

Friday 25th September 2026

Welcome from the Head of School

It has been another wonderful week at High Ongar, and I have been incredibly proud of the enthusiasm, creativity and positive attitudes shown by our pupils across the school.

This week, we have been working on our new values - Be Kind, Be Respectful, Be Resilient. These values reflect what we believe is important for our children as learners and individuals. Over the coming weeks, we will be exploring what these values look like in practice and how we can all demonstrate them through our actions every day.

One of the highlights of my week has been seeing the fantastic story writing taking place across the school. I have been impressed by the imagination, vocabulary and enthusiasm pupils have brought to their writing, with the children producing some truly engaging pieces. It has been wonderful to see children taking pride in the work and developing their confidence as authors.

A visit to EYFS brought a very different, but equally important, kind of creativity. The outdoor area was bustling with activity as children enthusiastically worked together to create an array of wonderful mud pies.



As we continue through the term, I look forward to celebrating more examples of learning, achievement and personal growth from across our school.

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support and partnership.

Best wishes,

Mrs S Kilbey
Head of School

Important Dates

29th Sept - EYFS Intake Tour
12th Oct - Shoebox appeal
14th Oct - EYFS Intake Tour
16th Oct - Clubs finish
22nd Oct - Friends Playground Tuck
23rd Oct - Non Pupil Day
2nd Nov - Clubs restart
9th Nov - Yr6 Resilience Workshop
11th Nov - Parents Evening
12th Nov - EYFS Intake Tour
12th Nov - Parents Evening
27th Nov - Friends Playground Tuck
4th Dec - Clubs finish
8th Dec - EYFS and KS1 Nativity 9.30am
9th Dec - Friends Christmas Shop
10th Dec - EYFS and KS1 Nativity 2.15pm
16th Dec - Christmas Jumper Day
16th Dec - Christmas Panto
17th Dec - Friends Christmas Disco
18th Dec - School finishes at 1pm

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High Ongar Primary School Newsletter

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School Updates and Celebrations

Pupil Leadership Roles

We are delighted to introduce a range of new pupil leadership opportunities for this academic year. These roles will help the children develop confidence, responsibility and team work whilst making a positive contribution to our school community.

We were incredibly proud of every pupil who put themselves forward for a leadership position. Applying for a role takes courage and confidence; every child who submitted an application should be proud of their effort.

Our new pupil leaders will play an important role in helping to shape school life and promote our school values of **Be Kind, Be Respectful, Be Resilient**.



Head Pupils

We are excited and proud to announce our Head Pupils for 2026 to 2027.

Head Pupil: Kit Fitz-Gerald

Deputy Head Pupil: Willow Savage

Congratulations on this well deserved achievement!



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School Updates and Celebrations

Headteacher Award Winners

Congratulations to all our recent Headteacher Award Winners!

Week Ending 18th September

Ash - George and Rosie
Beech - Sophia and Charlotte
Elm - Darcie and Khalifa
Maple - Cydnie and Parker
Willow - Amelia and Herbie

Week Ending 24th September

Ash - Jax and Winnie P
Beech - Bonnie and Teddy
Elm - Bambi and Jamie
Maple - Phoebe and Leo P
Willow - River-Rose and Reggie



Attendance

Congratulations to our attendance champions over the past two weeks. Excellent attendance helps children make the most of every learning opportunity and supports them to achieve thier best.



Week Ending 18th September: Ash (100%)



Week Ending 24th September: Willow (100%)

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Reminders

Attendance

8.35am Gates Open
8.40am Classrooms Open
8.45am School Starts
10.30am Morning Break
10.45am Morning Break ends
12pm Lunch starts
1pm Afternoon learning
begins
3.10pm Gates open
3.15pm End of day



To make sure that all children are as safe as possible, we operate a system of first day contact. When your child is absent, please contact the School Office on 01277 363761. Please give:

- Your child's name
- The reason for absence
- When you expect your child to return to school

You must call the school every day your child is absent.

PE Days

Ash - Monday and Wednesday
Beech - Thursday and Friday
Elm - Tuesday and Friday
Maple - Tuesday and Thursday
Willow - Monday and Wednesday



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Welcome! ♥

A very warm welcome back to all our families and a very special **welcome to our new Reception parents** – we're so happy to have you as part of our High Ongar school community!

Friends of High Ongar is a group of parents, carers and teachers who work together to raise funds for the school and organise fun events for the children. We're looking forward to a fantastic year ahead!

Same amazing school community, new adventures ahead! ♥



WHAT WE ARE CURRENTLY FUNDRAISING FOR ♥♥

We're raising money for some exciting improvements for our school:



NEW CHRISTMAS TREES

Helping to make the school feel extra special and festive.



