

12TH DECEMBER 2025

MILWARDS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY NEWSLETTER



Dear Parents and Carers,

It's official... Christmas has well and truly arrived at Milwards! The halls are decorated, the glitter is migrating to every surface known to mankind, and the children have been singing their hearts out all week.

We've had a truly wonderful week of festive performances. The choir treated us to a magical woodland performance (honestly, the squirrels were deeply moved), Key Stage 2 delivered beautiful singing concerts, and our Acorns wowed everyone with their Christmas shows. A huge thank you to every family member who came along to support the children – your encouragement makes these moments so special.

A special shout-out must go to Millie's, who joined us at multiple events this week serving delicious hot drinks. Nothing says "Christmas spirit" quite like a winter performance and a steaming cup of hot chocolate in your hands!

🧡 Coming Up Next Week...

We're not done yet! Next week, we're excited for the Key Stage 1 Christmas Show.

Millie's will once again be there with hot drinks, so bring along £1 and a reusable/disposable cup if you have one to stay warm and festive.

We're also looking forward to Christmas Lunch on Friday, and a gentle reminder that we finish at 1.30pm on the last day of term.

🎄 **Pantomime Fun – Sleeping Beauty!**

Today we whisked the children off to the pantomime to watch Sleeping Beauty, and they were absolute stars. Their behaviour was fantastic, their excitement was infectious, and they had the best time. We're incredibly proud of them.

📱 **A Very Important Reminder: Checking Your Child's Phone**

This week we dealt with a situation involving unkind messages and inappropriate content being shared within children's group chats. It serves as an important reminder of how easily things online can escalate.

We ask all parents and carers to please take time to:

- Check your child's phone regularly
- Look at WhatsApp groups, message apps, and shared images
- Talk to your child about kindness online, privacy, and what to do if they see something worrying
- Remind them never to share photos of others without permission

We've included two posters in this newsletter – one about WhatsApp and one about group chat safety – to help families navigate some of these online challenges. Thank you for your support in keeping our children safe online; it truly does take a team effort.

👶 **And Finally...**

It's the last week of term! We're excited, we're caffeinated, and we're ready for one more week of festive fun. Thank you, as always, for your support, your kindness, and your Christmas spirit.

Wishing you all a brilliant final week before the holidays

Merry Christmas
Ms Hurley - Deputy Head



Star of the Week

Little Acorns: Siyanda

Big Acorns: Enzo

Cherry: Hamza

Maple: Grace

Birch: Mimi

Willow: Lily

Pine: Abigail

Oak: Sahashra



RECEPTION ADMISSIONS – SEPTEMBER 2026

APPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN
STARTING RECEPTION IN
SEPTEMBER 2026 OPENED ON
10TH NOVEMBER 2025 AND WILL
CLOSE ON 15TH JANUARY 2026.

ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE
COMPLETED ONLINE VIA ESSEX
COUNTY COUNCIL:

WWW.ESSEX.GOV.UK/ADMISSIONS.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT YOU MUST
STILL APPLY EVEN IF YOUR CHILD
CURRENTLY ATTENDS OUR NURSERY.

Who can get the free NHS flu vaccine?



- People aged 65 or over
- Anyone 6 months to 64 years old with certain long-term health conditions
- Pregnant women
- Children aged 2 to 3 years old
- School aged children (Reception to Year 11)
- Carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person
- Anyone living with someone who has a weakened immune system

Speak to a member of staff to book your flu vaccine
or visit nhs.uk/bookflu



At Milwards, we know that family life isn't always easy — and sometimes the festive season, while full of joy and lights, can bring extra pressures, tensions or worries for families. Our school is part of the J9 initiative, which offers safe and confidential support for anyone affected by domestic abuse. If you ever need advice, someone to talk to, or signposting to services, please reach out to a member of our safeguarding team. We're here for you — not just during term-time, but especially when the festive season weighs heavy.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Not all Superheroes wear capes, sometimes they volunteer on the school PTA!

WE NEED YOU!

Whether you can help raise much-needed funds, organise exciting events, or simply serve teas and coffees at gatherings, every bit makes a difference. Join us in creating memorable experiences for our children and strengthening our school spirit.

BE A HERO

Contact us at WELFARE@milwards.essex.sch.uk
to join our PTA-Team!



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about WHATSAPP

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

WhatsApp is a free messaging service owned by Meta which allows users to send text and voice messages, make video calls, share multimedia – such as images, videos, documents and polls – and have group chats. WhatsApp messages are encrypted, meaning only the sender and the recipient can view what is sent. While this privacy may sound attractive on paper, this app comes with several associated risks that must be considered – especially for younger users.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

GROUP CHATS

Group chats let friends talk together but can pose problems for young users. They might feel excluded – like discovering events they weren't invited to. Hurtful comments can also escalate quickly, as more people join in, amplifying the impact through a wider audience.

