



SCHOOL OF SCIENCE
& TECHNOLOGY
MAIDSTONE

SST News

28 April 2023

Coronation Picnic on the Lawn

On Friday 5 May, SST will be celebrating the Coronation of King Charles III by hosting a picnic on the school field. The event will be attended by all year groups, and students are welcome to bring in their own picnic food or purchase some in the restaurant. Please see the poster below for more information.



SST Royal Picnic on the Lawn! Friday 5th May 2023



SCHOOL OF SCIENCE
& TECHNOLOGY
MAIDSTONE

You are all cordially invited to celebrate The Coronation of our new king, Charles III, by attending a whole school picnic on the lawn, which will take place during period 5, on Friday, 5th May.

Form groups will be invited to the top field to picnic, chill with great music, great dancing & great food! You can purchase your picnic food from the restaurant or bring along your own snacks. Don't forget to wear something patriotic, red, white & blue & your picnic blankets!

A fantastic menu will be available from the restaurant to purchase, including: coronation chicken, sausage rolls, wraps, cocktail sausages, cheese & pineapple, scones, lemon cakes & jelly, all the goodies you need for a right royal feast!

SST - where learning has no limits

Sports Update

We are proud to report that our students have achieved a large number of sporting successes over the past few weeks. Congratulations to all who participated in the following sporting events.

Huge congratulations to Holly J in 7V, who represented SST in the NSEA Show Jumping competition at Brook Farm (Essex) on Sunday 23 April, achieving a 1st, 1st and 2nd rosette. Well done Holly and Minstal VI, this is an incredible achievement.



Huge congratulations to Teagan F in 8T, who represented SST and competed in the Kent Schools Golf Championships at Pedham Place on Monday 24 April. It was a round including all weather fronts, from sun, cloud, wind to very heavy rain! Well done Teagan for being so resilient and not giving up.



SST - where learning has no limits

On Wednesday 29 March, SST welcomed Pro Golfer Jack Ryan and Kent Golf Junior Development Officer, Kim Brusadelli, who ran a SEND workshop for 8 students. This was a free 1-hour session offered to the students, on behalf of Kent Golf, in preparation for the Kent Golf SEND Festival.



On Wednesday 26 April, these students attended the Kent Golf SEND Festival at Tudor Park and the students had a very exciting time, learning the basic skills needed for golf, competing against each other, and receiving free goodies for their efforts.



Thank you to Jack Ryan, Kim Brusadelli, Kent Golf and Tudor Park for hosting the event.



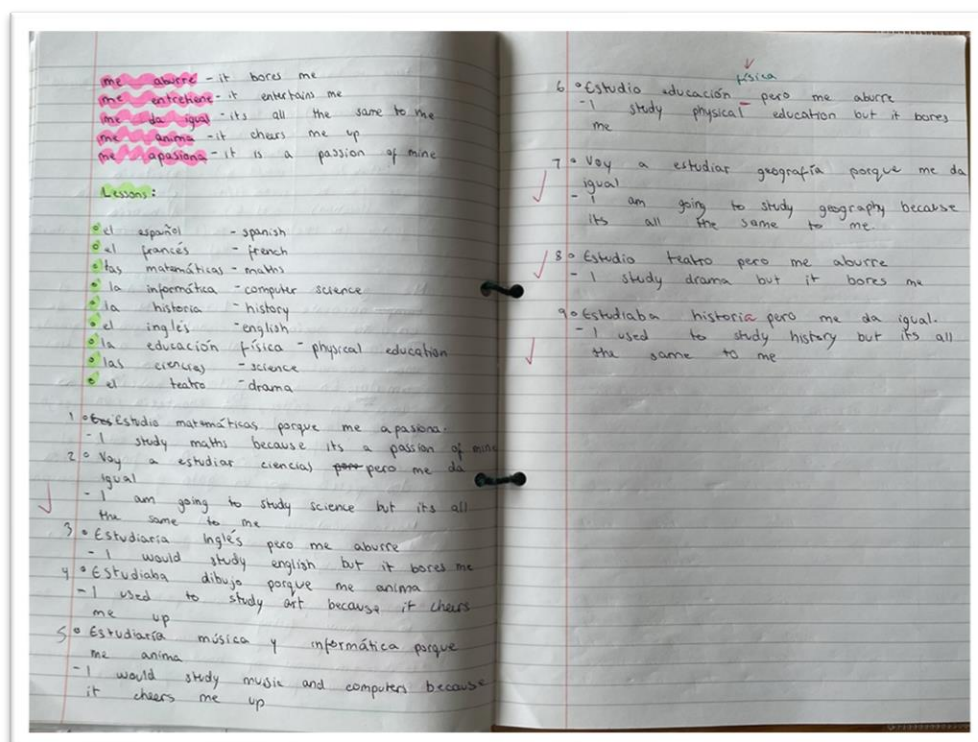
Linguist of the Week

This week, our Linguists of the Week are Archie H in 9H and Teigan C in 9T. They both work very hard in every single lesson and their progression in Spanish is extraordinary! Both students are always ready to share their answers when correcting activities, and their attitude towards learning is very positive. Congratulations both, you are SST Linguists of the Week!



This Week in Languages and Linguistics

This week, Year 7 have been learning how to give their opinion about school subjects in Spanish, and we had a little competition to see how many sentences they could write in Spanish. The winner was Matilda M in 7H with 9 sentences and translations. Congratulations, Matilda!