UPGRADE TO FOREST SCHOOL

Supporting enhancements to our Forest School area for even more outdoor learning opportunities.



WHOLE SCHOOL WELLY RACK

A much-needed welly storage solution for the whole school!

More projects to follow – watch this space! ♥

CHRISTMAS PANTO

We're excited to let you know the Christmas pantomime **has been booked** and will be funded by the Friends of High Ongar!

We hope it will be a magical treat for all the children.

Oh yes we have! ✨

UPCOMING EVENTS ♥



Friday 25th September

After-School Tuck Shop



Thursday 22nd October

Pumpkin Competition
More details to follow!



After-School Tuck Shop

COULD YOU HELP? ♥

We'd love to get more parents involved!

There are lots of ways to support Friends of High Ongar – whether you can join the committee, volunteer at an event, help behind the scenes, donate items or simply share your ideas.

Even a small amount of time can make a big difference! ♥

Many hands make light work ♥

INTERESTED? GET IN TOUCH!



Contact Krystle
07831696537



Chat to a committee member



Or speak to the school office



♥ Thank you for being part of our school community ♥



Friday 25th September 2026

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

DISCORD

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

A CHANNEL FOR EVERYTHING

While Discord is strongly associated with video games, it also hosts communities for almost anything you can imagine, such as books, music, influencers, cooking and sport. Some large servers focus on popular games like Minecraft or Fortnite, but many are private, invite-only spaces where friends or communities with shared interests can chat across phones, computers, and gaming consoles.

REAL-LIFE DISTRACTION

Like many social platforms, Discord can become a real time-sink. Although it does not rely on endless scrolling in the same way as some apps, constant messages, group chats, and voice channels can keep young people engaged for long periods, especially in larger servers. As Discord is closely linked to gaming, it may also increase the time they spend playing games.

STRANGER DANGER

Users can choose to stay within private servers with only people they know, but joining public servers will most likely bring them into contact with strangers. Many users are just friendly enthusiasts, yet others could have harmful intentions, including grooming, extortion, or radicalisation. In these types of environments, anyone can claim to be another teenager, which can make it harder for young people to judge who is safe to talk to.

A HARASSMENT RISK

There is also a risk from people a young person already knows in the real world. Bullying in the real world can continue online, and Discord servers can make this feel more intimidating, especially if someone uses anonymous or multiple accounts to carry out threatening behaviours. Because Discord works across computers, phones, and gaming consoles, unwanted contact can follow young people into online spaces that should feel safe and private.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

This huge amount of choice can help young people "find their tribe", especially when they have niche interests. However, because users can create servers around almost any topic, younger users may still encounter unsuitable or distressing content. Even in spaces linked to child-friendly games, Discord cannot directly control every conversation, image, or video shared by other users.

A MONEY DRAIN

Discord is free to use, but users can still spend real-world money on it. This may include Discord 'Nitro', a monthly subscription that unlocks customisation features and larger media uploads, or purchases through the 'Shop' for profile cosmetics and game-related items. Small purchases can add up quickly, especially if spending controls are not in place.

Advice for Parents & Educators

USE FAMILY CENTRE

Parents and carers should make use of Discord's 'Family Centre', which gives an overview of a younger user's activity while respecting their privacy. Messages are not shared, but adults can view an activity feed and receive weekly email summaries. Discord says this is designed to support conversations about online behaviour, rather than be about constant monitoring.

CHECK, TALK, REPORT

Review Discord's privacy settings together, including who can send them friend requests or private messages. Use this as a chance to talk to them about strangers, privacy, and personal information, making sure young people know to question suspicious behaviour, such as requests to keep conversations secret. Show them how to block and report these kinds of users and reassure them that asking for help will not get them into trouble.

MANAGE TIME ONLINE

Agree clear expectations around when and how Discord can be used, especially during homework, bedtime, and family time. Encourage young people to turn off unnecessary notifications and leave servers that feel overwhelming. If Discord is mainly used alongside gaming, discuss healthy limits for both activities so that schoolwork, sleep, and offline friendships are not affected.

REVIEW SPENDING CONTROLS

Talk openly about paid features such as Discord Nitro, profile cosmetics, and in-game purchases. Make sure the young person in your care understand that digital items still cost real money. Check payment settings on the device they use, avoid storing card details where possible, and consider adding approval requirements for purchases, particularly for younger or more impulsive users.

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist who has written for the likes of Wired, TechRadar, Tom's Guide, The Evening Standard, and The New Statesman.