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it attractive to scammers. Tactics include impersonating a child in an 'emergency' to request money, or triggering a login code, then pretending to be WhatsApp and asking for it – giving them access to private messages and personal data.

CHANNELS

'Channels' let users follow topics anonymously, interacting only through polls or emoji reactions. However, fake channels can mimic real ones, spreading misinformation, hate speech, or phishing for personal data. WhatsApp may also collect and share channel-following info with third parties, raising privacy issues.

DISAPPEARING MESSAGES

Disappearing messages help share sensitive info, but young people may wrongly assume they're fully private. Senders can opt for their message to vanish after 24 hours, 7 days, or 90 days – or for media, after one view. However, recipients can still save them by bookmarking or taking screenshots, reducing their privacy.

FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp's simplicity makes sharing news quick – accurate or not. To help curb misinformation, messages forwarded over five times now show a 'Forwarded many times' label with a double arrow. This alerts users that the message isn't original and may be unreliable.

CHAT LOCK

The new 'Chat lock' feature lets users store specific messages in a separate passcode- or biometrically-protected folder. While useful for privacy, it could be misused by younger users to hide conversations or content they know parents and educators might find inappropriate, including age-restricted material.

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's 'live location' feature helps friends meet up or parents check a child's route home. However, anyone in a child's group chats can track their location, potentially revealing their home address or regular travel patterns to strangers.

AI INTEGRATION

Meta AI on WhatsApp poses risks to children, including exposure to misinformation, inappropriate content, and data privacy issues. AI responses may be inaccurate, and kids might share personal information unknowingly. It can also hinder critical thinking by offering ready-made answers.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage children to treat unexpected messages with caution. Get them to consider, for example, whether it sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

THINK BEFORE SHARING

Help children understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy – and all too common – for content sent to one user to then be shared more widely, and even publicly on social media. Encourage them to consider how an ill-judged message might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change a child's WhatsApp settings to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval. To do this, go to 'Privacy', then 'Groups'. You can give permission to 'My Contacts' or 'My Contacts Except...'. Additionally, if the child needs to use 'live location', emphasise that they should enable this function for only as long as they need – and then turn it off.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Have a conversation with youngsters about how they're using WhatsApp, emphasising that it's for their own safety. If you spot a 'Locked Chats' folder, you might want to talk about the sort of messages that are in there, who they're with and why they have been hidden. Also, if a young user has sent any 'view once' content, discuss their reasons for using this feature.

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/whatsapp-2025>

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about GROUP CHATS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

On messaging apps, social media and online games, group chats are one of the most popular ways that children connect. Group chats allow messages, images and videos to be shared in one place and help friendships flourish; however, they also come with a number of risks.

TEASING AND BULLYING

Children of all ages are keen to fit in socially, and group chats can sometimes complicate that process. While group chats can foster connection, they can also give way to mean comments or jokes at someone's expense, especially when others join in for laughs. When bullying happens publicly, in front of friends and classmates, it can intensify the emotional impact – adding to embarrassment, anxiety and feelings of isolation for the child being targeted.

UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Children often can't control who is added to a group, which can lead to privacy concerns. Sharing personal details in group chats can be dangerous, and children have no control over what others do with the material they send. Some members of the chat might even decide to use such information maliciously.

PEER PRESSURE

Children may feel they have to constantly stay engaged just to be included and keep up with the conversation. In some cases, they might partake in inappropriate behaviours – like sharing explicit photos, jokes or teasing – just to fit in. Group settings can also encourage children to act in ways they normally wouldn't, or stay silent when they know something is wrong, out of fear of being excluded. Some children may find it difficult to leave toxic group chats.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some group chats may include inappropriate language or imagery. Even if a child isn't actively participating in the conversation, they may still be exposed to this content simply by being part of the group. Some apps have disappearing messaging features, where content is only available once or for a few seconds, which makes it harder for children to report something they've seen.

EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

Exclusion in group chats is common and can take several forms. Sometimes a new group is created specifically to leave one child out on purpose. In other cases, the chat may happen on an app that a child doesn't have access to, making it impossible for them to join in. This can cause feelings of being left out – even unintentionally.

VIDEO AND LIVE CHATS

Many popular apps allow children to engage in live streaming with interactive chats or have group video chats. Anyone can be added to these streams, and often children tag peers in the comments and have conversations which are unmoderated. There's a risk of being exposed to inappropriate or violent content and offensive language, either in the group videos or via the group chats.