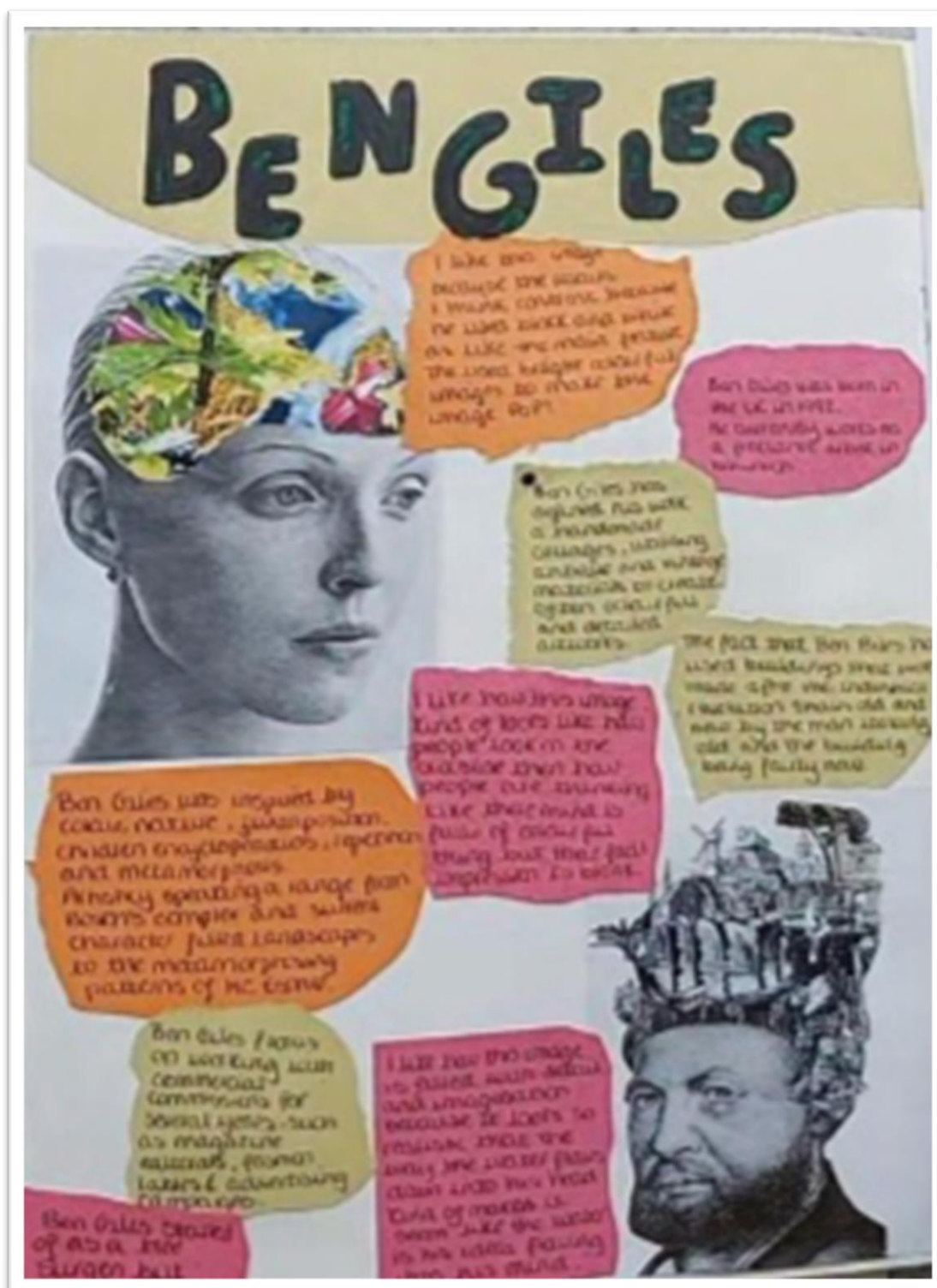
Our Year 8 students have been learning about the state of Texas, an area that has both Hispanic and English influences. They have found very interesting how Texas had actually been under the Spanish Empire for around 350 years, while they have only belonged to the USA for around 150!

Finally, in Year 9 Spanish we have been pretending we are visiting Spain on an exchange trip, and we have practised how to greet people, introduce ourselves as well as others, and communicate our basic needs such as "I am hungry" or "Can I send a message?". We are focusing a little more on speaking, and students are finding this both very fun and useful, as they feel like they could travel to any Spanish-speaking country and make themselves understood. You never know when you are going to find yourself in Spain!



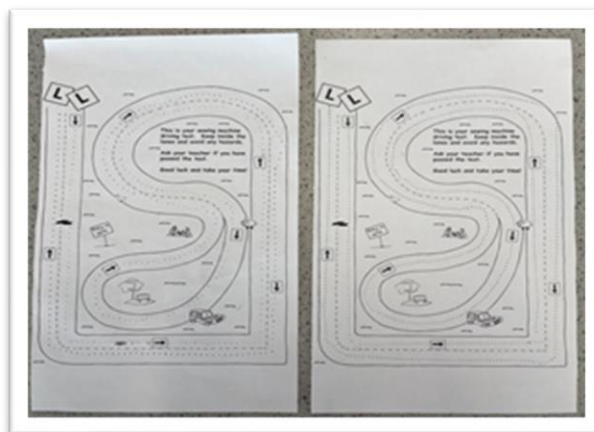
This Week in Art

Year 9 students have started their own mini-investigation as part of their portraiture project. Each student has chosen an artist to analyse and have started with detailed research pages which are presented in their sketchbooks. So many students have put in a huge amount of creative planning and thought into their presentation, and we can't wait to see their graphite responses in a couple of weeks' time.



This Week in Product Design

In Product Design this week, Year 9 have been taught how to use a sewing machine. They can now sew in straight lines, turn on corners and sew curved lines on a paper road map! A mention must be made of Seth 9L and Martin 9H who completed this task with so much care and accuracy – well done!



Some of the Product Designers have also been printing their Mary Quant or Orla Kiely inspired scatter cushion fabric. Here are some beautiful examples:



