

HOPTON NEWSLETTER



UPDATE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

As we reach the end of a busy and exciting half term, we have lots to celebrate! We have achieved an award, enjoyed some fantastic events and settled back into our learning routines. It has been wonderful to see our classrooms feeling calm and purposeful, with very few behaviour incidents. We are incredibly proud of the positive choices the children are making and the progress they are achieving.

Last week, we welcomed the Royal Ballet into school for a special workshop, where the children explored expressing themselves through dance and movement. They thoroughly enjoyed the experience! We also presented our Golden Welly Award to Jacob for his outstanding attitude towards OPAL play. Well done, Jacob!



We have lots to look forward to, including Mini First Aid sessions during the first week back and a non-uniform day on Friday. If you are able to, we would be grateful for a chocolate donation for the tombola at the Christmas Fayre at the village hall that day.

Dodgeball will also be starting after school on Thursdays. I have received some lovely feedback about our new clubs this term, and we would love to see more children getting involved. Please book via Arbor if your child would like to attend.

A few reminders:

- Secret Santa: Bookings are live on Arbor, with a deadline of Monday 9th November.
- Parent consultations: Bookings are now open, so please book a slot to speak with your child's class teacher.
- Please do provide consent and any contributions for panto.
- INSET day: School is closed this Friday for staff training.

I am pleased to share that we have appointed a new Headteacher for Hopton after a successful interview, who will start on 1st January. We will share further information soon. I will continue as Head of School until the end of the autumn term to support a smooth transition.

Thank you for your continued support this half term. We have much to be proud of, and I look forward to another exciting term ahead!

I wish you all a happy and restful half term. Stay safe, and we look forward to seeing you in November.
Best wishes,
Mrs Whiting

CLASS UPDATES

This week in Willow Class the children have enjoyed reading the story of The Little Red Hen. They have drawn and described their own characters and settings inspired by the book. We have been taking advantage of the lovely autumn weather and spending a lot of time outdoors, exploring and playing with autumn treasures. In our Forest school session we read the story Leaf Man, created our own imaginative leaf man pictures and had a fantastic time decorating conkers and log slices.



Oak Class had a very busy end to the first term of the year! We have continued our learning into The Romans, using research skills to find out everything we could about how they lived, what they ate and how they successfully invaded Britain. We also enjoyed learning about Boudica and her resistance to the invasion. In science we have been continuing to develop our understanding of light and shadows and have used different tools, including light meters, to plan and carry out investigations. We have also considered eye safety in the sun and designed an investigation into sunglasses and UV light. Our French learning for this term has been Les Instruments, and we have learned the name for ten instruments and how to say 'I can play'.

What an exciting final week of term we have had in Ash Class! We finished reading Other Words for Home and celebrated with a wonderful food-tasting session, sampling some of the delicious foods mentioned throughout the story. The olives certainly divided opinion! In English, the children produced some beautiful pieces of creative writing, describing atmospheric autumnal scenes using ambitious vocabulary and high-quality figurative language. Meanwhile, in Art, our clay tiles are looking incredibly impressive, showcasing the children's creativity and their understanding of the geometric patterns found in Islamic art. What a fantastic way to end the half-term!

There are still spaces available for all clubs. Please do email the office if you would like to book!

AFTER SCHOOL

CLUBS - AUTUMN 2



TUESDAY

3:20-4:20 Gymnastics



WEDNESDAY

3:15-4:15 SPLAT

4:20-5:20 Nerf Combat



THURSDAY

3:20 - 4:20 - Dodgeball



THURSDAY 22ND OCTOBER	LAST DAY FOR CHILDREN
FRIDAY 23RD OCTOBER	INSET DAY - SCHOOL CLOSED TO CHILDREN
FRIDAY 6TH NOVEMBER	MINI FIRST AID TRAINING FOR ALL CHILDREN
FRIDAY 6TH NOVEMBER	NON UNIFORM - CHOCOLATE TOMBOLA FOR CHRISTMAS FAYRE
MONDAY 9TH NOVEMBER	PARENT'S EVENING 3:30-5:30
TUESDAY 10TH NOVEMBER	1:30 RECEPTION OPEN DAY FOR NEW PROSPECTIVE PARENTS
WEDNESDAY 11TH NOVEMBER	REMEMBRANCE SERVICE AT THE CHURCH 10:45
TUESDAY 24TH NOVEMBER	CHRISTINGLE AT THE CHURCH 9:00
WEDNESDAY 25TH NOVEMBER	ART DAY
FRIDAY 20TH NOVEMBER	CHILDREN IN NEED - THEME TBC
WEDNESDAY 2ND DECEMBER	WHOLE SCHOOL TRIP TO THE PANTOMIME - 10AM START
THURSDAY 3RD DECEMBER	9:30 RECEPTION OPEN DAY FOR NEW PROSPECTIVE PARENTS
WEDNESDAY 9TH DECEMBER	SECRET SANTA
THURSDAY 10TH DECEMBER	CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY AND CHRISTMAS DINNER
MONDAY 14TH DECEMBER	GOVERNORS AWARDS 8:45 - INVITATION ONLY.
TUESDAY 15TH DECEMBER	CHRISTMAS NATIVITY SERVICE IN THE CHURCH - 9:00
FRIDAY 18TH DECEMBER	LAST DAY OF TERM
MONDAY 21ST DECEMBER TO FRIDAY 1ST JANUARY	XMAS HOLIDAYS
MONDAY 4TH JANUARY	INSET DAY - NO CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI COMPANIONS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Powered by generative AI models like ChatGPT and Google Gemini, AI companion apps and virtual chatbots such as Character.ai, Snapchat My AI, Replika and Talkie, allow users to create, customise, and chat to synthetic avatars around the clock. While many young people use them for harmless entertainment, creative writing or homework help, these tools are designed to simulate genuine human empathy, emotional bonding and deep friendship.

