12. BE THERE IF THEY NEED TO TALK

Even when you've made a device as secure as you can, there's still a possibility of your child seeing something that bothers them, or someone they don't know attempting to contact them. If this happens, listen to their concerns, empathise and reassure them. Once they've explained what happened, you can decide if you should take further action like blocking or reporting another user.



NOS National Online Safety®
#WakeUpWednesday



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI TOYS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

This festive season, the newest toys on the shelves do not just blink or make noise; they listen. Many now come with artificial intelligence (AI), allowing them to talk, learn, and even respond to a child's emotions. These toys can be educational and engaging, but they also collect, store, and process information. This guide explains what that means for families and why it matters.

TOYS THAT LISTEN AND LEARN

When a toy uses AI, it collects data such as voice recordings, interactions, and background sounds. This information is sent to remote servers, where it is analysed to improve responses. Your child's voice becomes training data, which may be stored indefinitely or shared with third parties.

WEAK SECURITY PROTECTIONS

Some AI toys have poor password protection or open network connections. Others may have microphones or cameras that stay on, even when the toy appears to be off. This can lead to recordings being made without your knowledge, including conversations unrelated to play.

ARTIFICIAL VOICES, REAL INFLUENCE

For very young children, an AI companion may become one of the first voices they interact with regularly. How that voice shows humour, empathy, or authority can shape how a child learns to communicate. If the model is artificial, then part of what is learned is artificial as well.

PRESSURE TO KEEP ENGAGING

Some toys reward repeated use or track engagement, encouraging children to interact more. When children compare how their toys perform, it creates pressure to play more often. This increases the amount of data collected and can make learning feel like competition.

MARKETING THROUGH PLAY

Toys that learn a child's preferences may feed that data into future advertising. A toy that knows a child's favourite colour or hobby could help a company design more targeted marketing to that child and their family.

PLAYTIME AS DATA TRAINING

The information collected from children helps train AI systems. Their voice, emotional responses, and behaviour shape how machines 'understand' people. Play becomes part of a much larger system that influences how future technologies behave.

Advice for Parents & Educators

START WITH A CONVERSATION

Talk to young people. Explain that some toys learn from what they say and do. Help them understand that even friendly technology should have boundaries, and to ask questions about it. Curiosity is healthy, blind trust is not.

SET LIMITS ON USE

Turn off Wi-Fi or Bluetooth when the toy is not in use. Check for updates regularly, as they can change privacy or safety settings. Treat connected toys like any smart device; they should be monitored, updated, and switched off when not in use.

MODEL DIGITAL AWARENESS

Children learn from adults. If they see you checking privacy settings, reading terms, and talking openly about online safety, they are more likely to do the same. Show them how to question technology in a healthy way.

RESEARCH BEFORE YOU BUY

Look for toys that work offline or store data locally. Check for a free or demo version so you can test how it behaves. Read privacy policies to understand what data is collected, where it goes, and whether it's shared with others.

REVIEW PRIVACY SETTINGS

Find out where the data is stored and who has access to it. Some companies sell or share data with advertisers. If the toy connects through an app, check what it requests access to and limit those permissions whenever possible.

BALANCE AI WITH REAL PLAY

AI toys can be fun and creative, but they are not a replacement for real human interaction. Encourage time away from technology with activities that foster emotional and social development. Use AI toys to support learning, not define it.

Meet Our Expert

Clara Hawking is Executive Director of Kompass Education. She advises governments, school trusts, and global organisations on AI governance and safeguarding, helping schools and families understand how technology shapes learning, wellbeing, and the digital future of children.



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