Hannah 9V



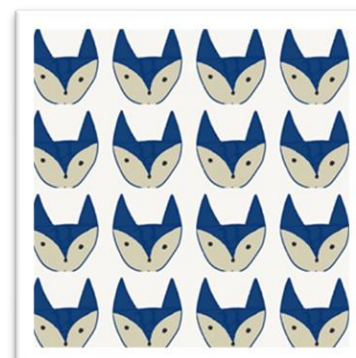
Chloe 9T



Eve 9L



Harry 9L

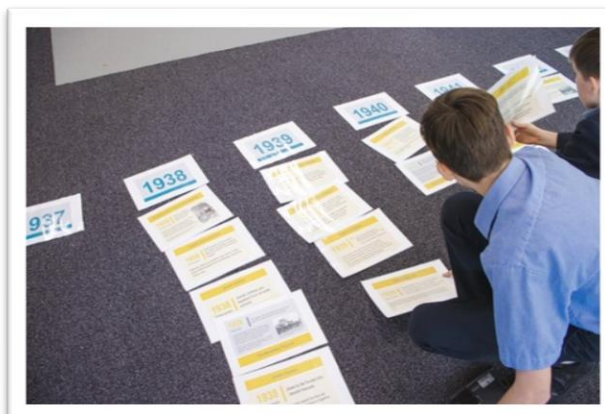


Henry 9L

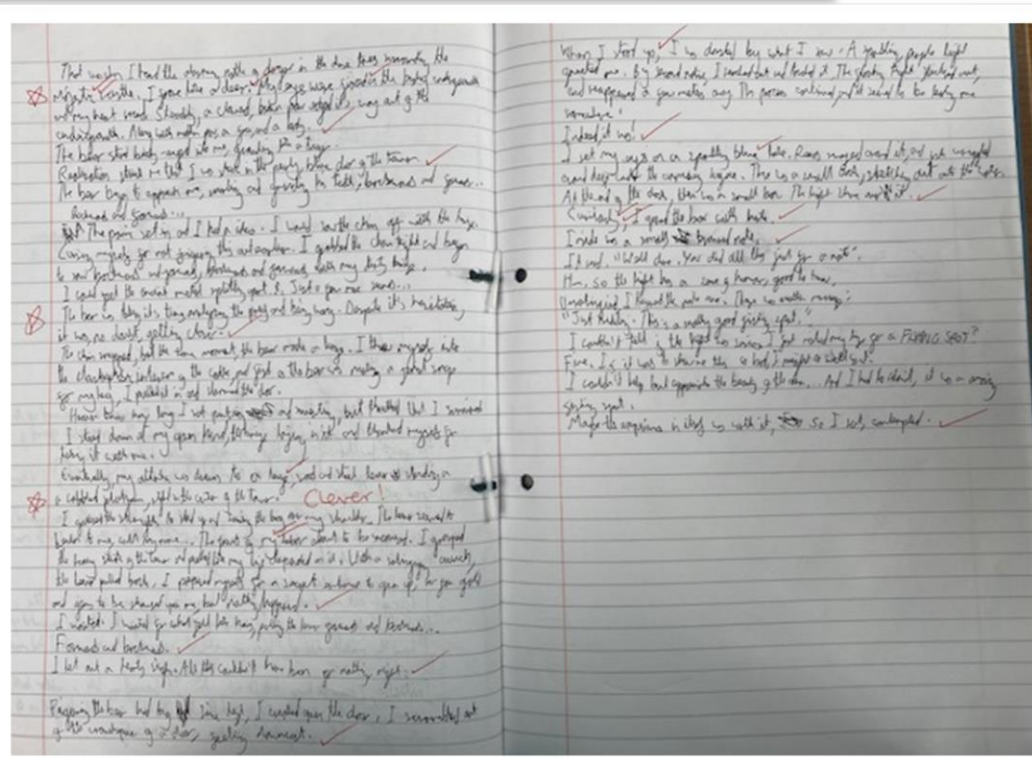
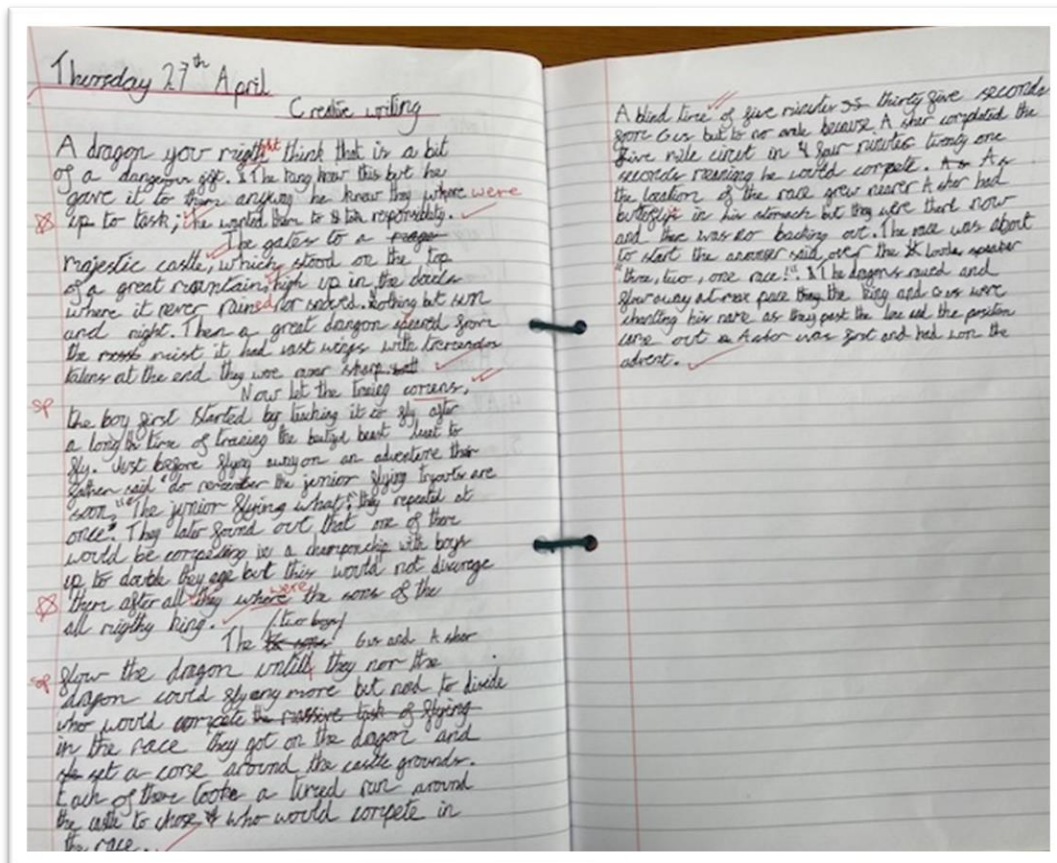
SST - where learning has no limits

This Week in History

This week in History, building on the understanding that antisemitism has sadly a long and deep-rooted presence in Europe pre-1939, students in Year 8 have been mapping out how German Jews were persecuted in Germany from 1933 to 1945. As part of their studies on the Holocaust, students were able to visually see for themselves how the persecution of Jews in Germany affected every stage of their lives from popular culture to politics, their livelihoods to religion. Students were able to identify and discuss the legislation passed by Hitler and the NASDAP in making it legal for normally law-abiding citizens to persecute Jews, which sadly became an accepted 'norm' for many. The objective of this week's lesson was for students to become increasingly aware how political propaganda can be used as a tool to do wrong if left unchallenged. Students also became aware that we need to challenge our preconceived ideas on what makes such episodes in our human history possible, how we come to define what makes a persecutor and a collaborator, and that often they are not so easily defined.



