

Inside Our Classrooms

The Hive The Hive did a mini Arctic project for Stem Week. We experimented with gummy bears in different solutions to see which grew and which shrank. We looked at insulation by experimenting with ice and different materials to keep our hands warm.. We made some polar bear dens showing our understanding of 3D shapes. A fabulous week for all!

Thinkers In Thinkers class for STEM week, the children explored different skills in 'dragon training' like Zog. They also enjoyed a science experiment with their year 6 buddies, using bicarbonate of soda and vinegar! Explosive! This week they have had lots of fun organising doctors' bags. They went down to the woods to spot the Gruffalo and friends on World Book Day.

Inventors were introduced to their new Spring 2 topic 'Travel and Transport' a little early. During STEM week, Inventors took on the challenge of investigating copious amounts of materials to see whether they float or sink in water. Their sequence of events started off by researching into Viking longships, investigating ideal materials to use to build a Viking longship and then moved onto the design process. Children labelled their designs with materials which would make a perfect floating ship; they then began making and brought their ideas to life! Due to Storm Eunice, we were not able to test our boats on the final day! However, as soon as we came back to school, Inventors conducted a whole class investigation and evaluation and discovered which boats floated and which boats...unfortunately sank! We discussed reasons as to why they sank and thought of changes that they could make next time. It has been a fantastic week back and we



look forward to meeting Mrs Armitage next week!

Explorers had a brilliant STEM week all about ice! We learnt about the Gentoo penguins and how they build their nests on an island in Antarctica. Our first engineering challenge was



to build our own nests in the woodland to withstand the windy and rainy conditions. For science we had daily investigations involving ice; our favourite being the 'Sticky Ice' experiment. We also had a message from a polar explorer asking us to design a new polar vehicle for her next expedition! We had some very ingenious ideas how to travel on the ice!

We had a wonderful World Book day and came in some creative costumes from Oliver Twist to Mr Bump! We loved listening to the stories read by Innovators and Trailblazers!

Warriors started the term the same way we ended the term - very busy and STEMMY! We had great fun during STEM week + 3 days looking at arches and why they are strong; which column shape held the most weight; what Romans ate by dissecting their poo; building mosaics using Roman numerals and spreadsheets and looking at the life of a plant through Now Press Play. There are definitely lots of children who will have a future in STEM!

Ground-breakers enjoyed a slightly curtailed STEM week, but we

had been busy! We had constructed using only jelly beans and cocktail sticks, designed and built Viking dragon boats, made crystal sun-catchers from smelly bath salts, thought about how sound is transported and we have picked up our stop animation after half term.

Innovators had a cosmic STEM week. They designed, made, tested and evaluated their own moon buggies. The aim was to see whose could travel the furthest. There were some real successes. They also built a package to protect their Eggonaut on its landing back to earth. Unfortunately some Eggonauts, even though their names were eggcellent, were scrambled on landing and not so lucky! Innovators have embraced book day with amazing costumes and battled it out to find their favourite book and they took on a real maturity and confidence to read, in small groups to the children in the school .

Trailblazers have made an awesome start to the term. We finished off all our Stem week learning and are now fully confident in all things 'light' and 'shadows' plus we really enjoyed learning about acids and alkalis and the periodic table. We visited Oathall to see the production of Matilda, which was a real treat. This week we were visited by a real life polar explorer! Zachary's godfather came in and talked to us all about his job as a polar guide and scientist. He has followed in Shackleton's footsteps and his visit was a wonderful way to finish that part of our Journey's topic. World Book Day has been a real 'page turner'! We created our own pen names, and invented new books based on our adventures into the woods.



Academy News

Mrs. Paul has worked at Blackthorns Community Primary School since 2009 as Senco, Teacher in Charge of the SSC, and more recently in a part time capacity working alongside Mrs. Jago in Year 6. She is still in touch with past students and their parents and has always had a strong sense of belonging. However, sadly she feels the time has come to move on.