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

AI companions are programmed to be endlessly agreeable, attentive, and available 24/7. Unlike human friendships, an AI companion never disagrees, sets personal boundaries, or gets tired. Young people (especially those experiencing loneliness, social anxiety, or low self-esteem) can quickly develop an unhealthy emotional attachment, viewing synthetic software as their 'best friend' or a surrogate romantic partner.

DANGEROUS MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE

AI chatbots possess no genuine empathy, professional clinical knowledge, or moral reasoning. While developers state these tools are not therapists, vulnerable teenagers often turn to them in crisis. Chatbots have previously hallucinated unsafe medical guidance, validated depressive spirals, and failed to safely escalate disclosures of self-harm or suicidal ideation to real-world protective services.

DATA HARVESTING & OVERSHARING

Because conversational bots simulate warmth and understanding, children often lower their guard and treat the chatbot as a trusted friend. They may disclose sensitive personal information, including full names, school details, private family problems, or secrets, unaware that their conversations are being logged, may be analysed by third parties (including advertisers), or used to train future AI models.

DISTORTED SOCIAL SKILLS

Navigating real-world friendships can be messy, involving dealing with conflict, compromise, boredom, and awkwardness. If a teenager spends hours interacting with an AI that is tailored specifically to validate and flatter them, they may become impatient with real-world relationships. Over time, this can lead to social withdrawal, heightened anxiety in peer groups, and isolation: a vicious circle of growing online dependency coupled with a heightened sense that relationships in the 'real world' are too challenging to maintain.

INAPPROPRIATE OR EXPLICIT CONTENT

While most mainstream platforms feature safety filters and guardrails, young people frequently discover 'jailbreak' prompts to bypass them. Some companion platforms subtly nudge users towards mature themes, romantic roleplay, or sexually suggestive conversations. In worse cases, third-party apps with weak safety checks have been found to generate sexually explicit text or intimate images.

"FREEMIUM" UPSELLS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many companion platforms operate on a freemium model. While basic chat is free, features like voice calls, uncensored responses, custom avatars, or 'deeper bonding' tiers are locked behind expensive monthly recurring subscriptions or in-app token purchases. This can lead to significant hidden costs and pressure on young people to spend money to maintain the 'friendship'.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALK OPENLY ABOUT FAKE RELATIONSHIPS

Demystify how these tools work. Explain to young people that an AI companion has no feelings, memories, or consciousness; it is simply calculating the next most mathematically probable word based on its training data. It is helpful to explain to them the mechanics of large language models so that they understand how they are trained and how they are designed to always flatter and be helpful.

ENCOURAGE REAL-WORLD CONNECTION

Ensure technology habits do not replace face-to-face peer socialisation, sports, hobbies, and family time. Create healthy boundaries at home (such as keeping phones and tablets out of bedrooms overnight) to prevent late-night, unmonitored attachment loops with conversational chatbots when young people are at their most vulnerable.

AUDIT PRIVACY SETTINGS & AGE LIMITS

Check which companion apps are installed on your child's phone or tablet. Many dedicated companion apps carry an App Store rating of 17+, while platforms like Character.ai set a minimum age of 13+ (or 16+ in the UK/EU). Review the privacy settings together: turn off data-sharing toggles, disable model training where possible, and ensure location permissions are blocked.

REINFORCE WHERE TO GET REAL HELP

Make sure young people know that a machine can never replace professional pastoral or mental health care. Remind them of the trusted adults they can turn to at school – such as their Form Tutor, Head of Year, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – as well as dedicated youth support services like Childline (0800 1111) or Shout (text 85258).

Meet Our Expert

Darren Coxon is the Founder and Executive Director of Kompass Education, a consultancy specialising in supporting educators, students and parents in making wise choices with AI. His book *Ethical AI and Education*, co-authored with Clara Hawking, will be released later in 2026 by Taylor and Francis.



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get a
free *Kellogg's*
breakfast
every school
holiday*

Morrisons

CAFÉ