This week, 8L have been working on their creative writing skills. Mrs Gidley would like to say well done to all of 8L, but especially to Spencer, Wade, Will W, Toby, Elijah, George, Joseph and Meghan, whose work has been included below.



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Nothing. Absolutely nothing. It was just an empty doorway gone which was in the middle of a forest. To make sure it was nothing at all, I stepped through the empty door. My heart dropped as I expected nothing to happen but all of a sudden, I ended up in a murky dark place. It was exactly the same as a normal magical forest with fauns but everything was dead. In the middle

There right behind ^{what} I had been laying that was a mini side building with a miniature light at the ~~very~~ window one singular window my eyes how fixated on that tiny lighted with my heart beats thumping at this point, what is it was our creator that wanted to eat me? There in the same window a silhouette through the glass of a tiny creature scurried behind the miniature curtain my kys coked and i became extremely dizzy red, sick and covered for my life, I cant remember what happened after that but i remember as clear as anything that Someone or even something tried to take me. ~~murdered me~~ ~~across~~ the ~~over~~ dump Woss on the tree, knocked up in what must have been the early morning.

Where could you include brackets?

Celebration Day Writing Competition



CELEBRATION DAY
Build a better world

THE DAY
Build a better world

What is the Celebration Day Writing Competition?

The second annual UK-wide Celebration Day schools competition will encourage 5-18 year olds (and their teachers) to connect with their elders, do research and retell stories of courageous people in history.

Entrants will either use their own research, or interview older family or friends, to find out about inspiring people from the past who showed courage in overcoming hardship or speaking up for what they believed in.

They will retell their story via a written article, sharing what our generation can learn from their remarkable story.

The competition is free to enter and open to learners of all ages in the UK. One winner will be chosen from each of the five age group categories and there will also be a separate category specifically for teachers!

- Age 5-7
- Age 8-10
- Age 11-13
- Age 14-16
- Age 17-18
- Teachers

The winners will get their stories published on The Day's website, win an iPad and a certificate.

The deadline for entries is **Monday 15th May**, so please make sure your entry is submitted before this date via the 'Submit' button on the website www.theday.co.uk/celebrationday.

Good luck! We are so excited to hear from you.

"I learnt lots about my great-granddad and now many more people will know his great story and name. It felt good to educate people, in a way, on how hard it was to be a black person coming to England in the 1950s, and how it could be possible that it is so exciting to celebrate his amazing life with lots of people. I cannot believe I won!"
Liam Merchant, winner of age 11-13 category

"I rarely see old Indian writers in media, and winning this competition is a chance for me to change that. Not only has it opened many doors for me, but it's also been the first time I've ever actually allowed my writing to be published or even seen by others, so clearly I'm overwhelmed at the moment."
Aradhya, winner of age 14-16 category

For your homework challenge, we would like you to enter the Celebration Day Writing Competition.

How to enter :

Interview the oldest person you know, or do your own research, about someone from the past who showed courage. The story you tell does not have to be about a famous person! Submit a piece of writing up to 500 words, retelling their story of courage and why we should all be inspired by it today.

Do not submit any work that is not your own, has already been published or was entered into the competition last year.

Please upload your entry to the Teams assignment called 'Celebration Day Writing Competition' by Tuesday, 9th May.

Your teachers will then submit your entries to the competition.

We will also choose one SST winner for each class!

There will also be sweets/chocolate for the prize winners in each class!

Prizes!

Prizes

The winners will get their stories published on *The Day's* website, win a 9th Generation iPad with 64GB and a certificate.

How the winners will be picked

The Day's editorial team will assess entries against three very different criteria - each worth 10 marks:

- 1. How interesting is the story itself?** How gripping? For example, if the story sounds like the summary of a potential Hollywood film, that would indicate a very high score.
- 2. How exciting is the way you tell the story?** We are not talking about grammar and spelling here. This is about the telling details, the actual words and the atmosphere that you manage to create.
- 3. How effective is the story at celebrating courageous people and sharing what we can learn from them?** We want entries to remember the purpose of this competition, which is all about sharing how people from the past overcame hardship, or showed courage and how we can be influenced by their story.



Interview prompts

If you choose to interview someone you know about a person in history that inspired them e.g. an ancestor, here are some ideas to get you started...

- Ask your interviewee if they knew the courageous person who lived in the past, or was it a famous person perhaps?
- How old was your interviewee when they met/knew of this person? What were they like?
- How was the person in the story courageous? Why have they chosen this person to talk about?
- What is their most vivid memory of this person and their courage?
- How did they influence the rest of your interviewee's life? How did they inspire them to be courageous? Did they make the world a better place? What advice can they pass on from them?
- What kind of hardship did they have to overcome? Did they speak up for what they believed in? What was a normal day like for them? What events most influenced their life?

It is a good idea to have some questions prepared before your interview, but make sure you do not just stick to a script! If your interviewee says something interesting, ask more questions about it.

Think about what you would most like to know about the person they are talking about. Why is this person still so important to them?

Research tips

If you choose to research someone from the past that showed courage, here are some ideas to get you started...

- Have a think about what periods of history might have had courageous, inspiring people. Is there a particular period you're interested in? Is there someone in history you already know a little bit about that you'd like to explore further?
- You could look online or in history books to find courageous people, or ask your teacher.
- What key events influenced their life? Did they witness any key moments in history and overcome them?
- In what way did they show courage? Was it through their actions, words or perseverance? Did they spark change or show resilience?
- What about their story and courage do you find inspiring?
- What do other people in history find inspiring about them?



Writing tips

The Day's Deputy Editor Zoe Osterloh provides some tips for your piece of writing!

