



Mapplewells Primary and Nursery School Weekly Newsletter - Friday 16th October 2026

Welcome Message

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we reach the end of a busy and successful Autumn 1 term, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our pupils, staff and families for their continued support. It has been a wonderful start to the school year, with lots of exciting opportunities and achievements already to celebrate.

This week, our Autumn Discos were a huge success, and it was fantastic to see so many children enjoying themselves with their friends. We would like to thank the Friends of Mapplewells and the school staff who helped to make these events possible. We were also incredibly proud of a group of Year 5 and 6 pupils who visited the City Ground, home of the mighty Nottingham Forest as part of the Anti-Racism Programme. They represented our school brilliantly and gained valuable insights into equality, inclusion and respect for others.

As we break for half-term, I hope everyone has the opportunity to rest, recharge and enjoy some quality time with family and friends. We look forward to welcoming our pupils back for another exciting half term filled with learning, opportunities and success. Have a wonderful and restful break. We will see you all soon.

Read on for all things Mapplewells...

Attendance

Our current school attendance after 7 weeks is 97.59%. Our current attendance by class is:

Birch 98%

Elder 98%

Elm 97%

Hawthorn 99%

Hazel 98%

Juniper 96%

Maple 98%

Oak 97%

Pine 97%

Rowan 97%

Willow 97%

Well done to Hawthorn class on their fantastic attendance this week!

Regular attendance plays a vital role in children's learning, progress and wellbeing. We can work together to ensure every child has the best possible opportunity to achieve their full potential.



Stars of the week

SUCCESS Stars of the Week! Congratulations to the following children who were chosen by their Class Teacher as 'SUCCESS star of the Week'. The children received their certificate in SUCCESS assembly today.

Birch - Grace

Elder - Maddison

Hawthorn - Alice

Hazel - Luca

Juniper - Jack

Maple - Roslyn

Oak - Maeva

Pine - Jaxon

Rowan - Mia

Willow - Sienna



Headteacher Awards

Each week, I present Headteacher's Awards to children who have been nominated by staff for a variety of reasons — from producing amazing work, going above and beyond, to simply demonstrating what it means to be a wonderful Mapplewellian. These awards celebrate the values we hold dear and recognise the exceptional efforts of our pupils. We'll proudly share the names of our award winners in each edition of the newsletter, so keep an eye out for these special celebrations!

This week's recipients of a Headteacher's Award are:

- **Eleanor, Iris, Jack and Stanley** – for demonstrating fantastic dedication and enthusiasm in their curriculum lessons, producing work of a consistently high standard across a range of subjects.
- **Mia** – for writing a wonderful and engaging World War II narrative, using impressive vocabulary and bringing her historical learning to life through her writing.
- **Grayson, Maeva, Parker, Ryder and Gabriel** – for creating outstanding poems filled with creativity, imagination and carefully chosen language to engage their readers.

Online Safety

What Parents and Carers Need to Know About AI Companions

AI companions are becoming increasingly popular with young people, offering round-the-clock conversations with virtual characters designed to feel like genuine friends. Platforms such as Character.ai, Replika and Snapchat My AI can provide entertainment and creative opportunities, but their human-like interactions also raise concerns. This guide explores potential risks including emotional dependency, inappropriate content, oversharing personal information and harmful mental health advice.

As AI companions become more convincing, helping young people understand the difference between synthetic relationships and genuine human connection is increasingly important. This guide offers helpful advice for parents and educators on discussing AI friendships, reviewing privacy settings, managing subscriptions and encouraging healthy offline relationships. It also highlights the importance of seeking support from trusted adults rather than relying on chatbots.

