

Abacus Primary School



Newsletter 553 10/1/25

We hope that you all had a wonderful Christmas break and would like to take this opportunity of wishing you all a Happy New Year. It's been wonderful hearing all about the children's Christmas adventures and the presents they received.

In our Key Stage assemblies on Monday we spoke about the New Year and lots of children wanted to share how they celebrated the New Year in. As part of the assembly, we watched

the London firework display, where a holographic Paddington appeared and said this: "**As we enter the New Year, I always remember what Mrs Brown says; "In London, everyone is different. But that means anyone can fit in. I think she must be right because although I don't look like anyone else, I really do feel at home. Happy New Year, love from Paddington."**



Next week we will be on WEEK 1



WEEK 1



Starting School



If your child is due to start School in September 2025, the application process closes on 15th January 2025. Applications need to be made via the Essex Education Portal: <https://educationportal.essex.gov.uk/CitizenPortal/en>

This week we completed our final tours and I could not be more proud of how the children in Year 5 and 6 conducted themselves on these tours throughout November, December and this week. The prospective parents commented on how proud the children are of their school and how they spoke with confidence and passion. One parent commented that they only hope their daughter is as confident when she is their age. Well done to you all and thank you.



Lots to celebrate this week for Vincente, Kayla, Daisy and Theo.













Mrs Ferrari and Mrs Smith are busy planning a range of activities for Children's Mental Health Week, which will be taking place during the week beginning 3rd February 2025. The theme for 2025 is **Know yourself, Grow yourself**. On Friday 7th February 2025 we will be holding a 'know yourself, grow yourself' day

where we invite children to dress in a way that tells us something about them (or if you don't want to take part then please wear school uniform as usual). This could be their favourite colour, outfit, what you want to be when you are older, your hobby or culture and the list could go on. If you would like to know more about the Place2Be charity and their work around children's mental health copy and paste the link below:

<https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/>

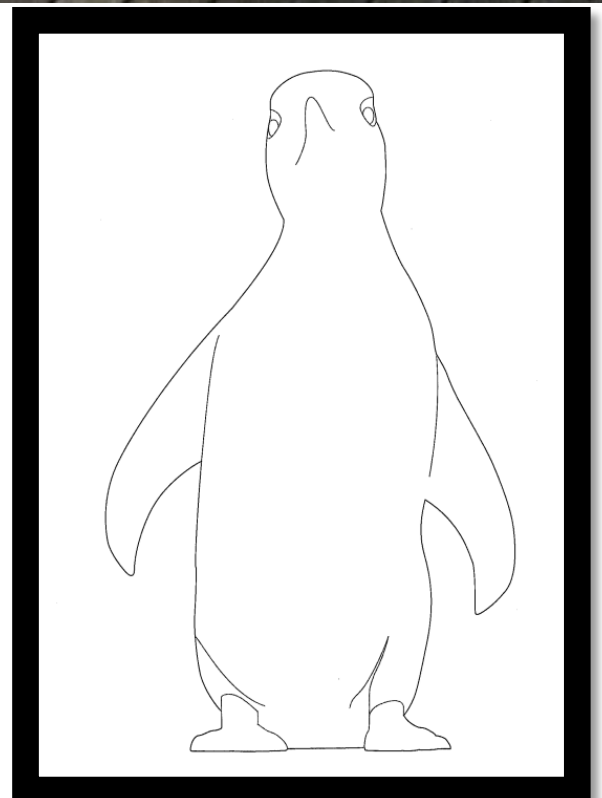
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Waddle ON-SEA

After the success of Elizabeth for Herd in the City, I am delighted to say that we have purchased a penguin to create as part of the Waddle on Sea trail.

School Council representatives have been talking to their classes and the work that the hospice does (which costs £7000 a day to run). We are inviting children to create a design which involves every child in school and captures the 'definition of love' which the hospice creates. The design should reflect Abacus in some way. Designs need to be handed to Mrs Blakeley **by Friday 17th January 2025**. The templates for your designs can be printed off our website or collected from school reception. **Please ensure your full name and class are on the back of your design.**



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about JUSTALK KIDS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

JusTalk Kids is a child's version of the JusTalk app – a highly popular social networking platform – designed for users up to 13 years of age, allowing them to video call, message and participate in group chats. While adults can link their own JusTalk account to their child's and make use of parental controls, it's important to understand the risks associated with the app.