- Use detail to bring the person you are describing to life - you will want to bring their courage and actions to life as well as their personality. Try to capture the essence of the person who inspired your interviewee or who you have researched.
- If you have too much information, try to include the most exciting bits of your interview or your research. What entertaining anecdotes did your interviewee tell you? What key points have you found in your research? What is the most inspiring thing you have found out?
- Do some research about the place and era the person you are describing was living in.
- Use your research to add context to your article.
- Think about how you will engage your reader. Make sure the very first sentence draws the reader in. Do you think they will still remember it the next day?
- Have you included some final thoughts about why their story is relevant today and what our generation can learn from it?
- Make a first draft. Then come back to edit it with fresh eyes. Double check all of your sentences - do they all make sense? Is your article easy to follow?
- Keep it simple. Amazing writing does not need to be complicated - long words are not always necessary!

Good luck! We cannot wait to read your entry
www.theday.co.uk/celebrationday



How to get involved in Celebration Day

After the competition closes, you can go on to celebrate the life of the person in your story on Celebration Day on 28th May. Maybe you could take a walk to remember them, cook their favourite meal, or throw a party for anyone that knew them.

Find out more about how to join celebrities in getting involved in this national day of remembrance at: www.celebrationday.com

#CelebrationDay

New Phone Number

During the Easter break, the school telephone system was upgraded so that it is part of the VIAT phone system network.

As a result of this change, outgoing telephone calls from the school are now showing as from the number 0303 303 0000.

In order to call SST directly, you should still use 01622 938444.

Library Amazon Wish List

We are excited to announce that SST is launching an Amazon wish list for the library this week. This will allow students, parents, carers and anyone else within the SST community to donate a book to our library. All books on our wish list have been carefully selected to ensure that they will be of the utmost benefit to our students. A link to our wishlist can be found [here](#). To purchase a book for the SST library, please add one of the books on our wish list to your basket and proceed to checkout. The delivery address is the following:

School of Science and Technology

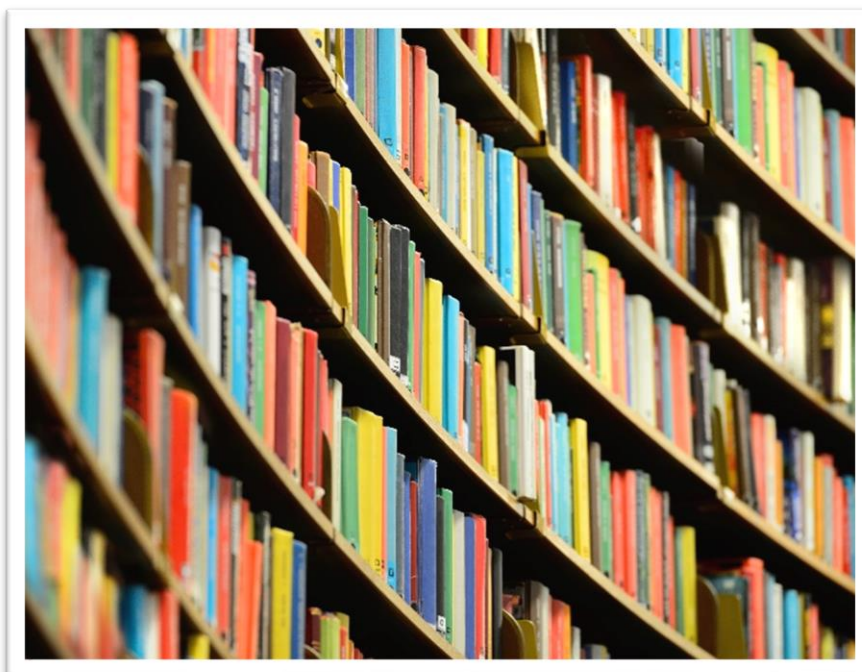
New Cut Road

Maidstone

Kent

ME14 5GQ

We really appreciate any donations that can be made to the library, and thank you to parents and carers who have already made donations of unwanted / no longer used books to our library.



PE Extra-Curricular Clubs Term 5




 SCHOOL OF SCIENCE
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MAIDSTONE

SPORTS CLUBS

TERM 5

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
	Rounders Club (All Years) Mr Chirnside	Athletics Fixtures Mr Chirnside	Basketball Club (All Years) Mr Skinner
	Cricket Club (All Years) Mr Skinner	Athletics Club (All Years) Mr Chirnside Mr Shingleton	
	Kickboxing (All Year) External Coach		

SST Battle of the Bands



Cleaner Position

Cleaner

TYPE OF POSITION:	Cleaner
SUBJECT:	Support
SALARY:	£8,370
START DATE:	ASAP
CLOSING DATE:	4 May 2023, 9am

We are looking to appoint a school cleaner to join our friendly site team at the School of Science and Technology, Maidstone.

If you take pride in the work you do, and enjoy working with a great team, we'd love to hear from you.

Successful candidates will be required to work 3 hours per day (3.30pm – 6.30pm, Monday to Friday), 52 weeks per year with annual leave taken during the school holidays. Previous experience of working in a school would be an advantage but not essential.

You will be entitled to 24 days holiday each year plus bank holidays. You will also be able to access our employee benefit scheme.

To apply for this position, please complete our application form and email to: recruitment@viat.org.uk.

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STEM Bingo Challenge

Calling all STEM Superstars! Do you have what it takes to complete the Bingo challenge? Complete the activities on the board and send evidence of completion of each activity to Mrs Chapman (h.chapman@sst.viat.org.uk). This can be in the form of photos or videos.

Prizes in the form of Amazon vouchers will be awarded for:

- 1st vertical line completed.
- 1st horizontal line completed.
- 1st diagonal line completed.
- Full house.

Entries can be sent up until the deadline of 30th June.

Good luck and get creating!

B	I	N	G	O
Build a race car, observe what happens when you change the wheel sizes	Design a marble maze, give it to a friend and see how long it takes them to solve it!	Build a boat that can propel itself across the bathtub	Write a 1 act play and design the set for it	Construct a device that can hit a target 3 times in a row
With the Lego blocks, create a secret code. Share the code with a friend and send messages to each other	Build a musical instrument, get some friends together and have a jam band!	Create a piggy bank that only you can open with a secret code or combination	Build the tallest tower you can that will survive a fan being directly blown onto it	Design something that will stop Lego pieces from hurting when you step on them
Design a device that can automatically feed a pet	Build a pencil case that will hold exactly 24 pencils	Free Space, build a spaceship and describe how it works	Design your own lego piece, design a pitch to lego creators on why it needs to be made	Make a tabletop version of a sport. Play with friends and have a championship tournament!
Design what your dream house/room would look like, label all key parts	Design a Bridge that has a span of 8 inches that can support a rock the size of your hand	Create a device that will launch a minifigure 4 feet!	Build something, write down the instructions to build it. Give them to a friend to see if they built what you build!	Take a minifigure for a walk outside. Take pictures of it on your walk. Write a story from the perspective of the minifigure
Research a famous building, design a replica of it out of Lego	Make a board game, including rules. Play with your family, get feedback to make it better	Build something that won't fall apart when you drop it from as high as you can reach	Using Lego pieces recreate a famous work of art or scene from a story	Build a tower that is 45 inches tall. But, the base is only 6 studs x 6 studs long

Mid Kent Mind Wellbeing Morning

Wellbeing Watersports Morning

Session for young people who have engaged with MKM's support before.



