

# Abacus Primary School

## Newsletter 550

### 6 / 12 / 24



It really is beginning to look a lot like Christmas and I cannot wait to watch Foundation and Year 1's Christmas plays next week. To ensure all children can be heard, these performances are for adults only. Letters with tickets have been sent home this week. Please check with your child's class teacher if you have not received yours.

***We have a duty of care to safeguard all children in our school and therefore we will be enforcing that no photos or videos can be take during the Foundation performances. Our Foundation Team will post photos from rehearsals on Tapestry and there will be an opportunity to take individual photos at the end of their performance.*** The FAPS discos will be taking place on Thursday 12th December 2024. The bookings for these close today at midnight.

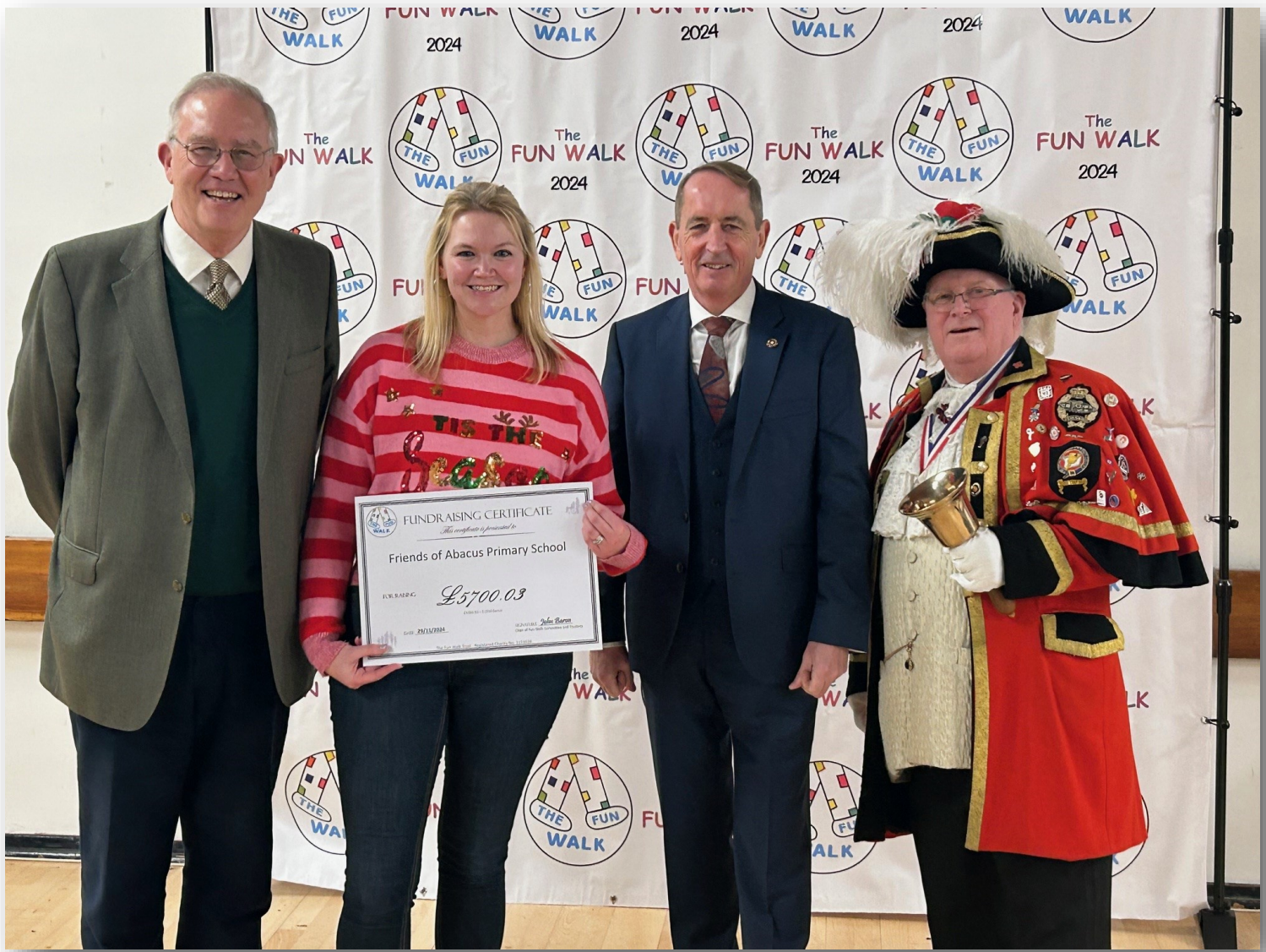


Today we say 'Happy Maternity Leave' to Mrs Craske. We cannot wait to meet her new bundle of joy. I am sure you will join me in wishing Mr and Mrs Craske all the very best for their new arrival...we all cannot wait to meet her.



