

Thomas Russell Junior School

'Ambitious culture, strong team ethos, outstanding academic achievement, high expectations, exemplary behaviour' Ofsted 2019.



Newsletter



Issue No. 18

Headteacher: Mrs S Sharpe

3rd February 2023



Times Tables Rockstars Year Group Battle

Monday 6th February will see the return one of our in-house Rock Star Battles. ☺

This first battle of the 2023 will be a year group competition with all four year groups competing directly against one another. We have some super players across the school so we are looking forward to an exciting contest!

The battle will continue until Thursday 16th February and points earned between 7.30am and 6.30pm each day will count towards the total. If you want to help your year to take first place, just login and play. Points earned in any area of Rockstars will count towards the total.

This is sure to be a hotly-contested battle so make sure you join in to help lead your year group to victory.

If you have any questions, please contact Mrs Preston on:

DPreston@thomasrussell-junior.staffs.sch.uk

WhatsApp

You may have seen the message in the Newsletter a few weeks ago regarding WhatsApp and inappropriate content. I wanted to keep parents updated and let them know that since that message, we continue to receive a number of further notifications, from both parents and children about difficulties experienced by our children whilst using the app.

These include inappropriate content, sharing of personal information, children being added to groups they do not wish to be a part of, persistently unkind messages being sent, children feeling overwhelmed by receiving upward of 100 notifications a day on a number of groups, as well as messaging continuing late at night.

At the end of this Newsletter, please find some information from the **UK Safer Internet Centre** about 'Helping you child with WhatsApp. Parents may wish to note there have been changes, which raise the minimum age of WhatsApp from 13 to 16.

Y6 Leavers' Treats



As February arrives, parents of children in Y6 will be all too aware that their children's time at Junior School is coming towards an end.

As is tradition, there are various treats such as Leavers' Hoodies, Yearbook and the Leavers' Disco, which parents take a lead in organising for their children.

I have been asked by two parents, Steph Cartwright and Claire Pickess to circulate their mobile phone number. If you would like to be involved in helping with the organisation of Y6 Leavers' Treats, then please drop a message to Steph on 07708 948031 or Claire on 07962 344705 and they will co-ordinate a group into action.

Parent Consultations

We look forward to seeing you at Parent Consultations next week. Please do let us know if you are no longer able to attend an appointment that you have booked.

We ask parents and carers to head to the hall, where a sample of your children's work will be available to view. Please take this up to the classroom with you when you go for your appointment.



Complimentary hot drinks (adults only) and biscuits are available.

Our Reading Ambassadors will also be running a Book Stall, selling 'Wonky Books' at £3 each (cash only). All of these are brand new, but some are ex-display. If you need longer than your 10 minute appointment, please request a call back or further appointment rather than running over into someone else's appointment time.

Children are welcome to wait in the hall where colouring activities will be provided. They will not be able to access the playground due to the space being used by Soccer Stars and Night Owls.

Bikeability

Look out on Tuesday as we have 63 Year 4 children taking part in Bikeability. Please could we ask children to walk down to the outdoor classroom with their bikes.

We are also really pleased to announce that we have managed to secure summer dates for our Y6 and Y5 Bikeability this year – it always seems more enjoyable if children can complete it in the warmer weather. Advance dates for your diary are:

Y6 on Wednesday 17th and Thursday 18th May
Y5 on Monday 22nd and Tuesday 23rd May



Don't forget we have Sport Day on Thursday 25th and an INSET Day on Friday 26th May.

Best wishes, Mrs Sharpe



Helping your child with WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a hugely popular mobile and desktop app which can play a significant role in your child's life, both online and offline. This blog takes a closer look at the messaging platform and how you can ensure they have a safe experience using it.

WhatsApp offers a quick, easy, and free way for young people to connect with friends and family, whether by sharing photos, videos or memes. WhatsApp requires a minimum age of 16 but relies on the honesty of the child and family to adhere to the age restrictions. If you have decided together with your child that they can begin to use it, then it is important that you support them to do so safely.

