

Parent / Carer Bulletin

Care • Inspire • Succeed

Week Commencing Monday 6th January 2025

Headteacher's Update

Dear Parents and Carers

May I wish you a Happy New Year! I hope you had a wonderful break, with an opportunity to rest, relax and spend time with loved ones.

Please do read the bulletin, brief as it is, as it contains a number of items regarding the first week back

Mr Farrer

WEEK B	CALENDAR - TERM 3
Monday 6th January School starts at 8:35am	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y13 Study Leave and Mock Exams Begin• Y11 Mock Results Day• Y11 Meetings for 6th Form
Tuesday 7th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y12 Talk for a Holocaust Survivor
Wednesday 8th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y13 Presentation Evening
Thursday 9th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y7-9 Theatre Trip "The Little Mermaid" (details below)
Friday 10th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y13 Study Leave and Mock Exams End

WEEK A	
Monday 13th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y13 Mock Practical Exams Begin
Tuesday 14th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y8 HPV Vaccinations Day
Wednesday 15th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y13 Drama Mock Exam
Thursday 16th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y10 Reports Issued• Y13 PE Mock EAPI• Y13 Mock MFL Exam• Y11 Subject Evening
Friday 17th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6th Form Bouldering Trip

Dear Parents/Carers,

MCAS Student Attendance

We would like to remind you that information on the MCAS Student Attendance app is updated daily at approximately 10:00am. Notifications regarding unexplained absences will be sent after this time.

If you have concerns about your child's attendance, we kindly ask that you allow adequate time for the Attendance Team to process the registers and update the system before contacting the school. Please note that calls made during this process may lead to additional delays.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Kind regards,
The Attendance Team

From: Mrs Nash – Head of Drama

'The Little Mermaid'

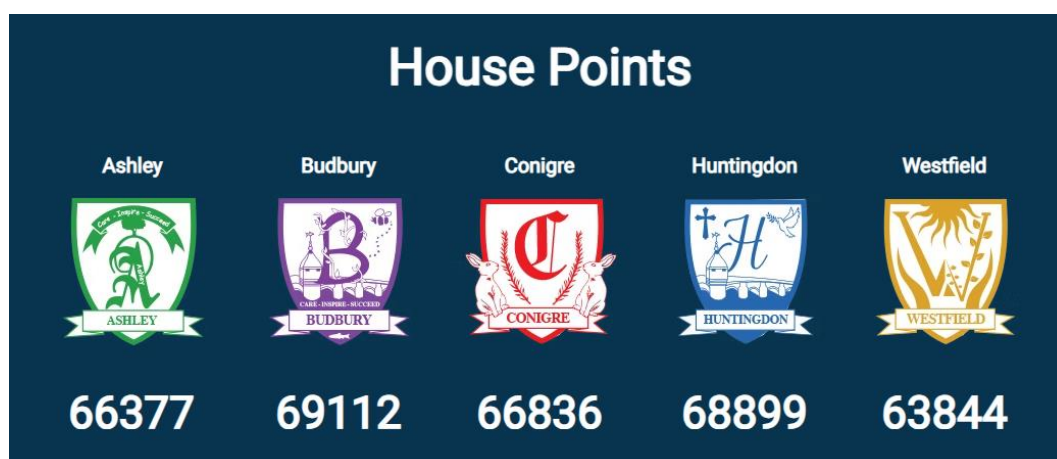
We are looking forward to our trip to see 'The Little Mermaid' on Thursday 9th January 2024. Students on the trip will have a personal letter in the New Year confirming all the arrangements which are as follows:

- Students should wear school uniform and come to school to attend tutor, P1 and 2 as normal.
- Halfway through P3 students should leave their lesson and make their way to the bus bay in the main car park to meet the coach.
- We are leaving school at 11:00am and students should bring a packed lunch which they can eat when we arrive in Bristol.
- The performance starts at 1:00pm and the running time of the show is 2 hours and 10 minutes so we will leave Bristol around 3:20pm, arriving back at St Laurence at approximately 4:20pm.
- We will give students more definite timings on the day so that they can communicate any changes with you by text.

Please make sure that school has up to date medical information and contact details for use in case of emergency.

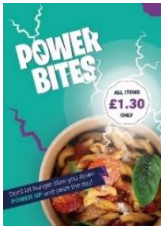
Students will be reminded of the need to behave appropriately when on the trip - including following staff instructions, not talking or making noise during the performance, not leaving any litter on the coach or in the theatre and being respectful to other members of the public at all times.

May we also take this opportunity to wish you and your families a happy New Year.



To report a student absence please ring the Attendance Line by 8:30am on 01225 309501

What's on the Menu?



Click the link to our Catering page for information on all the different ways our students can enjoy healthy and nutritious meals at school:

[Catering | St Laurence School \(st-laurence.com\)](http://st-laurence.com)

Online Safety

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

SAFETY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Currently, children are growing up in an immediate and throwaway culture when it comes to content that's consumed online. So much material is now deliberately created to be shorter in nature – and may often contain hidden elements such as advertising, or extreme political and cultural views. With complex algorithms built to keep people on their phones and engaging with social media content, it's becoming increasingly difficult to reduce time spent on these platforms.