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. For further guides, blogs and tips, please visit thenationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI COMPANIONS

Powered by generative AI models like ChatGPT and Google Gemini, AI companion apps and virtual chatbots such as Character.ai, Replika and Tada, allow users to create, customise, and chat to synthetic avatars around the clock. While many young people use them for harmless entertainment, creative writing or homework help, these bots are designed to simulate genuine human empathy, emotional bonding and deep friendships.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

AI companions are programmed to be endlessly supportive, attentive, and available 24/7. Unlike human friendships, an AI companion never disagrees, asks personal questions, or gets tired, leaving users especially those experiencing loneliness, social anxiety, or low self-esteem (or risk by revealing vulnerability) emotional attachment, viewing synthetic support as their 'best friend' or a surrogate romantic partner.

DISTORTED SOCIAL SKILLS

Reimagining real-world friendships can be messy, involving teasing, conflict, compromise, boundaries, and consequences. If a teenager spends hours interacting with an AI friend, it's a learned tendency to idealise and foster traits they may become impacted with when socialised. Over time, this can lead to social withdrawal, heightened anxiety in peer groups, and isolation: a vicious cycle of growing more dependent on digital world relationships than the 'real world' and the challenges to connection.

DANGEROUS MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE

AI chatbots possess no genuine empathy, professional clinical knowledge, or mental reasoning. While developers state these bots are not therapeutic, vulnerable teenagers often turn to them to discuss emotional and potentially self-harm-related issues, medical problems, undiagnosed depressive states, or needs to fulfil unrealistic expectations of real-world socialisation to real-world protective services.

INAPPROPRIATE OR EXPLICIT CONTENT

While most mainstream platforms feature safety filters and guidelines, young people frequently discover 'darkweb' content, explicit language, sexual nature themes, romantic/sexual, or sexually suggestive material, including sexual, 'NSFW' (not safe for work) or 'NSFW' (not safe for work) content. While safety checks have been found to be increasingly effective, they are not perfect.

DATA HARVESTING & OVERSHARING

Because conversational bots stimulate warmth and understanding, children often lower their guard and treat the chatbot as a trusted friend. They may disclose sensitive personal information, including full names, school details, private family problems, or secrets, unaware that their conversations are being logged, may be analysed by third parties (including advertisers), or used to train future AI models.

'FREEMIUM' UPSOLLS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many companion platforms operate on a freemium model. While basic chat is free, features like voice chat, character customisation, custom avatars, or unique bonding, such as locked content require monthly recurring subscriptions or in-app token purchases. This can lead to significant hidden costs and pressure on young people to spend money to maintain the 'friendship'.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALK OPENLY ABOUT FAKE RELATIONSHIPS

Demonstrate how these bots work. Explain to young people that an AI companion has no feelings, memories, or consciousness; it is simply calculating the next most mathematically probable word based on its training data. It is helpful to explain to them the mechanics of large language models so that they understand how they are trained and how they are designed to please rather than be helpful.

ENCOURAGE REAL-WORLD CONNECTION

Ensure technology habits do not replace time for face-to-face socialisation, sports, hobbies, and family time. Create healthy boundaries at home (such as keeping phones and tablets out of bedrooms overnight) to prevent late-night, unmonitored attachment loops with conversational chatbots when young people are at their most vulnerable.

AUDIT PRIVACY SETTINGS & AGE LIMITS

Check which companion apps are installed on your child's phone or tablet. Many dedicated companion apps carry an App Store rating of 17+, while platforms like Character.ai and Replika are rated 18+. Review the privacy settings together, turn off data-sharing toggles, disable model training where possible, and ensure location services are disabled.

REINFORCE WHERE TO GET REAL HELP

Make sure young people know that a machine can never replace professional pastoral or mental health care. Remind them of the trusted adults they can turn to at school – such as their form tutor, head of year, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – as well as dedicated youth support services like Childline (0800 111) or Youth (0800 132929).

Meet Our Expert
Damen Coates is the Founder and Executive Director of Kampus Education, a consultancy specialising in supporting educators, students and parents in making wise choices with AI. His book *Ethical AI and Education*, co-authored with Clara Bowling, will be released later in 2024, by Taylor and Francis.

