

WHAT'S COMING UP

January

20th - O2 Young Voices
Choir Trip
27th - Y4 Colchester
Castle Trip

February

4th - Y3 Saffron Walden
Museum Trip - details to
follow
15th - 20th - Half Term
23rd - Non Pupil Day

March

13th - Y5 Bocking Arts
Centre Trip - details to
follow

Dear Parents / Carers,

It has been wonderful to have all our pupils, parents, and staff return for what promises to be an exciting and inspiring year ahead, filled with exciting activities and opportunities.

To kick off the term, our staff came together on Monday for an INSET day focused on researching, learning about, and workshopping the best assessment methods across all subjects. Staying up to date with well-informed, evidence-based approaches is important as it ensures our assessments accurately reflect pupil progress and help tailor teaching to meet each child's individual needs.

Building on this commitment to excellence, our senior leaders also attended professional development sessions this week to stay fully informed about the latest changes to the Ofsted inspection framework and their implications for schools. This ongoing CPD aligns closely with our vision of best practice and purposeful learning, helping us to ensure that Bocking Primary continues to meet and exceed high standards in education and safeguarding. We will keep parents informed with clear updates about the recent Ofsted changes to help everyone understand what they mean for our school and your child's education.

We are excited to share some of the opportunities coming up for our children, including our choir's participation in the O2 Young Voices concert, Year 5's involvement in the Braintree Sings festival where they will workshop with professional musicians, and our mindfulness workshops, which are now fully booked. These are just a few of the upcoming experiences that will enrich our children's academic and personal development.

Lastly, despite the cold weather at the start of the week, we are incredibly proud of how well our children coped and returned to school ready to learn, demonstrating excellent learning behaviours across all year groups. To further support our pupils' well-being, we are pleased to announce the completion of our new wellbeing shed, which will be used by our wellbeing mentors during break and lunch times. These mentors will play a crucial role in providing a safe, welcoming space where children can talk, relax, and find a friend to play with.

Have a lovely weekend
Mrs Cagney

BEFORE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Fri - IRock

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Mon - CHOIR
Wed - SCS
Thu - SCS

Inclement weather procedure information:

By 7:30 each morning, the school will make a decision on whether it is safe to open or if it needs to be fully closed or partially opened due to inclement weather. This information will be reported on the Essex County Council emergency school closures website, posted on the school website, and communicated to parents via email to ensure everyone is informed in a timely manner. We will keep you updated through this time.



STAR OF THE WEEK

EYFS - Archie B
Year 1 - George M
Year 2 - Max
Year 3 - Theodore
Year 4 - Connie
Year 5 - Millie H
Year 6 - Skylah

AR READERS

Year 2 - Clara, Callie, Sidney, Ramona,

Now the weather has changed, please ensure you child has a water proof jacket.

All items of clothing should be named.

Water only in bottles please.

Polite Reminder:
The school toilets are closed for cleaning from 3:20.

CLASSROOM NEWS...

YEAR EYFS

The children in EYFS were very excited this week to talk about their Christmas holidays and to see the snow, which inspired us to create some winter artwork. We painted snowmen, decorated with a range of materials. In literacy, we warmed up our writing skills through word-building activities and learnt how to write a caption, practising the use of our index finger to create finger spaces between words. In maths, we developed our 'fast eyes' by recognising amounts on a dice while playing a track game, helping maths Monkey carefully jump from 0 to 10. When we reached 8, we worked out that we needed to roll a 2 to land on 10. We were even able to explain our thinking!

YEAR 1

In our English this week we have focused on using adjectives to add descriptions about the character in the short film we have watched and then used and to join these adjectives together. In PE we started our Fitness unit and had to think about how our body changes when we exercise. We noticed that we felt tired at the end of each exercise and also that our hearts were beating quickly. This week we introduced our new topic enquiry question - Where do I live? In our first lesson we explored maps and noticed that in Braintree there are lots of churches and schools. In math's we have been exploring numbers up to 20 and have started to identify how we can partition them into tens and ones!

YEAR 2

This week in English, Year 2 have been developing their grammar skills by exploring nouns, verbs, adjectives and commas, all linked to our exciting new topic, the Great Fire of London. They have started exploring rich vocabulary to bring their ideas to life for their dilemma stories. In maths, the children have been strengthening their problem-solving skills, adding and subtracting two-digit numbers with confidence. They are now ready to move on to multiplication next week. In History, we launched our new unit on the Great Fire of London with an exciting hook. The children created paintings of London houses and the fire, helping them to imagine what the event may have been like. During Computing, Year 2 learned how to take a good photograph, thinking carefully about focus, positioning and what makes an effective image. Finally, in RE, the children reflected on places where they feel they belong, sharing thoughtful ideas about why these places are special to them.





ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

97% - EYFS
94% - Year 1
92% - Year 2
99% - Year 3
89% - Year 4
96% - Year 5
93% - Year 6

Attendance target 95%

Please be aware that the gates open at 8:35, and your child is marked late, affecting their attendance from 8:50am. Punctuality is a valuable lifelong skill. Late arrival affects not only the pupil who is late but disrupts the whole class. Where a pupil arrives after the registers close, with no justifiable reason, a U code will be entered into the register. The U code amounts to an unauthorised absence for the whole session. We must warn you, a penalty notice may be issued where there have been at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence during a rolling 10 school week period.

ONLINE SAFETY..

Top Tips for SETTING BOUNDARIES AROUND GAMING

If your child loves video games, then you'll probably be aware that how long they spend gaming – and what they're actually playing – can occasionally become a source of concern or conflict. The UK's trade body for interactive entertainment, Ukie, has recently launched a campaign to promote safer and more responsible gaming among young people – with parents and carers helping by setting sensible and fair boundaries. Our guide has tips on key areas where you could agree some healthy ground rules for your child's gaming activity.

PROMOTE SAFER GAME CHOICES

Deciding which online games are OK – and which should be avoided – is tricky. Some titles allow children to cooperate or compete with strangers, which creates potential risks. Watching your child play online for a while could provide more insight into a particular game, while the parental controls on most consoles allow you to limit who can chat to your child or send them friend requests. Remind your child of the hazards around strangers online when you discuss this boundary with them.

ENCOURAGE REGULAR BREAKS

Help your child understand the need to take regular breaks, playing in shorter bursts rather than marathon sessions. Bear in mind that some games (such as role playing games) require time investment from the player, while others (online team games, for example) can't be stopped or paused at a moment's notice. A quick break every hour or so is good practice, and you could suggest some things to do in these breaks, such as having a drink of water or getting some fresh air.

AGREE SPENDING LIMITS

There's no doubt that gaming can be expensive, and younger players often don't realise how much paying for digital items and subscriptions can add up to. Many young gamers love to buy new skins or upgrades for their character, so you could settle on a fixed amount that your child is allowed to spend on in-game items each week or month. This sort of boundary will not only help your child to manage their expectations but will also make you more aware of the price of these items.

DISCUSS AGE RATINGS

Children often ignore the age ratings on games – or are unaware they even exist. If you're happy with your child playing a particular game even though it's rated above their age, then establish that as a boundary: emphasise that you've made an exception, and talk about what age ratings mean and why they're important. You could add context to this boundary by browsing games' boxes together while shopping, discussing why some games might have earned certain age ratings.

FACTOR IN FRIENDS

If your child is a keen video gamer, the chances are that they'll have other gamers among their social circle, too. When friends visit, do they instantly dash to their console or computer? You could put boundaries in place before their guests arrive by agreeing on a length of gaming time. Bear in mind, though, that they may try to extend this once they're together. Try coming up with activities or challenges for them during screen breaks – if they join in, they earn a little extra time on their game.

ENJOY GAMING TOGETHER

Setting time aside to play video games together can be an enjoyable bonding exercise. Undeniably, some young gamers may be less enthusiastic about a parent or carer joining in, but it can be a productive way of encouraging them to share their hobby with you. Setting goals or tasks might be useful: if they love Minecraft, choose something to build together; if Fortnite's their favourite, ask to try out some of the fun game modes, like Prop Hunt, which don't require high skill levels.

TALK ABOUT EMOTIONS

Help your child to monitor their emotions as they play. Discuss what is (and isn't) an acceptable level of competitiveness to show while gaming. Are they allowed to trash talk other players, for example? Can they notice when they get angry if they lose? Do they think these emotions are healthy? Some games can provoke anger, but others can bring joy, humour and the thrill of overcoming a challenge. Try to steer your child towards games that tend to produce these more positive feelings.

BE PREPARED FOR TROLLS

A frequent problem when gaming online is other players who are deliberately troublesome. Make sure your child knows how to report and block someone who makes their experience a negative one. Between you, decide if or how they should deal with these online trolls. Talk about where your child's boundaries are in terms of what they think is acceptable: what behaviour by other users is merely frustrating, and what crosses the line to become upsetting or abusive.

Meet Our Expert

Daniel Upescombe is a writer specialising in technology, video gaming, virtual reality and Web3. He has also written 18 guidebooks for children, covering games such as Fortnite, Apex Legends, Valorant, Roblox and Minecraft. With work published by the likes of PC Gamer, Kotaku, Pocket Gamer and VG247, he has reviewed more than 50 games and products over the past year.

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