Would your young people like to get out on the water and try new activities - including paddleboards, kayaks, pedaloos and more? If so, they should come to our watersports morning!

Starting from 9:30am, we will be offering a fun-filled morning facilitated by the Mote Park Watersports Centre Team, and supported by our wellbeing team.

Parking is available in the carpark on site for £2 a day. Parents or Guardians will need to stay with their young people for the duration of the session.

This session will take place on the 31st May from 9:30am until midday. Scan the QR code below, or visit <https://tinyurl.com/mkmwatersports> for more details.



Mid Kent Mind Registered Charity Number 1167328

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Charity Skydive



Mental Health Awareness Week 2023 is 15 – 21 May

To raise money, which will help us create a world where good mental health is a reality for all, Mrs Cuthbert will be skydiving out of a plane at an altitude of 10,000 feet and falling to Earth at more than 100 mph.

The money raised will help deliver vital research and develop solutions to improve prevention and treatment for the 1 in 6 people affected by mental health problems every week.

Donations can be made via a Just Giving page, which can be found via this [link](#).
Thank you in advance for your support.





Wellbeing Calendar

Below is April's wellbeing calendar, created by the charity 'Action for Happiness.' For every day this month, 'Action for Happiness' has provided a mindfulness activity to promote happiness and wellbeing for all. Today's mindfulness activity is to "meet a friend outside for a walk and a chat."



**Meet a friend
outside for a
walk and
a chat**



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

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Sparx Maths Support

Sparx Maths Support

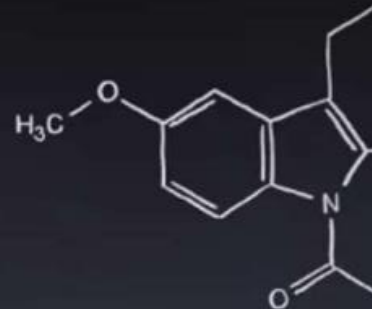
**Do you need some help with
your Sparx Maths homework?**

**Every Tuesday
from 3:05 pm to
4:05 pm in W11
with Miss Wigg**

**Email:
k.wigg@sst.viat.org.uk**

Made with PosterMyWall.com

$$2 \times 3 + 8^4 + 4 = 24$$



$A + B = 24$
 $8 + 16 = 24$

$V = 6 \times 6 \times 6$
 $V = 216 \text{ cm}^3$

$S = 6 \times 6 \times 6$
 $S = 6 \times 6 \times 6$
 $S = 6 \times 6 \times 6$



$\sin(x+y)$



Geography Song of the Week

This week's Geography Song of the Week is 'Ecuador' by DJ Sash. Ecuador is located in the western corner at the top of the South American continent. Ecuador is named after the Equator, the imaginary line around the Earth that splits the country in two. Most of the country is in the Southern Hemisphere.

Ecuador is roughly the size of Colorado and is bordered by Colombia and Peru. The high Andes Mountains form the backbone of the country. Cotopaxi in the Andes is the highest active volcano in the world.

The Galápagos Islands, 596 miles (960 kilometres) west of the mainland of Ecuador are part of Ecuador and are home to unique reptiles, birds, and plants. The Costa, or coastal plain region, is where many of the world's bananas are grown. The Sierra is also made up of farmland. The Oriente is east of the Andes and is rich in oil.

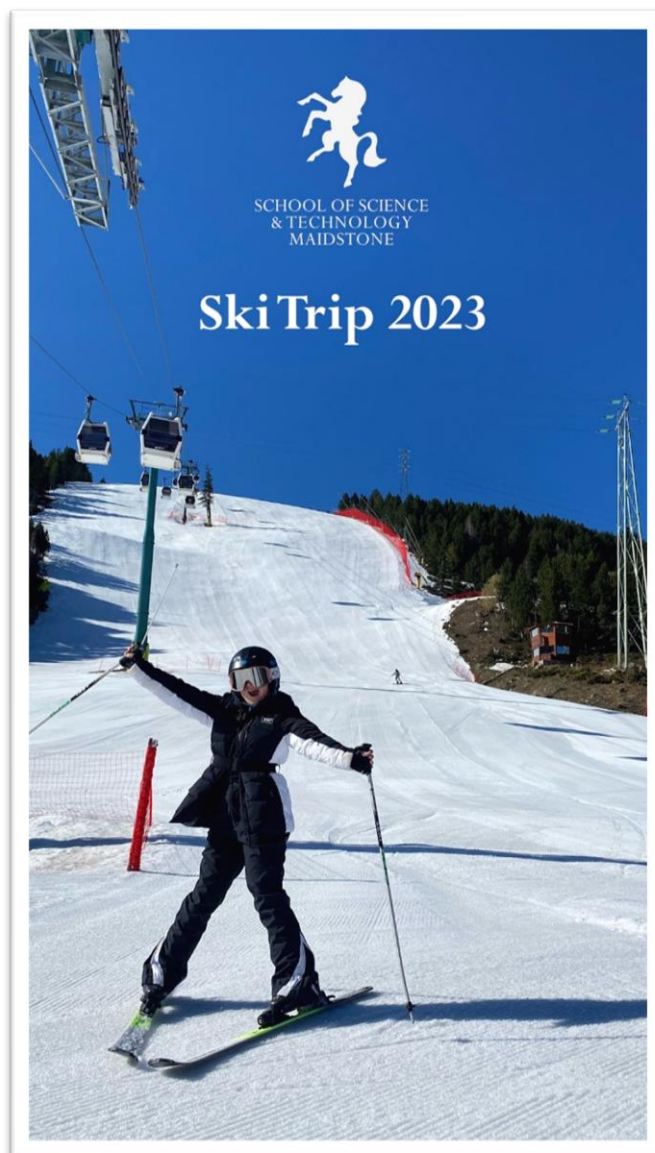
About 10 percent of the population is of European descent. Another 25 percent belong to indigenous or native cultures and the remainder are of mostly mixed ethnicity. Many of the native people are subsistence farmers and only grow enough food for their family. Soccer is the national sport. To listen to this week's Geography Song of the Week, use the link [here](#).