See full references list on our website

[WakeUpWednesday](https://www.wakeupwednesday.com) | [The National College](https://www.thenationalcollege.com)

[@wake_up_weds](https://www.wakeupwednesday.com) | [/www.thenationalcollege](https://www.thenationalcollege.com) | [@wakeupwednesday](https://www.wakeupwednesday.com) | [@wakeupweds](https://www.wakeupwednesday.com)

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Anti-Racism Workshop at Nottingham Forest

This week, a group of Year 5 and 6 pupils had the exciting opportunity to visit the City Ground, home of Nottingham Forest, as part of an Anti-Racism workshop. The children took part in a range of engaging activities and discussions designed to promote equality, respect and inclusion, while exploring the importance of challenging discrimination and celebrating diversity.

As part of the day, the pupils were treated to a behind-the-scenes tour of the famous stadium. Highlights included visiting different areas of the ground, sitting in the team dugouts and experiencing what it feels like to be pitch-side at one of Nottingham's most iconic sporting venues.

The children were excellent ambassadors for Mapplewells throughout the visit, demonstrating maturity, enthusiasm and respect. They returned with a greater understanding of the importance of inclusivity and many wonderful memories from a truly inspiring day.



Autumn Discos

Our Autumn Discos were a fantastic success, with children from across the school enjoying an evening filled with music, dancing, games and plenty of smiles. It was wonderful to see everyone having such a great time with their friends and embracing the fun atmosphere.

A huge thank you goes to the Friends of Mapplewells for their hard work in organising the discos and helping to make the events such a memorable experience for our children. We would also like to thank all of the school staff who generously gave up their time to support the events and ensure that they ran smoothly.

The discos were a wonderful way to end the half term, and we know the children thoroughly enjoyed every minute of them!

British Values - Focus on Respect and Tolerance



Respect and tolerance are words that describe how we treat other people. If we respect someone, we treat them in a way that shows we value them and think they are important. If we are tolerant of something, it shows we accept the differences between people.

This is the understanding that we are all different and have different beliefs and values. It is accepting and respecting this and involves no one person or group of people thinking they are more important, more deserving, or better than anyone else. We all have the right to live healthy, safe, and happy lives, where our different values are accepted and respected.

Would you like to work with us?

Are you a friendly, hardworking, caring and positive individual who would like to work with children? We are looking to appoint a Midday Supervisor to our friendly, welcoming school.

Please visit <https://www.flyinghighpartnership.co.uk/careers/> for more information



Autumn Parents' Evenings

We will be holding our Autumn Parents' Evenings on 10th & 11th November. On each day the time slots will be from 3.30pm to 6pm.

Appointments will be allocated for 10 minutes per child and give you the valuable opportunity to discuss all aspects of your child's progress, to ask any questions that you may have and also for the teachers to explain how you can support your child with their learning at home.

We are using Arbor and you can choose the slot that suits you best using the app or web version. Booking is now open!

Should you have any queries please contact the Office.



Flu vaccinations

The IntraHealth team will be in school on Wednesday 25th November.

You'll receive an email or text message from the NHS with a link to an online consent form.

You can use the online form to:

- give consent for your child to be vaccinated
- say you do not want your child to be vaccinated
- update your contact details if needed

Filling in the form will be quick and easy. It's important to respond, even if you do not want your child to be vaccinated. If you have questions about vaccinations or the consent form, please contact the immunisation team at: immunisations.Nottinghamshire@intrahealth.co.uk¹



Mapplewellian Drawathon

During our Mapplewellian Drawathon every child will take part in a special 30-minute drawing challenge, where they'll be encouraged to unleash their imagination and create a unique self-portrait inspired by our cherished Mapplewellian values.

We'd be incredibly grateful if you could support your child in collecting sponsorships.

