



### SCHOOL CLOSURES

#### ★ SCHOOL IS CLOSED FOR PUPILS

- Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May (May Day)
- Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May (School Improvement Day)

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

You received our Dates for Term 3 in our last week's parent news online. Please refer to this for school events and closures in May and June.



### INTERNET SAFETY

The internet and the use of modern technology can bring wonderful benefits but also can bring dangers for children such as being exposed to inappropriate material and messages.

We strongly encourage you to place parental controls on any devices your child has if they access the internet. Social media/chatrooms all come with age guidance – please check them out.

Have conversations with your child about their technology usage and ensure they know that they need to report to you anything they are not happy with. We continually reinforce this message in school. Parents regularly checking their child's device is another way of picking up any concerning issues.

We are aware that some children are spending an increasing amount of time on messaging chats, including social media and gaming group chats. The attached NI Safer Schools 'Shareable' offers some useful advice about keeping safe when using such apps and games.

Let's work together to keep our children safe.

### MATHLETES AWARD

Well done to Ballyclare Primary School for gaining another great award. Our P7 pupils and Staff have worked hard to achieve this.

Our Mathletes team fought off tough competition from Fairview and Mossley Primary Schools to win the competition.

Well done children, and Mr Joyce. We are delighted.

### MARATHAN RUNNERS!

We have a "Team" of runners running for the "Cancer Fund for Children" Charity this year. Buckets for donations will be in our playground next week if you wish/can support us.

### PRE/AFTER SCHOOLS CARE

As you know schools have assumed on increasing "caring" role for children over the years in school hours term time. We have been reliant on the excellent childcare facilities and extended family support in our area to look after pupils in parental hours - for families with working parents. Should you have an arrangement already in place that is working well and is affordable - we encourage you to continue with this routine. Following much discussion in school we are developing a 2-3pm "waiting" group (P1-P3) for families collecting at 2pm and 3pm each day. This will run for the last approximately eight weeks of term as a pilot. Please remember this is for Term time only.

We are in discussions concerning after school activities/care for the new school year (2-5pm) and we will keep everyone informed of progress in this as decisions are made. Please do not cancel any arrangement you currently have for now.

### SCHOOL CANTEEN

A temporary position is available in our school canteen (12½ hours). Anyone interested should contact our school cook Mandy on 028 93352653.

### HOCKEY - NI FINALS

It was a proud day to see our Hockey Team attend the NI finals last week. Well done girls on some super match play. Thank you to all parents who attended in support.



### MAY FAIR

The May Fair in Ballyclare Town will be in full swing soon. We hope you will log on to the website link and take part. Our school hopes to participate in the parade on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May. We will send further details soon.

### PHONES

All pupils in our upper classes have been reminded that mobile phones should only come to school if needed for home arrangements on exit. These are to be switched off before entering our gates each day.

**'Working together, towards excellence, for all.'**

# YOUR GUIDE TO Group Chats

Group chats are a type of communication involving multiple users that happen on most messaging platforms. While they have been around since the invention of online messaging (think chatrooms), popular use has grown in the last decade.



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## HOW DO THEY WORK?

Once a user creates a group chat on a messaging platform, they can:

Choose the name of the group & select a group photo

Set up the sharing and privacy settings

Add other users as members of the group



After the group is set up, users can:

Video or voice call all members of the group at the same time

Message into the chat

Send photos/videos/GIFS/voice notes

Tag other group members in specific messages

## Who can be in a group chat?

Anyone can be in a group chat as long as they are a user on that platform. Most platforms have age restrictions (usually 13+) but there are not always robust age verification processes in place.

## Why do young people use them?

- Stay connected to friends, family, or teammates.
- Send important information to multiple people.
- Discuss specific interests or events with others.
- Organise meetings for school, work, extracurriculars, etc.

## More than 8 out of 10 parents

are concerned their child will be cyberbullied on a group chat.

## The Risks of Group Chats

**Bullying.** Many young people have reported being left out of group chats, experienced bullying within them or have been made fun of in a chat they weren't included in.

**Image sharing.** Young people may feel pressured to share sexual imagery of themselves. Even if they choose to share an image with just one person, they may lose control if it is shared in a group chat.

**Disappearing messages.** A function of many group chats which allows users to delete messages or automatically make them vanish after a set time (e.g., on Snapchat) which can present opportunities for bullying or coercion when sharing inappropriate images.

**Information leak.** Being in a group chat could unintentionally lead to private information being shared, such as mobile numbers or live locations.

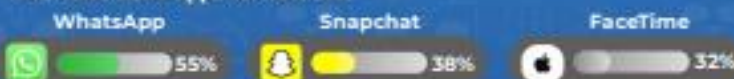
**Stranger interaction.** A young person may not know everyone they are in a group chat with, potentially exposing them to harmful interactions.

**Inappropriate content.** If someone sends in something that is inappropriate, it may expose a young person to content they were not prepared to see.

**Excessive screentime.** Some group chats might be receiving messages 24/7, which could draw a young person's attention at inappropriate times!

When using WhatsApp, images can automatically save to the user's camera roll, unless adjusted in the settings. This may lead to young people unintentionally possessing harmful or illegal images by default of someone else sending them into a group chat.

Group messaging functions exist across various social media and gaming platforms. The most common way 3-17-year-olds interact online is through communicating via messaging/video platforms. The most used apps for this are:



The most important thing you can do for a young person is to ensure they know who their trusted adults are and that they can always talk to them without fear of consequences. Here are some other preventative steps that you can take:

- Ensure they understand what information should be kept private.
- Talk about appropriate behaviour towards others online.
- Discuss the risks of sharing nude or semi-nude images.
- Enable and review privacy settings together - use our Safety Centre to help!
- Teach how to block, mute and report other users or chats.
- Adjust auto-saving settings on WhatsApp.
- Set family rules and screentime limits on devices.

## If a young person does seek your help...

- Listen and reassure them that they have done the right thing.
- Include them in any decisions that follow.
- Screenshot evidence of bullying as soon as possible.
- Only ban the use of the platform where necessary for their safety.
- Involve parents or relevant staff if children are at risk.
- Contact organisations who can help.
- Do not respond directly to harmful or hurtful messages.
- If you believe a child is in immediate danger, contact the police without delay.

SOS

NEVER SCREENSHOT AN INDECENT IMAGE OF A CHILD!