Mrs. Jago commented, "Mrs. Paul has such high expectations of every single child she meets. She has the experience and intuition to know the path a child (and their family) need to take to get the very best out of them. She believes that effort is the key to a child achieving their potential whilst ensuring they know how wonderful and amazing they are when they produce better results or make progress - however small that progress may be. Mrs. Paul encourages all children to be thinkers, to question the world and to be active participants in what is going on around them. I have become a better teacher of young minds since knowing Mrs. Paul, I learn from her on a weekly basis. She is simply the wisest person I know and she will be hugely missed in KS2."

Following recent announcements surrounding the lifting of certain Covid restrictions, the academy has reviewed some of its current provision. Here is a summary of the way we propose to move forward:

- We will end the need for a one-way system and will return to entering and exiting via the ramp to the Key Stage 1 playground. We would like children to arrive into school between 8.45 and 8.55.
- Children will continue to attend the academy in their PE kits on PE days
- All assemblies will be congregational and whole school assemblies are now in place.
- Key Stage 2 will continue with break times for 2 classes at a time. The extra space at this time in the day has had a positive effect that we wish to continue,

We had a very successful last three days recruiting before half term and Storm Eunice. Inclusion Lead, Assistant Principal and Vice Principal were all recruited. This is wonderful news. When we have received all the relevant employment checks we will inform you all!

Sports News

Since the last newsletter, 10 Year 3 children took part in a badminton festival run by Wendy Adams (ex England international) learning lots of skills including serving, hitting and foot movement!

We had 8 Year 5/6 children represent Blackthorns at the Mid Sussex Tournament playing 5 teams in the group stages. We beat London Meed 2-0; Southway 2-0; Holy Trinity 3-1 and drew with Lindfield 1-1 which put us second in the group and through to the semi finals where unfortunately Harlands were a little too strong (and tall) and defeated us 3-0. However, massive improvement was made from the last set of league fixtures and to finish 3rd out of 13 schools was amazing! Well done to Ella, Roseanna, Nat, David, Charlotte, Holly, Emilia and Matilda.

Finally, results were delivered for the Mid Sussex Sportshall Athletics tournament that was mentioned in the last newsletter. The 3 athletes that took part in each field event had their schools averaged alongside the times of the track events. 13 schools took part across the 3 days and we had some very amazing results! Bella, Ella and Emily S were the BEST triple jumpers in Mid Sussex whilst the boys Thomas, Ollie and Ale finished in silver position! Blackthorns have the best Speed bouncers - well done to Johnny, Reuben, Ollie, Emilia, Amelie and Immi. Across the track events we also scored high - Amelie, Holly, Roseanna and Eriko (Obstacle relay); Roseanna and Ella (1 lap relay); Zachary and Thomas (6 lap relay) and Maisie, Eriko, Emilia and Maia (Over/under relay) all claimed 2nd place out of 13 schools but Emily S and Gabriella took gold in the 2 lap relay!

All times and scores were given points (24 for 1st, 22 for 2nd....) and totalled across the 13 schools. Blackthorns finished in 3rd position with a score of 426 (84 points clear of 4th position) and we were all given bronze medals! A massive well done to the team!

Dates for your diary:

4th March: Learning share (afternoon)

7th March and 9th March: Parent Consultations

11th March Bringing Books To Life Dance Workshop KS1

15th March Oathall Transition

15th March Year 4 Trip to Butser Ancient Farm

30th March Zoolab Visit KS1 (Information nearer the time)

30th March Year 5 Trip to Hever Castle

8th April Spring Celebration Service at All Saints Church (am)

World Book Day 2022!

Once more, Blackthorns enjoyed a fabulous World Book Day, celebrating the love and joy that we get from books and reading.

It was a great start to the day as we welcomed all sorts of characters into the school. Miss. Trunchbull, Matilda, Willy Wonka, Gangster Granny, The Boy in the dress, the very hungry caterpillar, Wally and a zebra were on hand to greet the children — and that was just some of the teachers and teaching assistants! There was a palpable tension in year 6 when Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy stepped into the same class room, but there were no duelling spells during the day as far as we know...

We had fun in the book booth (as you can see from some of our pictures), had book battles, read beautifully when the book bomb was launched into the class rooms and our fabulous Year 5 and 6 pupils read beautifully to groups of the younger children. It was magical.