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See full reference list on our website



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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about WHAT'S REAL ONLINE

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Children are growing up in a digital world where seeing and hearing no longer mean they can always believe. One major emerging concern is what UNESCO describes as 'synthetic media': AI-generated audio, images or video, including deepfakes, that can convincingly imitate a person's voice or likeness. As these tools become easier to access, children may encounter manipulated content, cloned voices, and fabricated messages that appear or sound real. Parents and educators therefore need to help them question what they experience online, which can often feel harder when we're experiencing it for the first time, too.

AI-GENERATED CONTENT

Artificial intelligence can now create realistic images, audio, video, and text in a very short time. Online, children may encounter fabricated news clips, AI 'influencers', fake screenshots, or entirely invented events without ever realising they are fake. The real challenge is that this content often looks polished and convincing. Parents and educators need to help children understand that professional-looking content is not automatically reliable and that all digital material should be questioned before it is trusted or shared.

DEEPPAKES LOOK CONVINCING

'Deepfakes' use AI to alter or create images and videos that appear to show a real person doing or saying something that never happened. They are sometimes used to spread false information, embarrass someone, or target people through bullying and image-based abuse. Even when others know the content is fake, the emotional and reputational impact can still be significant – and, in some cases, potentially life threatening. Deepfakes therefore need to be treated as both a digital literacy and safeguarding concern.

FALSE INFORMATION SPREADS

Misinformation is false or misleading information shared without necessarily intending harm, while disinformation is deliberately created to deceive others. Both types can spread quickly through social media, messaging apps, and video platforms. Their popularity, repetition, and confident presentation can make these false claims feel true. Children may also be more likely to trust content shared by friends, influencers, or familiar accounts, making source-checking and verification essential parts of developing their digital literacy.

VOICES CAN BE CLONED

AI tools can copy someone's voice using only a short audio sample. A child may receive a call or voice note that appears to come from a parent, friend, teacher, or trusted adult, but the audio is not genuine. These messages can be used to create panic, request money, obtain information, or pressure a child into secrecy. Hearing a familiar voice is no longer enough to confirm someone's identity, especially when a message is urgent or unusual.

ACCOUNTS MAY BE FAKE

Not every online profile represents the person it claims to be. Fake accounts may impersonate another pupil, a teacher, a family member, or someone connected to the school. They can be used for acts such as bullying, scams, grooming, or manipulation. A convincing photograph, username, or message history does not prove that an account is genuine. Children should be cautious when someone asks for their or someone else's personal information, images, passwords, money, or access to private conversations.

ALGORITHMS INFLUENCE REALITY

Many online platforms, such as social media, are shaped by algorithms that recommend content based on what users view, like, search for, and share. This means children do not see a neutral or balanced version of the world. They may repeatedly encounter similar opinions, misleading claims, or increasingly extreme content. Over time, this repetition can make an opinion feel more common or credible than it really is, because the child may never see this opinion opposed or countered.

Advice for Parents & Educators

PAUSE, CHECK, COMPARE

Teach children not to accept content as true simply because it looks professional, sounds confident, or has been widely shared. Encourage them to pause, identify the original source, check the date, and compare the claim with another reliable source. Ask questions such as: Who created this? What evidence is provided? Could anything have been altered? What is the real motive? Regular, age-appropriate practice helps children develop the critical thinking needed to navigate their online worlds.

VERIFY ANOTHER WAY

A familiar face, voice, or account is no longer enough to confirm someone's identity. If a message is unusual, urgent, or asks for secrecy, money, personal information, or immediate action, children should verify it through a separate route. They should be encouraged to call the person directly using a known number, speak to them face to face, or check with another trusted adult. Families can also agree a private 'code' phrase to help them authenticate genuine emergency messages from each other. This should be something random, non-personal, and known only to the family.

KEEP TALKING OPENLY

Create regular, non-judgemental conversations about what children see, hear, and experience online. Make sure you use parental controls where appropriate and understand each platform's age restrictions. Asking children about new platforms, influencers, unusual messages, or content they are unsure about can help open up valuable conversations. Avoid immediately blaming the child or removing their device, as this may discourage them from disclosing their concerns in the future.

SAVE, REPORT, SUPPORT

When fake content, impersonation, or manipulation targets a child, take it seriously, even if the material is fabricated. Save relevant messages, usernames, links, and screenshots without sharing the content any further. Report it through the platform, follow safeguarding procedures, and escalate concerns involving threats, grooming, sexual content, coercion, or extortion. Remind children that creating or sharing this content, even as a so-called 'joke', can have serious consequences for them and others, and may be difficult to remove once shared online.

Meet Our Expert

Philippa Wraithmell is an educator, author and digital transformation specialist with expertise in digital safeguarding, online safety, AI in education and whole-school digital strategy. She is the Founder and CEO of EdRupture and works with schools, organisations and policymakers to help create safer, more ethical and more effective digital learning environments for children and young people.



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