



Teaching and Learning
in a supportive environment
where all
feel valued, happy and
successful.

Blaydon West Primary School
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Dear Parents and Carers,

www.blaydonwestprimary.org

As we reach the end of this half term, we would like to extend our thanks for your continued support and engagement in your child's learning journey. It's been a busy and exciting term, filled with many activities, achievements, and new learning opportunities. From classroom projects to outdoor learning and everything in between, a lot has happened, and we are so proud of all the progress the children have made!

Halloween Disco Success!

Our Halloween Disco was a massive success! The children had a fantastic time enjoying hot dogs, browsing the tuck shop, and dancing to spooky music with their friends. It was wonderful to see so many creative costumes and happy faces on the dance floor. Thank you to everyone who helped make this event such a memorable one for the kids!

¡Hola! Spanish Day Celebration

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce a special event to kick off our new focus on Spanish language learning across the school! To launch our change to Spanish in the curriculum, we will be holding a Spanish Day on Friday 8th November.

On this day, children will participate in a variety of fun and interactive activities designed to help them learn more about Spain and its rich culture. From traditional music and dance to Spanish art and food tasting, it promises to be an engaging and educational experience for all!

We encourage children to join in the celebration by wearing Spanish-related clothing. This could include:

- Red, yellow, or a combination of both (the colours of the Spanish flag)
- Spanish football shirts
- Traditional Spanish-style clothing or accessories

We look forward to seeing the children immerse themselves in the Spanish spirit!

Safeguarding Update

Please see the attached safeguarding update poster for the latest guidance and support available to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students. As always, the safety of our children remains a top priority.

Firework Safety Reminder

As we approach Bonfire Night, we want to remind children about the importance of staying safe around fireworks. Please take the time to discuss the following key safety points:

- Always stand well back when watching fireworks.
- Only adults should light fireworks.
- Never pick up or touch fireworks that have been used.

We hope everyone enjoys the festivities safely!

We are looking forward to so much more in the next half term, with more exciting activities and learning opportunities planned. Wishing you a wonderful half-term break, and we look forward to welcoming everyone back for an even more exciting term ahead.

Best wishes,

Regards.

Mr S Brown

25h October 2025

Head Teacher - Simon Brown

Chair of Governors - Chris Robson

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI VIRTUAL FRIENDS

Artificial intelligence has seen significant development over the recent months, with companies releasing new AI-based software or adding an AI element to existing apps (such as Snapchat). One form of AI that has become especially popular has been the 'AI friend' or chatbot. There are now numerous 'virtual friend' apps available, with other successful platforms likely to adopt it soon.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONTENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

AI chatbots may not always recognise when content is age inappropriate or harmful and should be filtered out. As a result, there's a possibility that children could be exposed to offensive language or explicit material while conversing with their virtual friend. The companies producing such AI solutions are also unlikely to take responsibility for any content that their algorithms generate.

REDUCED SOCIAL CONTACT

An excessive reliance on chatbots for social interaction could potentially cause a child to begin reducing the amount of face-to-face communication they have, leading to social isolation. If young people become dependent on chatbots to provide companionship, it could possibly hinder the development of their real-life social skills.

LACK OF SENSITIVITY

Chatbot software isn't always sophisticated enough to pick up on subtle emotional cues or recognise signs of distress in children, as most humans would. It might therefore fail to respond appropriately. AI misinterpreting what it's being told or replying insensitively to a young user who's already struggling could potentially impact a child's emotional wellbeing or exacerbate any existing emotional issues.

UNINTENTIONAL BIAS

AI companions are only as reliable as the information they've been programmed with. The algorithms they use, therefore, may unintentionally promote bias, stereotypes or discriminatory behaviour. As many chatbots originate from the USA or UK, for instance, they can display a distinctly western-centric worldview. This could lead to children developing skewed attitudes and behaviours if they interact with the AI consistently.

COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS

Although many are now undeniably advanced, AI-powered chatbots still have limitations in terms of understanding complex concepts, context and nuance. Depending heavily on chatbots to help with learning or solving problems may stunt the development of a child's own powers of critical thinking, their creativity and their ability to engage in open-ended discussions with other people.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Chatbots typically collect data about users, including personal information and conversations. This is ostensibly to improve their performance as they gradually learn about our behaviour – but many experts warn that there may be significant risks associated with how this information is stored and used (for instance, the possibility of potential breaches or misuse by third parties).

Advice for Parents & Carers

CHAT ABOUT CHATBOTS

If a child is already expressing an interest in AI apps, then a relaxed, natural chat should help you to discover which ones they're aware of and how they're using them (or are planning to). Discuss these options with children and perhaps do your own research to ensure that you think they're suitable. Once you're totally happy, you could sit and explore the range of AI chatbots together.

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

If a child is keen to engage with AI chatbots, encourage them to do so in a safe environment: ideally in a shared space, so you can easily keep an eye and ear on their progress. Set up appropriate content filtering measures in advance – and gently remind them that you'll be close by and ready to help with any questions or concerns that may arise.

FIND A BALANCE

Work alongside children to establish the right balance in terms of how they might use AI-powered chatbots – and when it's appropriate. It's important to make sure that children still get plenty of opportunities to learn to solve problems for themselves, as well as building their interpersonal skills through face-to-face conversations with friends, family members and teachers.

TAKE CONTROL

As with any form of app or game, when it comes to AI chatbots we'd strongly recommend that you consider employing parental controls (either on the device being used or within the software itself) to manage which apps children can download and interact with. This is particularly important for younger children, who may be more at risk of being upset or frightened by inappropriate content.

RECOGNISE THE RISKS

It's unlikely that most children will have even considered the potential risks attached to having a virtual companion. So it's probably wise to explain some of the possible hazards and challenges of AI chatbots to them. Emphasise that AI isn't a real person (however much it might sound like one) and may occasionally tell them something inaccurate or skewed by bias.

Meet Our Expert

A Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), Gary Henderson is the Director of IT at a large boarding school in the UK, having previously taught in schools and colleges in Britain and the Middle East. With a particular interest in digital citizenship and cyber security, he believes it is essential that we become more aware of the risks around technology, as well as the benefits.



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