Advice for Parents & Educators

CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats can become an arena for children to compete for social status. Help children consider how people might feel if they behave unkindly. If a child does upset someone, encourage them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

SET SOME GROUP CHAT RULES

Discuss safe group chat practices, such as asking a peer for consent before adding them to a group chat, or leaving a group chat if a stranger is added. Tell children that if they're added to a group they didn't agree to beforehand, it's OK for them to leave immediately.

BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If a child encounters inappropriate content or feels uncomfortable in a group chat, encourage them to block and report the sender and leave the group. Make sure children know it's OK to leave a group chat if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Group chats are an excellent way for children to connect and feel like they belong. However, remind them that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded, instead of responding to the person who's upset them. Validate their feelings and empower them by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. You can also encourage children to speak up if they witness others being bullied.

PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

It's vital for children to be aware of what they're sharing and who might potentially see it. Ensure they understand the importance of not revealing personal details – like their address, their school, or photos they wouldn't like to be seen widely. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they can't be certain where it might end up or how it might be used.

SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Being bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be an irritating distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to children that they can still be part of a group chat while disabling notifications. In fact, it would be healthier for them to do so, helping them avoid the pressure to respond immediately.

Meet Our Expert

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



The National College®



MILLIES

The PTA will be serving hot drinks at the start of each Christmas performance.

Tea, Coffee & Hot Chocolate
£1

Thank you so much to everyone who supported us at Choir in the Woods, we sold out of cups!

Please bring along your favourite reusable coffee cup, this not only avoids disappointment but keeps our school green!

Please bring change where possible.

Thank you!

STAY CONNECTED WITH US! ✨
JOIN OUR VIBRANT COMMUNITY ON
INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK! 📸 ✨
SHARE OUR POSTS AND SPREAD THE
JOY ABOUT THE AMAZING LEARNING
HAPPENING HERE. FOLLOW US TO
STAY UPDATED ON ALL THE EXCITING
EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES. LET'S GROW,
LEARN, AND HAVE FUN TOGETHER
UNDER THE BRIGHT SUN! 🎉



Harlow

Call Citizens Advice Harlow, part of the
Tackling Fuel Poverty Together Team

0808 189 6550

www.harlowcitizensadvice.org.uk

WEBSITE:

[HTTP://WWW.MILWARDS.ESSEX.SCH.UK/](http://www.milwards.essex.sch.uk/)

INSTAGRAM:

[HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/MILWARDSPRIMARYSCHOOL/](https://www.instagram.com/milwardsprimaryschool/)

FACEBOOK:

[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PROFILE.php?id=100091808599928](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091808599928)

Privacy Notice Please see the following link to a page
on the HILT Academies website where you can view the
Privacy Notice for Pupils and Parents.

<https://www.milwards.essex.sch.uk/general-data-protection-regulation-2018/>

Contact details

A reminder to please keep all of your contact details up to date.

This can be done by logging into your Arbor app or via the
website: [Milwards Primary School and Nursery.](http://www.milwards.essex.sch.uk/)

easyfundraising

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- Harlow
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You shop, brands donate to us.
It won't cost you any extra!

The banner features the easyfundraising logo and various shopping-related icons like a lightbulb, a smartphone, a shopping bag, a potted plant, and a popcorn bucket.

How to sign up

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Date	Event	Additional information
16.12.25	After school Christmas parties	EYFS and KS1 3.15 - 4.30 KS2 4.45 - 6.15
17.12.25	KS1 Nativity	2pm
18.12.25	KS1 Nativity	9.30am
19.12.25	Christmas Dinner and wear an xmas outfit	
19.12.25	End of Autumn term	School closes at 1.30pm PM nursery children should attend the AM session this day.

Date	Event	Additional information
05.01.26	Start of the Spring term	School opens at the normal time for the new term
16.02.26-20.02.26	Half term	
27.03.26	End of the Spring term	School closes at 1.30pm PM nursery children should attend the AM session this day.
19.05.26	Class photos	Class and team photos
03.06.26	Reception to Pizza Express	Details to follow.
07.07.26	Key Stage 2 Production	2pm and 4pm
8.07.26	Key Stage 2 Production	9.30
09.07.26	KSI summer showcase	3pm
26.06.26	Whole school Sports Day	Reserve date: 10.07.26
03.07.26	EYFS to Barley Lands Farm	Details to follow
15.07.26	Year 6 leavers BBQ	3.30
16.07.26	Acorns Graduation	2pm - For parents of children leaving Acorns
17.07.26	Year 6 leavers assembly	9.30
17.07.26	End of the Summer term	School closes at 1.30pm PM nursery children should attend the AM session this day.