



**Happy New Year**

Welcome back and Happy New Year! We hope everyone had a restful, happy and healthy holiday and are looking forward to this new year. Please find attached the action for happiness calendar to support a happier January and a flyer from NT about their Healthier Lifestyles group

**Year 2 Class Mass**

On Thursday the children in Year 2 led the parish Mass on the theme of Thanksgiving. They read, sang and prayed with great reverence and were thankful to be joined by the family and member of the parish.

**School Lunches**

Please complete the school meals form to make your child's lunch choices by clicking on this link. Menus are available on our school website. The form is open from 8am on Mondays until noon on Wednesdays.

<https://forms.office.com/e/miMkUpPTB5#>

**DONATIONS!**

Can you help? We are looking for some pop up books or cards that can be used as examples in our DT lessons. If you have anything like this, please can you send it to the school office? Thank you.

**New Nursery Pupils**

Well done to our new Nursery pupils who started nursery sessions with us this week. They settled straight in and are very welcome additions to our school family. We still have spaces in both Nursery and Reception for September 2025 – please contact the school office for more information.

**Lost Property**

Our lost property boxes are growing with a number of unnamed clothing items, hats and gloves. Please put your child's name in all of their possessions.

**Wellbeing Ambassadors**

As part of our continued work around Mental Health and Wellbeing, we asked pupils in Year 2 and Year 5 to put themselves forward to be pupil ambassadors in school. We were overwhelmed with the responses but have selected 2 small groups who will begin their training with the Connect Team in the coming weeks.

**Dates for Diary**

*Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January – Year 3 Family Celebration of the Word*

*Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January – SEND Coffee Morning*

*Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January – Mini Vinnies Meeting after school*

*Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January – Year 1 Class Assembly*

***House of the Week is St Mary's***

**Next week is MONKEY week on the school lunch menu**

**Don't forget to visit our school website for further school information**

**[www.stmarysonline.co.uk](http://www.stmarysonline.co.uk)**

# Online Safety #wakeupwednesday

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](https://nationalcollege.com).

## What Parents & Educators Need to Know about JUSTALK KIDS

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

JustTalk Kids is a child's version of the JustTalk 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 JustTalk 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 JustTalk 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 call, exclusive stickers, a badge denoting them as a premium subscriber, and exclusive ringtones and themes.

### RESISTANCE TO CONTROLS

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

### KNOWING THE PARENT PASSCODE

After downloading JustTalk 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

JustTalk and JustTalk 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 SCREEN TIME

A report by the UK Parliament Education Committee highlighted a 82% increase in children's screen time between 2020 and 2022 – as well as finding that 26% 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 JustTalk 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 JustTalk 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/justtalk-kids>



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