Thank you to all the parents and children who helped to make the day a memorable one!



E-safety We have recently seen reports from the BBC concerning some gaming platforms like Roblox. This [link](#) is what Roblox have said they are doing to protect users. They also advise all parents of children using the game to review the parental controls. National Online Safety have some fantastic guides for many the platforms and games. We have added the guides for Roblox and Whatsapp to the final pages of this week's newsletter. If there are other guides that you would be interested in seeing, please let the office know.

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one game of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

ROBLOX



With more than 150 million users worldwide, Roblox is one of the most popular video games of recent times. Roblox allows users to create their own gaming experiences using Roblox Studio: building levels and games then allowing other people to play them. Similarly, players can play each other's creations, either on their own or with other people online. While it's a tool that can help foster creative thinking, Roblox is also intermittently in the news amid concerns over young users' safety.

No Age Rating

Roblox is rated 7+ by PEGI, but the platform itself doesn't have a minimum age requirement. It does ask for a date of birth when registering, but this can be easily fabricated. The sheer quantity of games available on Roblox means that some will fall into teen/adult categories. Users can also interact with each other freely – and the game has, historically, attracted scammers, griefers and online predators.



Chat Functionality

Users can join group chats with almost anyone through the Chat & Party function. While the chat has some filters, predators still try to find ways around these to prey on young children. There have been recent reports of adults pretending to be children, attempting to groom younger players and encouraging them to chat privately in an unmoderated environment away from the game.

In-App Purchases

Robux is the in-game currency used to buy things like special outfits or emotes, and to play certain sections of the game. A subscription service (costing £4.99 per month) called Roblox Premium offers more privileges and more in-game currency. Robux can also be purchased in batches, for up to £4.99. Children can easily pay for these, or purchase a membership, without realising it.



ODers

An 'ODer' (online dater) joins Roblox to find someone to 'date' online. While there's nothing inherently wrong with finding love on the internet, it becomes an issue in a space that's populated by children and young teens, like Roblox. Online dating is against Roblox's community guidelines, but certain player-built games on the platform are specifically for 'ODers' and should be avoided by children.

Online Predators

Roblox's developers aim to maintain a safe place for children; they employ human moderators for their players' protection. But there will, sadly, always be individuals who try to bypass these safeguards so they can chat to children and attempt to communicate outside the game. Anyone asking for your child's personal information or to talk privately should be blocked and reported.



Advice for Parents & Carers



Take Note of Ratings

Recent press reports drew attention to Roblox's issues with potentially offensive content. Some players were using Roblox Studio to create games featuring nudity, sexual activity and extreme political views. In response, Roblox is introducing a ratings system which will rank content by age appropriateness, with clear warnings if a game is not suitable for younger players.



Set Parental Controls

Roblox has controls that allow parents to moderate who their children can talk to and which games they can play. To enable these, add your email address to your child's account through the Security menu, and create a secure PIN to stop settings being tampered with. Then head into the Privacy menu where you can apply moderation to in-game chat, personal messages, invites and more.



Disable Messages

It's advisable to block all messaging if you have concerns over your child's safety. If they're playing with friends they know in real life, encourage them to chat in another way (like on the phone), so you know exactly who they're talking to and how. Accounts can be tweaked to allow messages from specific groups of people, such as friends or users that your child follows.



Block and Report

To report players in a game, find the Roblox symbol on screen (or the 'Settings' button on some devices). Identify the offending player and click the flag icon. Clarify why the player is being reported by choosing a reason from the list. If you think a particular game is inappropriate, you can also flag it for a moderator to check by following the same steps but selecting 'Game' instead of 'Player'.



Encourage Creativity

It could prove a little too complex for younger children, but Roblox Studio is a great place to start learning the fundamentals of game design. Many budding developers have created Roblox games which have become popular among the community. There are plenty of tutorials on making games on sites like YouTube. You never know, your child's creation might be the next big thing!



