

St. Columba's Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher: Miss. R. Quinn



Iona Star – 21st February 2025

St Columba's Families,

We hope that you have all had a good week – the children at St Columba's have been extremely busy!

This morning, Reception class delivered a fantastic assembly all about 'friendship'. Thank you to the family members who attended to support them. Well done Reception, we enjoyed your songs, seeing your paintings and hearing your storytelling.



On Tuesday, Year 2 visited Eotheon Homes to share their wonderful work from this half term with some of the residents. They were delighted to see some of the children's Maths and Writing that they have been completing.



On Tuesday evening, Year 1 took part in the North Tyneside Dance Festival – the children were AMAZING as they opened the night with their routine to 'Can't Stop The Feeling'. Well done to Year 1!



On Thursday, Year 6 and Reception visited St Columba's parish church where they attended Mass and then stayed behind for Reception class to complete a treasure hunt as part of their RE topic. Year 6 were absolutely amazing role models for the younger children – we were extremely proud of your kindness, patience and the responsibility you took. Well done, Year 6.



This afternoon, we said a big 'goodbye' to our ten new feathered friends who are off to their forever home at a local independent farm. We have loved watching our special eggs hatch into baby chicks, grow bigger and we have enjoyed holding them this week!



Below, you will find key information. Also attached to the Iona Star is a guide for staff and parents, this week the focus is on 'WhatsApp'.

If you have any questions about anything in the newsletter, or if there is anything that we can help with, please do not hesitate to contact us. A reminder that school closes tonight for half term, but we look forward to welcoming you all back on Monday 3rd March.

Take care,
Miss Quinn

Attendance and Punctuality



Our whole school attendance from Reception to Year 6 for this week has been **94.1** %. We are in the **amber zone** and we are not quite meeting our targets set by the Department for Education (96%).

We are, however, delighted to announce that Year 2 and Year 3 are joint winners of our attendance trophy with an attendance of 96% this week. Congratulations!

Temporary School Building and Planning for Permanent Rebuild

We are aware that many parents will have seen a story in The Chronicle about our temporary building and our ongoing permanent rebuild. We are continuing to work with the Department for Education and members of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust to discuss the long-term needs of our school. The timescale for procurement and subsequent planning processes are yet to be agreed. However, we are very happy with how the project is progressing and will share further information as soon as it is available.



RAAC is a national and local issue, affecting many schools across the country. Both we and BBCET are grateful to the DfE for the speed in which they are addressing the needs of our school; we are pleased to be part of the School Rebuilding Programme.

Last month, Baroness Smith of Malvern, former MP Jacqui Smith who is Minister of State for Education, told the House of Lords: "The department has committed to resolving this problem as quickly as possible, permanently removing RAAC either through grant funding or the School Rebuilding Programme."

Breakfast Club Drop Off



An email was sent to parents through the week, asking that children are walked to Breakfast Club during morning drop off. We do ask, please, that parents do not allow children to walk independently from the car park. This is for safety, as school is being opened up, the perimeter being checked and made safe for the school day. At these times, there are limited staff on site and we need to ensure the safeguarding of children and safe transfer from parents' care to ours. Thank you for your support.

School Car Park



A reminder to take care when accessing our staff car park for breakfast and afterschool club. There have been a few near misses with staff cars recently, and, at times, parents have blocked several spaces which has prevented staff from being able to park their own cars. Many thanks.

School Clubs After Half Term

Please keep an eye out for ways to sign up for further extracurricular opportunities following the February half term. We will be offering:

After School

KS2 Football Training (with Lewis Burns, Miss Wilson/Miss Barnett)

KS1 MultiSports (with Lewis Burns)

Recorder club for Y3 and Y4 (with Mrs Harris)

Drama club for KS2 (ongoing with Mrs Whitelaw)

Lego League for Y5/6 (ongoing with Mr Gillie/Miss Barnett)

Science club (with Miss O'Connor)

Lunchtimes – no parent consent needed

KS2 Choir (with Mrs Harris)

Book Chat for Y5/6 (with Mrs Weir)

Positive Minds (with Mrs Carr)



Ten Ten Parent Newsletter

Ten:Ten
Resources

You can access the latest parental newsletter from Ten Ten which shares the key messages, prayers and opportunities for worship at home by clicking this link <https://www.tentenresources.co.uk/prayers-for-home/parent-newsletter/>

Wellbeing Hub

 Register for The Wellbeing Hub

SCAN ME



Parents at St Columbas' Catholic Primary School

Through our partnerships with Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust, we are pleased to be able to offer all parents, staff and children aged +10 access to a wealth of information through The Wellbeing Hub.

Positive mental health is fundamental to young people's ability to thrive and make the most of the opportunities available to them while at school. By collaborating with The Wellbeing Hub, we aim to equip all our staff and parents with the knowledge, understanding, and strategies to support our pupils effectively.

To register, please use this link or QR code.

<https://club.teentips.co.uk/register/parents/?ca=1b5372e0e7384-337b68bf150a0f7c597>



 **PODCAST**

The Wellbeing Hub
— from Teen Tips — 

This week's content

Week commencing 24th February

PODCAST: Friendships in the early years with Dr Amanda Gummer, child development expert and Founder of The Good Play Guide

Listen now: club.teentips.co.uk

Diary Dates for Parents – Spring 2024

(new dates added in yellow)

Monday 3rd March – School reopens following half term

new Thursday 6th March – World Book Day. Please come to school with your favourite book! You can come dressed as a character, a word or a letter! Or, if you're stuck, come in pyjamas to show how the best time to read a book together is before bed! We look forward to sharing lots of lovely reading activities together on this day.