**Next week we will be on WEEK 1 of our school menu, which you can view on our website.**





What a pleasure it was to accompany Mandy Campbell, Chair of FAPS to the Fun Walk celebration evening on Friday night. We were delighted to be awarded a cheque for £5700.03 to recognise our efforts with our Family Fun Walk in September. Thank you to everyone that supported this event by taking part and sponsorship.

This is an amazing effort by everyone involved. We are already looking forward to our Fun Walk 2025.



# School Council



We are so excited to be taking part in the Havens Hospice Art trail again. This time it is called 'Waddle on Sea'. On Tuesday afternoon, Aron and Faye from Havens Hospice came and met with our School Council to talk about the hospice and the trail.

Our School Council members will be talking to their classes about the work of the hospice and why fundraising is so important to them. We will be launching our Waddle on Sea competition very soon...keep an eye out.

We cannot wait to see how creative you can be with your designs.



# LET'S CELEBRATE!



*Well done to Kayla, James, Liam, Seb and Nathan for their achievements outside of school this week.*

Essex County Council  
Adult Social Care

★ Essex Care Sector Awards ★

# The Prospers

**Commended**

**Intergenerational – All Age Friendly**

This award has been presented to:

*Silvanna Court*

In recognition of their outstanding  
contribution to care in Essex

Awarded on 4 December 2024

Signed *Clark*

*Well done!*

Silvanna Court were nominated at the Essex Care Sector Awards for the Intergenerational All Age Friendly category this week.

We are so proud to be part of the Silvanna journey.

# We love to read!



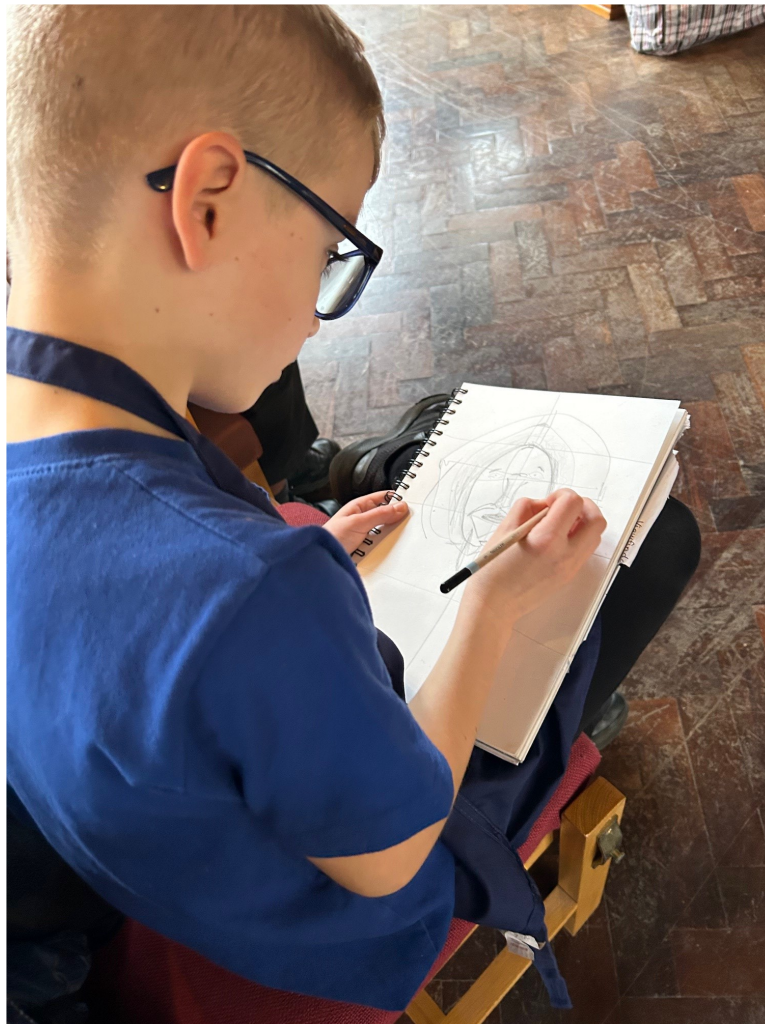
Children in Year Two attended a festive book club on Monday afternoon at Silvanna Court. Not only did they put smiles on our resident friends faces with their reading, but they also got to decorate Christmas biscuits together.