SUBSCRIPTION FOR PREMIUM ACCESS

While JusTalk Kids is free, there's the option to subscribe to a kids' premium account or a premium family account. At a cost, this feature allows children to have access to more fun features such as games they can play with others in a chat, exclusive stickers, a badge denoting them as a premium subscriber, and exclusive ringtones and themes.

RESISTANCE TO CONTROLS

JusTalk Kids endeavours to allow children the sense of having a chat-based app while allowing parents to set controls (either in the app or from their own adult JusTalk account). The basis behind this is positive; however, some children are challenging their parents by refusing to use JusTalk Kids, preferring to use the adult version without any restrictions in place.

KNOWING THE PARENT PASSCODE

After downloading JusTalk Kids, parents can set a passcode which users must enter to add contacts. The parental controls help to manage which content can be viewed and who children can add as a contact: this then allows children to chat with friends in a controlled environment. However, prospective contacts don't have to know a specific username. In theory, someone could type in a random name and then add them as a friend.

POTENTIAL DATA LEAKS

JusTalk and JusTalk Kids claim to be secure and encrypted, going so far as to state that even the developers themselves won't access your data. However, a security lapse in 2022 highlighted that messages were not in fact encrypted – leading to concerns around the security of the app and the transparency of the development team.

CYBERBULLYING

Online chats can provide a sense of anonymity, leading some users to post things which they wouldn't normally say in person. Combined with the option of group chats, there's a risk that young people might join in with this kind of behaviour, escalating it further and potentially turning what should be a fun experience into something deeply negative.

TOO MUCH SCREENTIME

A report by the UK Parliament Education Committee highlighted a 52% increase in children's screen time between 2020 and 2022 – as well as finding that 29% of children used their smartphones in a manner consistent with screen addiction. Introducing children to social networking apps when they're too young can lead to bad digital habits and a reliance on technology from an early age.

Advice for Parents & Educators

JUSTIFY THE CONTROLS

If parents allow their child to use JusTalk Kids, they should explain that they're putting parental controls in place to make the app safer. Make sure the child knows not to put their full name on the account and doesn't use a photo of themselves as their profile picture. This type of open discussion will help to ensure that a child is aware of the app's potential risks and knows how to reduce them.

TALK ABOUT ONLINE FRIENDSHIPS

Young children could be excited to use this app. However, highlight that they must do so in a positive, respectful and responsible manner. While it can be easy to get caught up in a group chat, it's important to talk to others politely and call out any unpleasant behaviour. Discuss the importance of limiting their contacts to people they know in real life and use parental controls to enforce this.

DOS AND DON'TS OF SHARING

Some children might not understand the potential dangers of oversharing online. Set clear guidelines around what is and isn't safe to share on the internet, and discuss the concept of a digital footprint. Children need to understand that the things they say and share online can never be completely erased. Even if they delete it themselves, it can be saved and distributed by others.

ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION

Apps like JusTalk can sometimes lend themselves to bullying behaviours. Parents should monitor what their child is sending and receiving, check in with them regularly and encourage them to share their feelings (both positive and negative) at home. Remind them that they can block a contact if someone is treating them disrespectfully.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/justalk-kids>

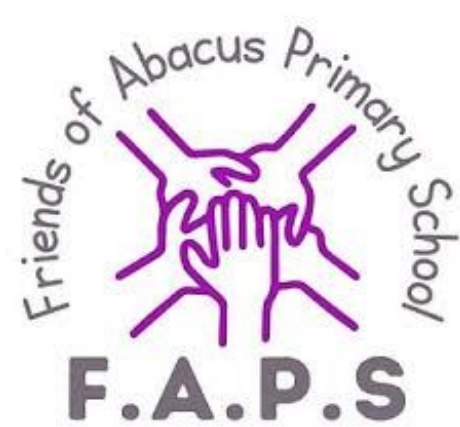
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Bingo Night – 25th January 2025

Join us for an evening of fun when Skittleman leads us through our Bingo Night!