Thursday 13th March – Year 5 and Year 6 will be attending Whitley Bay Playhouse to see St Thomas More's production of 'High School Musical'

new Thursday 13th March – Our team will be competing in the local 'Lego League' competition for the chance to reach the national rounds

Thursday 13th March – Reception class are being visited by dental students to complete a 'Brush Up!' session about oral hygiene.

WB Monday 17th March – Assessment week. Year 2 – Year 6 will take part in internal assessments during this week within their classrooms.

Thursday 20th March – National Child Height and Weight Measurement Programme for Reception and Year 6

Friday 21st March – Year 3 are visiting the Laing Art gallery

Wednesday 26th March – SEND parent review meetings with Mrs Harman. These appointments will be available to book via SchoolCloud two weeks before the date.

Monday 31st March and Wednesday 2nd April – Parents evening appointments will be available from 3.30pm – 6.00pm. These appointments will be available to book via SchoolCloud two weeks before the date.

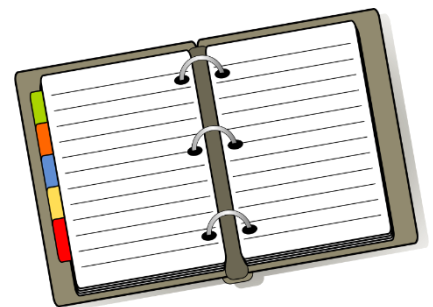
Thursday 3rd April – Children in Year 4 will attend Mass at St Columba's and then make their Sacrament of Reconciliation

Friday 4th April – Mellors Catering 'Smoothie Bike' will be visiting school – children will have to pedal to create their own smoothie!

Wednesday 9th April – Whole school Mass at 2.15pm in the hall. Family members are welcome, please book a space with the school office

Thursday 10th April – school closes to pupils for the Easter holidays

Friday 11th April – Staff training day



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about WHATSAPP

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

With more than two billion active users, WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service. Its end-to-end encryption only allows messages to be viewed by the sender and any recipients: not even WhatsApp itself can read them. The UK's Online Safety Bill proposes to end such encryption on private messaging, but for the time being, this controversial feature remains.

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it a lucrative hunting ground for scammers. Recent examples include posing as the target's child, requesting a money transfer because of a spurious 'emergency' – plus a scam where fraudsters trigger a verification message by attempting to log in to your account, then (posing as WhatsApp) call or text to ask you to repeat the code back to them, giving them access.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

To start a chat, someone only needs the mobile number of the WhatsApp user they want to message. Therefore, if a child has ever given their number out to someone they don't know, that person could then contact them via WhatsApp. It's also possible that the child might be added to a group chat or community (by one of their friends, for example) containing other people they don't know.

FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp's connectivity and ease of use allow news to be shared rapidly – whether it's true or not. To combat the spread of misinformation, messages forwarded more than five times on the app now display a "Forwarded many times" label and a double arrow icon. This makes users aware that the message they've just received is far from an original ... and might not be entirely factual, either.

CHAT LOCK AND SECRET CODES

In 2023, WhatsApp introduced a feature that lets users keep their chats in a separate 'locked chats' folder, saved behind their phone's passcode, fingerprint or face ID. There is an additional feature – 'Secret Code' – where users set a unique password for locked chats. Unfortunately, this creates the potential for young people to hide conversations and content they suspect their parents wouldn't approve of.

VIEW ONCE CONTENT

The ability to send images or messages that can only be viewed once has led to some WhatsApp users sharing inappropriate material or abusive texts, knowing that the recipient can't reopen them later to use as evidence of misconduct. People used to be able to screenshot this disappearing content – but a recently added WhatsApp feature now blocks this, citing protection of privacy.

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's Live Location feature lets users share their current whereabouts, which can be helpful for friends meeting up or parents checking that their child is safe while out, for example. However, anyone in a user's contacts list or in a mutual group chat can also track their location – potentially letting strangers identify a child's home address or journeys that they make regularly.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage children to treat unexpected messages with caution: get them to consider whether it sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change a child's WhatsApp settings to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval. You can give permission to My Contacts or My Contacts Except.... Additionally, if a child needs to use Live Location, emphasise that they should enable this function for only as long as they need – and then turn it off.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Check in with the child about how they're using WhatsApp, making sure they know you only have their safety at heart. If you spot a Locked Chats folder, you might want to talk about the sort of content they've stored in there, who they're talking to, and why they want to keep these chats hidden. Also, if children send any View Once content, it could be helpful to ask them why.

DISCUSS GROUP CHATS

Make children aware that there could be members of a group that they don't know well and that words can be misinterpreted. Encourage them to leave a good impression, to avoid joining in if conversations turn towards bullying, and to respond to such situations in an appropriate way. Make sure they know that it's OK to leave a group chat if it makes them uncomfortable – or for any reason, in fact.

THINK BEFORE SHARING

Help children understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy – and all too common – for content that a user posts to be shared more widely, even publicly on social media. Encourage children to consider how an impulsive message or forwarding might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence.

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.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College