- 1 REDUCE DOOMSCROLLING**
It's concerning how common it is for young people to spend hours 'doomscrolling' – trawling through social media and aimlessly viewing every post they see, many of which might make them feel sad or anxious. Social media can be useful for keeping in touch with friends and family, as well as staying up to date on current events. However, it's important to use it with a clear purpose, instead of endlessly scrolling through content, which could lead to young people accidentally discovering harmful material.
- 2 TALK ABOUT THE CONTENT**
It's important to keep abreast of the kind of content that a young person is being exposed to. Discussing what they're watching online can help you understand why they're using social media in the first place. Furthermore, ensure that children are aware of hidden content, such as advertising of a product – and that they know how to spot that the creator is being paid to talk about it.
- 3 FIND POSITIVE ASPECTS**
Despite all the concerns, there's plenty of wholesome content on social media. It's worth spending time with children to help them find something suitable and enjoyable. Perhaps you'll even discover a joint interest, and you can enjoy the content alongside the child, as part of this, you should also point out any certain things it hasn't given attention, explaining why it isn't suitable and why it's been created in the first place.
- 4 REDUCE SCREEN TIME**
Young people can sometimes be unaware of the exact amount of time they spend looking at social media. Smart phones don't just have the capacity to monitor screen time, they also record how much time is spent on each app. Consider setting targets to reduce this, and support a child to meet these goals, gradually reducing the amount of time spent on different apps.
- 5 FILL THE VOID**
Monitoring and reducing screen time can create a lot of free time to fill, and young people can even face withdrawal symptoms when made to step away from their phones. To mitigate this, consider what offline activities you could introduce the child to, and what they would enjoy. This can ensure that young users will temporarily put down on their screen time, rather than temporarily doing so while they know it's being monitored.
- 6 REDUCE NOTIFICATIONS**
One way in which social media platforms keep people coming back is through notifications. The algorithms behind these apps track people's daily habits, including the times of the day when they're most likely to engage with the platform. This data is then used to deliver specifically timed notifications to draw them back in. To avoid young users being exposed to this tactic, simply turn off notifications for the app in their phone's settings.
- 7 LIVE IN THE REAL WORLD**
Overexposure to social media can distort someone's perception of the real world – from body norms to social conventions. This filtered environment can make it hard for young people to distinguish reality from online content, which is now becoming even more difficult with the rise of AI. To mitigate this concern, take time to teach young people how to discern truth from fiction, both on and off social media.
- 8 DIGITAL DETOX**
Encouraging young people to take a 'digital detox' from even just a couple of the apps that they use, can result in an overall reduction of screen time and less exposure to potentially harmful content. Alternatively, rather than avoiding the app entirely, encourage children to take a 'digital detox' from content creators and influencers, and instead, keep in touch with friends and family – which is generally a far healthier use of these platforms.
- 9 MODEL GOOD BEHAVIOUR**
Consider the habits that you're demonstrating to your children. How much time do you spend on your phone? How much do you 'doomscroll'? Comparing your own usage with the child's could put things into perspective for them – or if it turns out that you're also overusing social media, it can turn screen time reduction into a joint mission, which you and the child can work on together.
- 10 BE CLEAR ON THE "WHY"**
Research shows that young people can become addicted to social media. There are many schools that are moving towards being 'phone free' due to the negative impacts of using social media and phones continuously. It's important to explain to young people why managing screen time is important. Set out the benefits and ensure they have all the relevant information, so it's not just seen as a punishment.

Meet Our Expert
John Inley is a senior leader in a Birmingham secondary school and has vast experience in leading schools over the past 15 years – including the development of engaging curriculums across primary and secondary schools, writing e-safety policies and supporting schools with computing and e-safety advice.

Wake Up Wednesday
The National College

Source: 300+ references to an online guide page: <https://the-national-college.org.uk/guides/top-tips-for-safety-on-social-media>

Emotional Safety for Teens on Roblox

Teens play Roblox for many positive reasons, from relaxation to community building to identity formation and creative self-expression. Among the many teens who play video games — 85% of all U.S. teens, according to a 2024 [Pew Research Center report](#) — nearly three-quarters said spending time with others is one reason they play. More than half said gaming helps their problem-solving skills.

But parents know there is potential for harm on Roblox or any online platform. Teens do, too: That same Pew study found that 80 percent of teens ages 13-17 think harassment in video games is a problem for people their age, and more than 40% said they have been called an offensive name while playing.

Your teen might be sensitive to a conversation about cyberbullying and online safety, but parents and caregivers can and should offer consistent messages to help teens know how to identify inappropriate behavior on the platform — and what to do when they encounter it. Even brief or “micro” conversations held at regular intervals can make a big impact on how your teen thinks about their safety online.

What is Cyberbullying?

While Roblox, like any online gaming platform, can provide players with a fun experience, it also carries the risk of harmful behaviors known such as “[cyberbullying](#).”