Meet Our Expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for several years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about WHATSAPP



WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service, with around two billion users exchanging texts, photos, videos and documents, as well as making voice and video calls. Its end-to-end encryption means messages can only be viewed by the sender and any recipients; not even WhatsApp can read them. Updates to its privacy policy in 2021 (involving sharing data with parent company Facebook) caused millions to leave the app, but the new policy was widely misinterpreted – it only related to WhatsApp's business features, not to personal messages.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

SCAMS

Fraudsters occasionally send WhatsApp messages pretending to offer prizes – encouraging the user to click on a link to win. Other common scams involve warning someone that their WhatsApp subscription has run out (aiming to dupe them into disclosing payment details) or impersonating a friend or relative and asking for money to be transferred to help with an emergency.

DISAPPEARING MESSAGES

Users can set WhatsApp messages to disappear in 24 hours, 7 days or 90 days by default. Photos and videos can also be instructed to disappear after the recipient has viewed them. These files can't be saved or forwarded – so if your child was sent an inappropriate message, it would be difficult to prove any wrongdoing. However, the receiver can take a screenshot and save that as evidence.

ENABLING FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp has unfortunately been linked to accelerating the spread of dangerous rumours. In India in 2018, some outbreaks of mob violence appear to have been sparked by false allegations being shared on the app. WhatsApp itself took steps to prevent its users circulating hazardous theories and speculation in the early weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic.

POTENTIAL CYBERBULLYING

Group chat and video calls are great for connecting with multiple people in WhatsApp, but there is always the potential for someone's feelings to be hurt by an unkind comment or joke. The 'only admins' feature gives the admin(s) of a group control over who can send messages. They can, for example, block people from posting in a chat, which could make a child feel excluded and upset.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

To start a WhatsApp chat, you only need the mobile number of the person you want to message (the other person also needs to have the app). WhatsApp can access the address book on someone's device and recognise which of their contacts also use the app. So if your child has ever given their phone number to someone they don't know, that person could use it to contact them via WhatsApp.

LOCATION SHARING

The 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, allowing friends to see their movements. WhatsApp describes it as a "simple and secure way to let people know where you are." It is a useful method for a young person to let loved ones know they're safe – but if they used it in a chat with people they don't know, they would be exposing their location to them, too.

Advice for Parents & Carers

[CLICK HERE](#)

CREATE A SAFE PROFILE

Even though someone would need a child's phone number to add them as a contact, it's also worth altering a young person's profile settings to restrict who can see their photo and status. The options are 'everyone', 'my contacts' and 'nobody' – choosing one of the latter two ensures that your child's profile is better protected.

EXPLAIN ABOUT BLOCKING

If your child receives spam or offensive messages, calls or files from a contact, they should block them using 'settings' in the chat. Communication from a blocked contact won't show up on their device and stays undelivered. Blocking someone does not remove them from your child's contact list – so they also need to be deleted from the address book.

REPORT POTENTIAL SCAMS

Young people shouldn't engage with any message that looks suspicious or too good to be true. When your child receives a message from an unknown number for the first time, they'll be given the option to report it as spam. If the sender claims to be a friend or relative, call that person on their usual number to verify it really is them, or if it's someone trying to trick your child.

LEAVE A GROUP

If your child is in a group chat that is making them feel uncomfortable, or has been added to a group that they don't want to be part of, they can use WhatsApp's group settings to leave. If someone exits a group, the admin can add them back in once; if they leave a second time, it is permanent.

THINK ABOUT LOCATION

If your child needs to use the 'live location' function to show you or one of their friends where they are, advise them to share their location only for as long as they need to. WhatsApp gives a range of 'live location' options, and your child should manually stop sharing their position as soon as it is no longer needed.

DELETE ACCIDENTAL MESSAGES

If your child posts a message they want to delete, WhatsApp allows the user seven minutes to erase a message. Tap and hold on the message, choose 'delete' and then 'delete for everyone.' However, it's important to remember that recipients may have seen (and taken a screenshot of) a message before it was deleted.

CHECK THE FACTS

You can now fact-check WhatsApp messages that have been forwarded at least five times, by double-tapping the magnifying glass icon to the right of the message. From there, your child can launch a Google search and decide for themselves whether the message was true or not.

Meet Our Expert

Parven Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Clicks: a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.