Contact Details

Telephone: 01622 938444 | Email: office@sst.viat.org.uk

Don't forget to watch [our weekly vlog](#) and to also follow us on [Twitter](#) to see regular updates.



This Day in History

Today we have finished another successful school week, but did you know what happened on this day in history?

28 April

1789 Mutiny breaks out on the HMS Bounty

Having sailed from England to Tahiti to gather breadfruit saplings, Captain Bligh finds his command under siege during his return voyage. Acting Lieutenant Fletcher Christian leads the mutinous crewmembers, and they will set Bligh and 18 loyalists adrift in an open boat.

2001 US millionaire entrepreneur is first tourist in space

Investment banker Dennis Tito pays \$20 million to hitch a ride on the Russian Soyuz TM-32 mission. The amateur astronaut will spend more than a week orbiting the Earth as a visitor on the International Space Station.

Births on this Day

1442 Edward IV – King of England

1878 Lionel Barrymore – American actor

1888 Harry Crerar – Canadian WWI and WWII general

1908 Oskar Schindler – Austrian businessman

1926 Harper Lee – American author

1930 Carolyn Jones – American actress

1948 Terry Pratchett – English author

1974 Penélope Cruz – Spanish actress

1981 Jessica Alba – American actress

1995 Melanie Martinez – American singer-songwriter

Deaths on this Day

1721 Mary Read – English pirate

1973 Clas Thunberg – Finnish speed skater

1999 Arthur Leonard Schawlow – American physicist

2002 Lou Thesz – American professional wrestler

2021 Michael Collins – American Major General USAF and astronaut

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Morpheme of the Week

SST has launched 'Morpheme of the Week' to equip students in understanding new vocabulary. This week, our Morpheme of the Week is 'earth'.

Morpheme of the Week

The morpheme 'earth' is used in the following examples:

- Although the alien planet was strange, some earthly features made it feel familiar.
- Tara used her fingers to make a hole in the earth for the sunflower seed.
- The earthquake may have been small, but James could still feel the ground shake.

'Earth'
As in 'earthly'

A word using the morpheme 'earth' often refers to 'our planet' or 'ground'.

'Earth' refers to 'our planet' or 'ground'

In this case, 'ly' is used to associate two similar things

Earthly

Earthly: to do with the planet Earth and our world.

Students have been rewarded with an Achievement Point for using the MOTW correctly.

Restaurant Menu

Please see below the restaurant menu for the following school week:

	WEEK 3 MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Classic Favourites	MAC N CHEESE BAR Variety of Toppings	JAPANESE CHICKEN CURRY 50/50 Rice	ROAST TURKEY Stuffing, Yorkshire Pudding, Gravy	BEEF CHILLI CON CARNE Nachos, Rice, Sour Cream	FRESHLY BATTERED FISH/ SALMON FISHCAKES
VEGETARIAN MEAL	VEGETARIAN MAC BAR Variety of Toppings	GOAN SWEET POTATO & CHICK PEA CURRY 50/50 Rice	BUTTERNUT SQUASH, BRIE & ROASTED ONION WELLINGTON Gravy	MIXED BEAN CHILLI Nachos, Rice, Sour Cream	CHICKPEA & CORIANDER BURGER Wedges, Coleslaw
VEGETABLES	GARDEN SALAD	STIR FRIED GREENS	SEASONAL VEGETABLES	SWEETCORN	PEAS CHIPS
PASTA POTS	TOMATO & BASIL				
	PESTO PASTA	VEGAN BOLOGNAISE	CHEESE SAUCE	CARBONARA	ARRABIATA
JACKET POTATO	TOPPED WITH A CHOICE OF CHEESE, TUNA OR BEANS				
HOT PUD	WAFFLE BAR Fruit Compote	CHOCOLATE ORANGE MOUSSE	STICKY LEMON SPONGE Custard	BANANA BREAD & BUTTER PUDDING Custard	APPLE & PEAR CRUMBLE Ice Cream
FRUIT POT	SELECTION OF FRUIT POTS AVAILABLE DAILY				
JELLY POTS	SELECTION OF JELLY POTS AVAILABLE DAILY				
YOGHURT POTS	SELECTION OF YOGHURT POTS AVAILABLE DAILY				

TRY OUR HOME MADE **SOUP** WITH FRESHLY BAKED BREAD

LOOK OUT FOR AMAZING BLUE DOT MEAL DEALS

PIZZAS, WRAPS & PANINIS FRESH OPTIONS EVERY DAY

TAKE HOME A TAKEAWAY Collect Before You Go Home

LUNCH MEAL DEAL Check out what's on offer today!

WATCH OUT FOR OUR **POP UP & STREET FOOD PROMOTIONS**

All of Our Deli Range, Sandwiches, Salads & Desserts are **FRESHLY MADE HERE DAILY**

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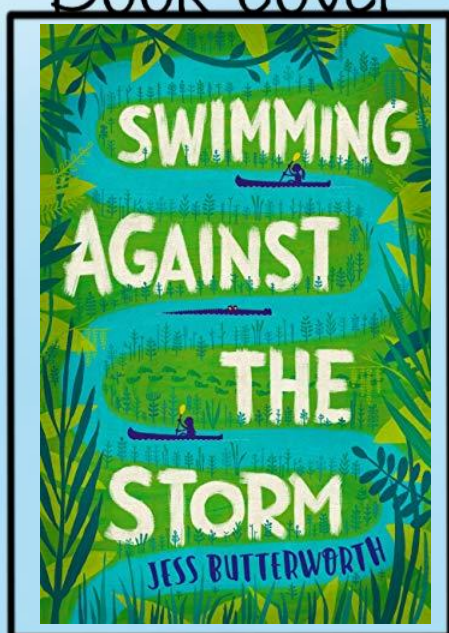


Book of the Week

Here at SST, we are very passionate about reading. We know that the more a student reads, the more accessible all parts of the curriculum and their learning become. Have you read our 'Book of the Week'? This week, it is 'Swimming Against the Storm' by Jess Butterworth.

