



House of the Week

This week we have launched a new initiative to continue to celebrate the hard work and excellent behaviour of our pupils. Each week we will celebrate a 'House of the Week' based on the house points collected. The pupils in the house will be kings and queens for the day, wearing special lanyards to allow them priority passes around school!

Connect Virtual Support Group

Connect MHST invites Parents and carers supporting children and young people with social, emotional, and mental health needs to a virtual support session on Wednesday 30th October 2024, 6pm on Zoom. The virtual session is a place for parents and carers to share their experiences, help and support each other and get information and advice to support them. October's support session will focus on Managing and Regulating your child's emotions. This link will take you to a flyer where you can click or scan the QR Code to register your interest and to receive the Zoom invite. <https://shorturl.at/LNB1G>

School Lunches

Please complete the school meals form to make your child's lunch choices by clicking on this link. Menus are available on our school website. The form is open from 8am on Mondays until noon on Wednesdays. <https://forms.office.com/e/miMkUpPTB5#>

Reception and Year 6 Class Mass

Our Year 6 pupils supported their special friends in Reception class as they led the parish Mass on Thursday on the theme of Friendship. They read and sang so beautifully and Father Andrew was so impressed with how well they all took part in the Mass.

World Mental Health Day

On Thursday we celebrated World Mental Health Day in school exploring our feelings and emotions during our PSHE lessons and our staff having time for Tea and Talk throughout the day. To celebrate this day, we share Action for Happiness' Optimistic October calendar for a positive month ahead.

Asda Cashpot

Our PTA need your help to raise funds for the schoolboy signing up for Asda's Cashpot for Schools Initiative. Our PTA get £1 for every sign up (even if you don't do any shopping) and 0.5% of any spend at Asda or George. Download the app and find out more here:

<https://www.asda.com/cashpotforschools> Once you have the app, scroll down to the green button- 'click me to choose your school'. Type 'St Mary's North Shields' and hey presto, the PTA have a pound in the pot, and even more if you shop at Asda. Many thanks.

Reception Class Reading Meeting

Many thanks to everyone who attended our Reading Meeting on Tuesday evening. We hope you found this useful and will be adding the PowerPoint to our useful information page.

Harvest

Thank you for all of your Harvest donations for the Bay Foodbank. We will be giving thanks in a special Celebration of the Word on Monday so if you still have some donations you can bring these on Monday morning.

October Half Term Activity Camp

Just a reminder that bookings are open for Miley and Johnson Active Kids Club for this October half term. To book your place visit their Facebook page or <https://miley-johnson-active-kids-club.classforkids.io>

Dates for your diary

Wednesday 16th and Thursday 17th October – Parents Evenings

Friday 18th October – Year 5 Class Assembly

Week of 21st October – BIG ART WEEK

Monday 21st October – Year 6 in High Borrans

House of the Week is St Oswald

Next week is ZEBRA week on the school lunch menu

Don't forget to visit it our school website for further school information

www.stmarysonline.co.uk

Online Safety

#wakeupwednesdays

At The National College, our WakeUp/Wednesday 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 IN-GAME CHAT

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Video games are continuing to grow in popularity – including, of course, among children and young people – and the emergence of gaming communities has been accelerated by the inclusion of chat functionality across many different titles. While in-game chat isn't inherently a bad thing, it can create some concerns about online safety and the people that children might be interacting with.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHAT

There are a number of ways that gamers commonly chat with one another online. As the name would suggest, in-game chat happens within the game itself. There's also party chat: a group voice conversation that console users can have with anyone on the same platform. This tends to be more commonly used by players who already know each other. Finally, many gamers – especially on PC – will chat via a third-party app such as Discord.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

Whether it's text- or voice-based, in-game chat is frequently open to all players to use. Many games default to making it an opt-in function, but some don't: meaning a child could start seeing messages within the game from people they're playing with, regardless of whether they know those individuals or not. While most strangers won't necessarily have ill intent, there are some who may behave inappropriately when chatting to a child – intentionally or otherwise.

DANGER OF GROOMING

It's been reported that some young gamers have encountered older players online who pretend to be a lower age to manipulate children, sending gifts in exchange for chatting and sending photos. Just as on any messaging platform, it's good to advise young people to avoid speaking to strangers; emphasise that they shouldn't accept gifts from anyone online that they don't know.

BULLYING AND ABUSE

While some in-game chat can turn toxic because of how a match plays out, others turn that way because of people who engage in trolling – in essence, behaving in an offensive and abusive way simply to cause pain or get a rise out of whoever they're talking to. These trolls often lean on racial slurs, anti-LGBT sentiment and other hateful rhetoric; they normally feel most confident preying on younger, more impressionable gamers.

POTENTIAL FOR PRIVATE CHAT

If a player would like a re-match with a stranger after meeting them in the game, they can send a friend request, or use the party chat together in the future. For the most part, this is harmless – but it might lead to messages being exchanged in private. This could then escalate to the sharing of private information, and potentially attempts to manipulate or scam younger players.

COMPETITIVE ATMOSPHERE

Certain games are very competitive, and players can sometimes get upset if they feel a teammate is underperforming, an opponent won unfairly, or they're just a bad loser. This can lead to unpleasant messages that stray away from playful 'trash talk' and wander into the territory of bullying. Some players have been known to get incredibly abusive in situations like this, and the impact of this on a young gamer's emotional wellbeing could be severe.

Advice for Parents & Educators

LOCK-DOWN IN-GAME CHAT

In-game chat can often be disabled in the game's settings. This allows children to play without risk of contact from strangers – but it will need to be done in each individual game. Text chat appears in the corner of the screen in many titles, so it's normally easy to take a quick glance and see what's being said. With voice chat, explain to children what behaviour is inappropriate, so they can spot the dangers themselves.

REPORT POTENTIAL OFFENDERS

Most games offer a robust means of reporting other players, so you can flag an account as potentially harmful. This normally leads to the account not being matched with yours in the future and, if that person's conduct breaks any of the game's rules, they may be banned from playing entirely. This is done within the game itself, so each title has a slightly different process, but these tend to be designed for simplicity.

CONSIDER OTHER CHAT OPTIONS

If a child wants to play with people they know, consider using party chat or a third-party service like Discord. This allows everyone involved to chat on a private server and even enjoy each other's company while playing different games. It's also far more secure, as anyone looking to join will need to request and be granted access – normally by whoever is hosting the chat.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Make sure children understand the difference between being competitive and being abusive. Talk about what constitutes unusual or inappropriate behaviour from strangers online. Be clear that if anything ever concerns or worries them, they should tell a trusted adult as soon as possible. Empower children to identify the risks of in-game chat for themselves and reassure them they won't get in trouble for seeking help if anything goes wrong.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is the Editor in Chief of GGRecon and has been working in the games media industry for five years. He's also a parent and therefore understands the importance of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his work has been published at sites including IGN, TechRadar, and plenty more.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

Source: see full reference list on guide page at nationalcollege.com/guides/in-game-chat

X @wake_up_weds

f /www.thenationalcollege

IG @wake.up.wednesday

YT @wake.up.weds

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 02.10.2024