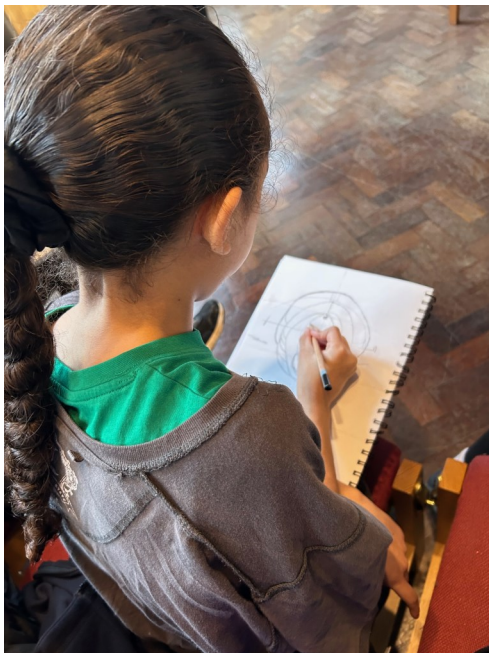


# Amazing Art!



On Wednesday 4th December 2024, eight children from Years 5 and 6 attended an art exhibition at St Andrew's Church with Mrs Playle and Mrs Blakeley. The children participated in an engaging art workshop inspired by the exhibition Trials and Tribulations by Leigh-on-Sea-based artist John Paul Barrett. He is known for his mixed media paintings, exploring modern interpretations of Eastern European religious iconography, which provided the foundation for the workshop.





The children learned the technique of box gridding, a method used to scale images up or down. Using this technique, they created their own portraits of Jesus based on John Paul Barrett's artwork, focusing on drawing one square at a time to complete the full image.

In addition, the children were introduced to the concept of using dark and light colours to create contrast, helping them understand how to add depth and dimension to their portraits. The workshop was a wonderful opportunity for them to develop new artistic skills while connecting with a unique style of art.

## About the TCS Mini London Marathon

We have signed up for the Mini London Marathon 2025. We are offering children from Years 3-6 to take part in this event on **Saturday 26th April 2025.** The TCS



Mini London Marathon invites schools to bring their children and young people to run, jog, walk, or wheel one mile or 2.6K in the heart of the capital.

The event is free to enter, and what's more, our title partner, TCS, gives schools £10 for every participant aged 17 or under who finishes the event! Participants who cross the iconic TCS London Marathon Finish Line will receive a TCS Mini London Marathon medal.

Once we have more details, we will let you know.



			
			
<b>1396</b>	<b>1190</b>	<b>1341</b>	<b>1602</b>





## Friday 13th December

2024



# CHRISTMAS JUMPER Day

We have arranged for a Pantomime to come and visit our school. This will take place on Friday 13th December 2024, which is also Christmas Jumper Day.

Children will be allowed to bring in snacks to enjoy whilst they watch the Pantomime.

The school will be funding this experience.



## Christmas lunches



Our Christmas lunches are taking place on:

Foundation/Year 1 and Year 2— Tuesday  
17th December 2024

Years 3,4,5 and 6—Wednesday 18th December 2024

Please see menus on the following pages.

## Foundation/KS1 Christmas Meal

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> December

**Red Band** – Turkey, Chipolata, Stuffing, Roast Potatoes, Carrots, Peas & Sweetcorn

**Green Band** – Cheese & Onion Yorkshire Puddings, Vegetarian Sausage, Roast Potatoes, Carrots, Peas & Sweetcorn

Christmas Tree Ice Cream or Cookie

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December

(As KS2 are having their Christmas lunch on this day) the menu options for Foundation/KS1 will be