Types of group chats

Your child might be in group chats of various sizes, these could be with family members, close friends, or even with whole classes or year groups.

It is important to be aware that your child may not necessarily know every person in all of their group chats. It can be a good conversation starter to ask your child about the groups they are part of and whether they know all of the members within them.

Creating and joining group chats

The creator of a group on WhatsApp is known as the 'admin'. An admin must have your phone number saved in their contacts in order to add you to a group. You can leave a group at any time, but admins can re-add a user at any time. Admins can also choose to remove participants without permission.

A default setting in WhatsApp means that your child can automatically be added to a chat by someone else without needing permission; a useful safety precaution to take is to disable this.

Within WhatsApp on their phone, go to:

- Settings > Account > Privacy > Groups > My Contacts Except
- Then, 'Select All' their contacts.

If someone tries to add them to a group, they have to send a link first with an invitation to accept.

Are group chats private?

Although WhatsApp chats are end-to-end encrypted, meaning no one else can read or listen to your child's messages, it's important to keep in mind that anything sent privately can always be shared further by forwarding messages, saving images, or taking screenshots. No message is ever guaranteed to be 100% private.

Whilst your child's [live location](#) is not automatically visible on WhatsApp, it is possible to share a location within an open chat. If you are not comfortable with this option, location tracking can be disabled within the settings on your child's phone, which will then apply to all apps on their phone.

If your child has an Apple device, head to:

- Settings > Privacy, then select Location Services.
- Select an app, then turn 'Precise Location' on or off.

If your child has an Android device, head to:

- Quick settings menu, then long-press on the Location icon. Or, swipe down, tap Settings icon, and choose 'Location.'

- Find the 'Use location' feature at the top and toggle it off.

Notably, your child can disable this setting at any time, and, if your child clicks on share location on WhatsApp (or any other location sharing app), they will likely present your child with the option to go to their phone's settings and enable the function again.

Managing group chats

Young people may find themselves in many chats and could feel overwhelmed by the notifications, the volume of content posted, and pressure from others to respond. There are different ways to deal with these issues.

- **Talk together about using WhatsApp.** Talking to your child about the different groups you are in, and explaining how *you* manage them, can be really helpful.
- **Mute a group.** If notifications are becoming distracting for your child and interrupting their school work or even sleep, and they're feeling pressure to respond quickly, then muting a group can be a positive action. Your child still remains a member and receives all the messages but is not notified when new ones are posted.
- **Search a group.** If your child wants to find something quickly, a chat can be searched for using specific key words to find previous conversations, or just the media that has been shared.
- **Turn off 'Read Receipts.'** Deactivating read receipts means that others are only able to see when messages are delivered, but not if they've been read. Although this blanket setting has to be applied to *all* chats, it may be helpful if your child is feeling pressure to respond quickly.
- **Disable 'Last Seen' status.** It is notable that even if Read Receipts are disabled, others that have added your child as a contact can see when they were last active to the precise minute. You can disable this function by heading to: Settings > Account > Last Seen, then change the setting to 'Nobody'.
- **Leave a group.** The final option is to leave a group chat. When doing this, other participants are notified that this has happened, and an admin will need to re-admit anyone who wants to re-join.

Are there any other risks?

Like with any social media app, it isn't possible to control what other people choose to share online. What is funny to one person, may cause upset to another, and content may be misinterpreted. If your child is being bullied, sees bullying within a group, or inappropriate content is being shared, then this is not acceptable and needs to be reported. Taking screenshots can be a useful way of saving the evidence.

Blocking and reporting

Other users can be reported and also blocked within the app. To do so, simply click their name to bring up their information and choose either 'Block contact,' or 'Report contact.'

Be available to help

Let your child know that they can always come to you for help and support if they see anything that concerns, upsets, or confuses them online, without worrying about judgement.

Open dialogue is key. Encouraging your child to discuss what they enjoy about a specific app can be a helpful bridge to talking about safety messages and more difficult issues in the future.

There is a huge amount of information available on the UK Safer Internet Centre which can be found via this link: <https://saferinternet.org.uk/>