This is an **adults-only event**, so organise a babysitter, and bring all your friends!

We'll be in the School's Large Hall - doors open at 6.45pm. Please arrive in advance of the start time of 7.30pm.

Tables will be set up for groups of 8-10, so you may be asked to sit with other people if your group is smaller than this. Please bring your own drinks and nibbles – nothing containing nuts, thanks.

There are very limited numbers of tickets, so please don't delay if you'd like to join the fun.



Tickets cost £10 and are available from www.pta-events.co.uk/faps-abacus

This covers your first book of 7 games; more will be available to purchase on the night – please bring cash for this.

Any questions, please contact faps@abacus.essex.sch.uk

Thank you

From the Friends of Abacus Primary School Committee





Special Educational Needs
& Disabilities

Below is a Focus on **FREE** Courses to Support Parents from SENDIASS

Emotional Resilience for Parents of

15th January 2025 -online Time 7pm to 9pm

Parenting a child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can be an emotional rollercoaster. This training is designed to help parents understand the complex emotions that come with this journey.

Course Objectives:

Understanding Emotions: Gain insight into the common emotional responses to raising a child with SEND, including grief, guilt, and anxiety.

Building Resilience: Learn practical strategies to build emotional resilience and cope with stress.

Course Highlights:

Expert Guidance: Session led by a qualified counsellor with extensive experience in supporting families of children with SEND.

Resource Toolkit: Build a variety of strategies and tools to help support your own emotional wellbeing whilst advocating for your child/children

Who Should Attend: This course is ideal for parents and caregivers of children with SEND who are seeking emotional support and practical strategies to manage their thoughts & feelings.

To book a place email iasspromotion.development@essex.gov.uk



Emotional resilience for parents of children with SEND

Date: 24th January with Proactive Training

Time: 10am until 2pm

Location: Colchester Football Stadium (lunch provided)

Visit <https://www.essexsendiass.co.uk/> for enquiries or to book a place. Or email sally.gralinger@essex.gov.uk

EHC Needs Assessment and Draft Plans

18th February 2025 online with SENATA Legal Services

Time: 6:30pm until 9:30

This 3 hour session covers everything you need to know about EHC needs assessments and EHC plans. The aim of the course is to provide attendees who are thinking about requesting an EHC needs assessment or who are going through the assessment and/or draft EHC plan process with a comprehensive look at the SEND legal framework relevant to assessments and EHC plans. We will look at the following:

Legal requirements for EHC needs assessments; myths and misconceptions; procedure for assessment; ensuring the procedure is carried out properly; test for issuing EHC plans;

Contents of EHC plans including the right to state a preference for particular education settings; responding to a draft EHC plan and the practical steps you can take to ensure it is fit for purpose and finally; what you can do if you are not happy with the final EHC plan.

There will be a Q&A session during and at the end of the training.

To book a place email: iasspromotion.development@essex.gov.uk

Understanding and Managing Your Child's Responses

Date: 5th February 2025 with Proactive

Time: 10:00 until 14:00

Location: Portlands Park Hotel, W Hanningfield Rd, Great Baddow, Chelmsford CM2 8HR

To book a place email: iasspromotion.development@essex.gov.uk

Or email sally.gralinger@essex.gov.uk

For More Information



<https://www.essexsendiass.co.uk/>

<https://www.essexsendiass.co.uk/parents-and-carers/>

<https://www.essexsendiass.co.uk/training-and-development/training/>

YOUR SCHOOL NEEDS YOU



NEXT WEEK

Would you like the opportunity to speak about how your child's school can improve inclusion for its neurodivergent pupils?

Join us at a 'cuppa and chat' hosted by Essex Family Forum as part of the PINS project.

(find out more [HERE](#))

Your school are committed to working with EFF to hear your voice and want you to speak openly with EFF about how the school can improve.



The next meeting is-

Wednesday 15th January 2025 at 9am