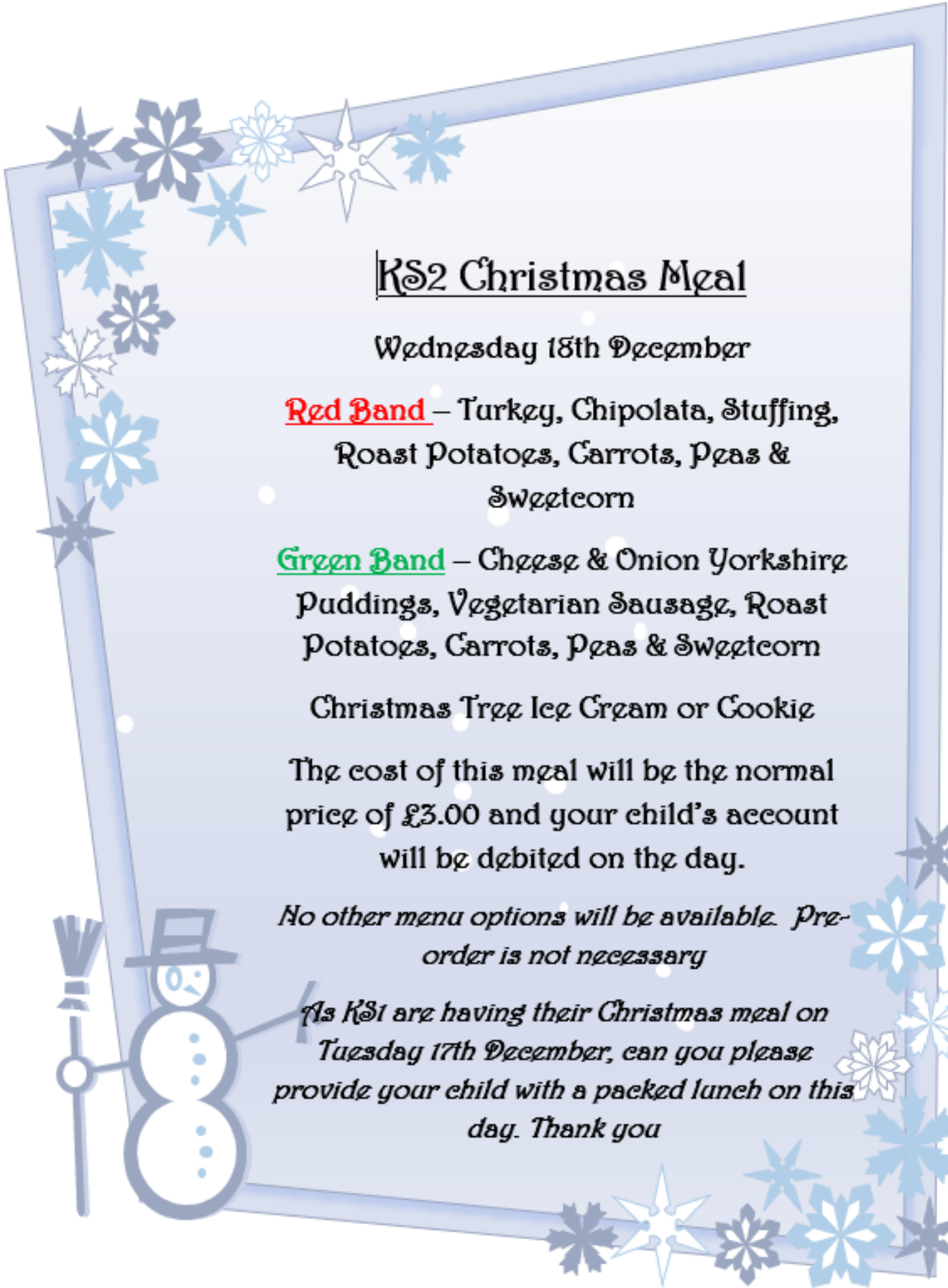
Cheese Roll or

Ham Roll with Crisps & Fruit

*No other menu options will be available on both days.*

*Pre-order is not necessary*





## KS2 Christmas Meal

Wednesday 18th December

**Red Band** – Turkey, Chipolata, Stuffing,  
Roast Potatoes, Carrots, Peas &  
Swede


**Green Band** – Cheese & Onion Yorkshire  
Puddings, Vegetarian Sausage, Roast  
Potatoes, Carrots, Peas & Swede

Christmas Tree Ice Cream or Cookie

The cost of this meal will be the normal  
price of £3.00 and your child's account  
will be debited on the day.

*No other menu options will be available. Pre-  
order is not necessary*

*As KS1 are having their Christmas meal on  
Tuesday 17th December, can you please  
provide your child with a packed lunch on this  
day. Thank you*



# YOUR SCHOOL NEEDS YOU



Would you like the opportunity to speak about how your child's school can improve inclusion for it's 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



# Internet Safety

Free Online  
**Safety Awareness Session**  
for Parents and Carers

**MAKING**  
BASILDON BOROUGH  
**SAFER**

**BASIL  
DON** BELIEVE IN  
BASILDON

Basildon Council

Free Online Safety & Exploitation Awareness Session designed specifically for parents and carers. The session helps you understand how young people are spending time online and how to recognize the signs of exploitation.