Book of the week

Book cover



Blurb

Eliza has lived her entire life in a small fishing village, growing up alongside turtles, pelicans and porpoises. But now, with sea levels rising, her home is at risk of being swept away. Determined to save their land, Eliza and her younger sister go searching for the wolf-like loup-garou. If they can prove this legendary creature exists, the government will have to protect its habitat – and their community. But there's one problem: the loup-garou has never been seen before. And with a tropical storm approaching and the sisters in deep, deep swampland, it's not just their home at risk, but their lives as well...

'Swimming Against the Storm' is one of many books by Jess Butterworth that tackle environmental and wildlife preservation. In this book, through the experiences of main character Eliza, the author explores the vibrant culture of Louisiana, as inspired by her research trips there. Whereas she lovingly describes the Cajun and Creole food and human culture in Louisiana, the focus of 'Swimming Against the Storm' comes from an environmental perspective. Eliza and her younger sister, Avery, can see and feel the negative effects of climate change and rising sea levels on their home in a small fishing village, and so seek out the legendary 'loup-garou' in an attempt to gain government support on protecting its habitat. However, as a large storm approaches Louisiana, their mission quickly becomes a race against time.

London-born, Jess Butterworth spent her childhood growing up between the United Kingdom and India. Both the stories her Grandmother told her as a child, and her subsequent adventures inspired by these tales, greatly influence her writing.

For more information on 'Book of the Week' please speak to Miss Garland or a member of the library team.

Accelerated Reader Book Level: 4.4



Online Safety Spotlight

Have you ever read something online that's changed your perspective? Provided new information and made you look at an issue in a fresh light? Imagine if that kind of thing never happened: if everything you read on the internet just reinforced what you thought to begin with, and – what's more – confirmed that pretty much everyone else out there in cyberspace felt the same way.

Welcome to the world of online echo chambers, where one particular school of thought is constantly repeated and never challenged. This lack of impartiality can be damaging if the opinion is an extreme one – especially for younger people who are generally more inclined to believe it.

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many issues which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about ECHO CHAMBERS

Digital echo chambers have become increasingly prevalent over the last half decade. Formed by a combination of social media algorithms designed to promote engagement and the basic human urge to be correct, these online environments reinforce the opinions that people already have – such as particular political ideologies – in a perpetual loop. The danger is that exposure to this constant bias can gradually nudge users towards more extreme views. That's certainly a potential hazard for young people, who tend to be more impressionable and easily influenced by things they see and read online – especially if it reflects a view they already agree with.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- EXTREME IDEOLOGIES**
Echo chambers can offer routes to harmful extreme worldviews. A typically teenage distrust of authority, for example, could spiral into a full-blown belief in conspiracy theories – sometimes rooted in ideas which are antisemitic, racist or misogynistic. For impressionable individuals who may be feeling disillusioned with life, echo chambers can often function as a gateway to radicalisation.
- NO CRITICAL THINKING**
While critical thinking skills are sometimes taught in schools, they are rarely domain specific. A lack of experience in thinking critically – for example, about things we see when browsing the internet – places young people at risk of falling prey to misinformation, untruths and false narratives, which are sometimes deliberately designed to mislead them and influence their thinking.
- A VALUES VACUUM**
If schools struggle to deliver on a clear ethos, founded in British values as outlined in the national curriculum, it leaves a space within which other ideologies have potential to flourish. Teaching about British values in more siloed experiences, such as PSHE lessons, doesn't always effectively convey the key notions: tolerance, democratic values, individual liberty and the rule of law.
- UNDETECTABLE INDOCTRINATION**
Many people enter online echo chambers every day without realising. It's easy to simply consume whatever's placed in front of us as we keep scrolling, unaware that we're being funnelled down a particular route. Not recognising that their daily digital diet could in fact be deeply biased in favour of one side or the other can accelerate a young person's journey towards more extreme ideologies.
- LACK OF BALANCE**
It's challenging to reflect on your own beliefs and opinions, and question whether you might have got things wrong. That's why most of us naturally lean towards consuming information which reinforces and underlines what we thought to begin with. The long-term consequence of this is general close-mindedness and, potentially, intolerance of a more diverse set of perspectives.

Advice for Parents & Carers

- TALK ABOUT CHALLENGES**
It could be helpful to explain to your child that, in general, people like to find evidence to strengthen their existing beliefs and prefer to ignore anything which supports an opposing perspective. Emphasise that it's OK if someone (politely) challenges what they think occasionally, and that any criticism of their view is purely that – a criticism of their opinion, not of them as a person.
- DEBATE CAN BE GREAT**
Encourage any interest your child shows in debating – whether at home, at school, or in clubs or societies. Debates require people to assess the merits of an opposing argument, so they can counter it. Putting themselves in the shoes of someone who has a different point of view is a useful way for children to approach new ideas that may contradict what they previously believed.
- DISCUSS 'UNHEALTHY FEEDS'**
Help your child understand how online algorithms shape which information is presented to them each day: ask them to consider why things appear in their feed on platforms like TikTok, Instagram or Snapchat. Explain that it benefits social media companies' advertising revenue to keep people coming back by showing them content which, generally, reinforces their existing world view.
- THE VALUE OF VALUES**
It can be hugely beneficial if your child recognises the importance of a core set of principles, such as the British values. By regularly tying their online experiences back to those essential ideas of democracy, tolerance and kindness towards others, understanding the rule of law and protecting individual liberties, you'll be helping them grow into a more resilient and robust future citizen.
- VARY THEIR DIGITAL DIET**
Sitting down to read online news stories with your child is an excellent way to demonstrate to them why it's important not to always get their information from just one place. Comparing how the same story is reported across popular mainstream publications – and talking about the political biases each may have – will highlight the importance of regularly checking a wide range of online sources.

Meet Our Expert

A former director of digital learning and currently a deputy headmaster and DSL, Brendan O'Keeffe's experience and expertise gives him a clear insight into how modern digital systems impact the experience of children, staff and parents – and which strategies help to ensure that the online world remains a useful educational tool rather than a minefield of risks.

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