Cyberbullying can mean hurtful comments from fellow gamers whose emotions become intense around the power dynamics within a game. Cyberbullying can also involve:

- Blaming or angry language or name-calling
- Gossiping or conspiring to eliminate a player from a game
- Making harmful references to aspects of a player’s identity, if they have shared any on the platform
- Hate speech or race-based language

Cyberbullying can also be predatory, as when an adult plays under an assumed teen identity and attempts abusive, manipulative, or hateful behaviors with young players.

Any of these negative behaviors can lead gamers to experience feelings of shame, guilt, fear, or anxiety. It can erode self-confidence and self-worth. And it can exacerbate existing mental health conditions like depression and anxiety.



What Are Signs a Teen Might Be Struggling Online?

Your teen might not always come to you to share confusing or hurtful experiences they're having online, but there are signs that can help you sense a problem.

Some of these signs are related to your teen's gaming habits, such as:

- Suddenly decreased or increased use of favorite platforms
- Hiding screens when an adult comes by
- Vocalizing strongly — aggressive language or angry shouting — while playing
- Suddenly exiting the game or storming away from the device

Other signs might show up off-screen if your teen:

- Starts to worry more
- Has increased irritable or angry behaviors
- Enjoys favorite activities less
- Experiences changes in sleep habits
- Changes in grades or school performance
- School avoidance
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints, like headaches and stomachaches
- Avoids social activities
- Isolates at home
- Responds defensively when asked about gaming
- Acts differently in ways that you notice

What Can Parents/Caregivers Do?

Get in the Game

The first and most impactful thing you can do as a parent or caregiver is to learn as much as you can about Roblox or any gaming platform your teen uses.

Create your own Roblox account and make time to play with your teen to show them you are interested in meeting them where they are with an activity they enjoy. While you're playing, lay the groundwork for deeper conversation by asking upbeat questions like:

- Why is this game your favorite?
- How did you discover this game?
- How do you feel when you're playing this game?
- What are some good tips to help me get started?



Take the Conversation Deeper

Continue the conversation with open-ended questions and active listening. Make sure to be clear that you are not asking because your teen is "in trouble" or in danger of losing their gaming privileges; you genuinely want to understand and support them on Roblox.

Some questions to ask your teen include:

- How do people treat each other in this game?
- Are there patterns to bullying behaviors in the game?
- How do you see other players respond to these behaviors?
- Are hurtful words directed at you?
- What strategies have you tried when this behavior is directed toward you?

Do this in active, organic moments throughout your day, like while taking a walk, having a catch, or preparing a meal together - not sitting around the kitchen table or even driving in the car, where silence within the conversation can feel uncomfortable.

Each time you check or talk with your teen about cyberbullying, affirm that these are difficult topics to talk about, and tell them you're glad for any conversation you're able to have together.

Talk Through the Options

Think together with your teen about what choices they have when confronted with bullying behavior on Roblox or online. These might include:

- Mindfulness strategies like stepping away from the game, using a slow, deep breathing strategy like "[Box Breath](#)," pivoting to a mindfulness app for a few minutes to calm down, or walking outside for ten minutes of fresh air
- Considering other Roblox games to play instead of games that are causing your teen stress, or playing the games they love with a different set of people
- Responding using one of Roblox's safety resources, such as [muting or blocking a player](#), using [parental controls to limit chat access](#), creating [a private server](#) so only known gamers can play with your teen, or [reporting Roblox rules violations](#) if a cyberbullying incident occurs
- Using other resources like the [Cyberbullying Research Center](#) to report cyberbullying incidents and access technical and legal supports if needed

Listen for cues from your teen about how they are using Roblox, so you can guide them toward options that support those goals. Your teen might play Roblox to:

- Connect with a social community through the platform
- Relax and enjoy private time away from the stresses of everyday life
- Explore aspects of their identity through their online persona
- Play with self-expression in ways they don't do at school or in person with friends

Be Clear About Cyberbullying

Many teens can tell the difference between banter among friends and harmful or bullying behavior. But some are still learning to discern between the two, especially in the context of a competitive game or on an online platform without body language or tone-of-voice cues to guide them and where "trash talking" is a normal and expected part of the experience.

Remind them of online behaviors that clearly cross the line like:

- Aggressive commentary having to do with racial, ethnic, gender, or physical attributes
- Threatening, mocking, aggressive, or violent language, including "trash talk" that turns aggressive
- Relational aggression intended to harm other players' reputations or self-worth during gameplay
- Verbal threats of harm to social status or physical safety and/or doxxing other players
- Sexual harassment and cyber-stalking

Talk about the difference between words and behaviors that are "annoying" and those that are hurtful or harmful. You might share some of your own experiences that taught you to tell the difference.

Cyberbullying can feel overwhelming, whether you're monitoring for it or helping your teen navigate it. Remember that consistently using tools like these can help you and your teen on Roblox and anywhere online.





St Laurence School

has joined the following SOCIAL MEDIA platforms to keep you informed of some of the great work your children are doing at school.

We will post news and photos from school trips, dance and drama performances, STEM events and lots more. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and “like” and “share” our stories.

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LIKE 

& SHARE



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