But hurry—it's only available for the next 15 days!

📺 Watch back here: [https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/3JvGQxOZ6vBAJMG7e2GRtYjubBHJ5fm97XVbKcc7 - PkDn4ESMmYSY22YafOaj-d.I9ivtH6bK7nEnbZT](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/3JvGQxOZ6vBAJMG7e2GRtYjubBHJ5fm97XVbKcc7-PkDn4ESMmYSY22YafOaj-d.I9ivtH6bK7nEnbZT)

Let's work together to keep our young people safe.  
Don't miss this important session—watch it before it expires!

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING APPS

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

When looking at options for supporting a child's mental health, the sheer volume can be overwhelming. There are many wellbeing apps available, but unfortunately not all are trustworthy. It's important to evaluate which resources are suitable, reliable and effective. This guide lets you know what to consider before installing such an app, to determine just how useful it's going to be.

### QUALITY & RELIABILITY

Mental health apps can be a useful starting point when looking for wellbeing advice and strategies and can be a useful extension to the in-person services available. However, they aren't a substitute. Information on the quality of some of these apps is scarce. They may look cute and child-friendly, but have they been designed by a mental health professional? Furthermore, do they have research to back up their content?

### PLACE RESPONSIBILITY ON CHILDREN

Some apps add the words 'kids' or 'children' to their title or use cartoon icons to make them more appealing to young people. When signing up for some of these apps, some will speak to the parent directly, saying something along the lines of "Your child is good to go. Let them take it from here". It's important to remain involved in the child's mental health journey, so regular check-ins are recommended.

### DISREGARDING APPROPRIATE SUPPORT

Young people who feel anxious and have trouble sleeping may download a mindfulness app to help. While this is a good strategy initially, it's not addressing the root of the problem. A child could simply try managing these symptoms themselves (as opposed to speaking out and seeking professional help), which could potentially worsen their anxiety in the long run.

### LACK OF PERSONALISATION

Mental health or wellbeing apps are useful tools for the short term, teaching users several helpful habits to manage their condition – such as keeping an illness diary, improving nutrition and practising mindfulness exercises. As every person is unique – and children especially will grow and develop in different ways – these apps struggle to tailor themselves to users' individual needs. For example, many apps don't distinguish between the ages of users and can offer extremely generic advice.

### DATA SECURITY

As with any other app – not just those for mental health and wellbeing – it's wise to check out the privacy policy before downloading it. Some of these applications may share data with third parties for numerous reasons (such as targeted advertisements), and if a user is sharing personal and sensitive information within the app, they probably don't want it ending up elsewhere without their consent.

### IN-APP PURCHASES

Many apps will provide their most basic features for free but will require you to pay for other aspects – such as a more tailored experience or access to additional resources. This could be a one-off fee or a regular subscription. Consider whether this is actually required. Is it benefiting the child, or could they receive the same support from a medical professional?

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### CHECK THE CREDIBILITY OF THE APP

Before you download a mental health and wellbeing app, investigate the developers. Have they consulted with qualified mental health professionals to create their resource? Also check whether the app is affiliated with any government or mental health organisations, as these are solid indicators of legitimacy. Reviews can also be a useful signpost to the app's quality. There are many good apps out there, but there are just as many that miss the mark.

### SEEK PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Trusted mental health and wellbeing apps designed by qualified, reputable organisations can be used alongside the personalised advice and support of fully trained professionals. These apps should never be considered a substitute for counselling or other tailored medical help. If you have real concerns about a child's mental wellbeing, you should seek appropriate advice from a suitable source, such as their GP – or CHieline, who can be contacted by calling 0800 1111.

### READ THE PRIVACY POLICY

Look into the app's terms of service – especially its privacy policy. Do so by yourself first, then go over it with the child who is considering using the app, to ensure they know what data will be collected and how exactly it will be used. Use all of this information to make an educated decision on whether or not to download that particular app.

### ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION

Mental health and wellbeing apps can be useful for writing down feelings, tracking your own health and other such activities. These can help if the problem is short-term and temporary – such as a child getting stressed about approaching exams – or if you're currently waiting for professional support. Nonetheless, it is important that children aren't solely reliant on the app and have a safe space to talk about their feelings and experiences in the real world.

### 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.



Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/mental-health-apps>