We encourage children to start practising their drawing skills at home and to think about what it means to be a true Mapplewellian. Let's make this a day to remember!

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. We can't wait to see the children's creativity and enthusiasm shine.

¹<mailto:immunisations.Nottinghamshire@intrahealth.co.uk>



Non-uniform day - Friday 20th November

Friends of Mapplewells have planned a Non-Uniform Day on **Friday 20th November**! This year, instead of a £1 donation, we are asking families to kindly donate chocolates and sweets for the upcoming school fair, just like last year. These treats will be used for the fair's tombola.

Thank you for your continued support in helping make our school fair a sweet success!



Raise money for school with Asda Groceries online shopping

How does easyfundraising work?

1. Sign up with easyfundraising (for free) and choose which charity you want your donation to go to <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/support-a-good-cause> and choose Friends
2. Visit Asda online via their website and shop with them just as you normally would.
3. Part of what you spend with Asda Groceries will be donated to your charity on your behalf.

Does using easyfundraising cost me anything?

No, it's free to sign up with Asda and all the money donated on your behalf will come out of what you usually spend. There are no hidden fees, and you won't pay higher prices.



Nottinghamshire County Cross Country League

Last Saturday, some of our amazing children took part in the Nottinghamshire County Cross Country League at Berry Hill Park.

We are so so proud of each and every one of them! Their dedication to completing the race on a Saturday morning, their team work and encouragement of each other and their Mapplewells spirit were something to be proud of. Well done!



F2 stay and play

This week, F2 had their first stay and play event of the year!

The children loved exploring the autumn provision with their grown ups and showed them all of the fun things we do in F2!





Free Girls Cricket half term offer

We have been contacted by Trent Bridge about some free girls sessions that they are holding over the half term holidays. This is open to all girls aged 6-12. No previous experience of cricket is required, and there are three sessions to choose from:

Weds 21st Oct 09:15-13:15 Outwood Portland Academy, Worksop SIGN UP-Trent Bridge Community Trust FREE GIRLS CRICKET SESSION –

https://forms.cloud.microsoft/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=x17MrrSAHkKpa_INCMNv3xmJG-Sar41BskRZ-UoTjc5URUU1TkE2UVRaWDkwREpBQVNB1cyRERHni4u&route=shorturl

Mon 26th Oct 13:00-16:00 Kirkby in Ashfield Leisure Centre SIGN UP-Trent Bridge Community Trust FREE GIRLS CRICKET SESSION (2) –

https://forms.cloud.microsoft/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=x17MrrSAHkKpa_INCMNv3xmJG-Sar41BskRZ-UoTjc5UMzdYVvK5LU01HMUISRDAzTDICQIY2VkdTMS4u&route=shorturl

Weds 28th Oct 10:00-14:00 Trent Bridge, Radcliffe Road SIGN UP-Trent Bridge Community Trust FREE GIRLS CRICKET SESSION (3) –

https://forms.cloud.microsoft/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=x17MrrSAHkKpa_INCMNv3xmJG-Sar41BskRZ-UoTjc5UQ0E3VTdGQjVNVDm4Szc0MDIwTIRTVUw2Vi4u&route=shorturl

To sign up, follow the direct links or use the QR code on the attached posters.



**DYNAMOS
CRICKET
HOLIDAY CAMP**

FREE SESSION

**Cricket
camps
for girls**

**Fun-filled cricket camps
for 8 – 11 year-olds**

Monday 26th October
13:00 - 16:00
Kirkby in Ashfield Leisure Centre
Contact: rebecca.slizowska@trentbridge.co.uk

SIGN UP



**This
is our
game.**




Key Dates

Please keep updated with our key dates as we add to this. Our term dates are published on the website - <https://www.mapplewellsprimary.co.uk/page/?title=Useful+Information&pid=86>

Diary Dates	
2026	
November	
2 nd November	1 st day of Autumn 2 term
6 th November	Drawathon
10 th November	Autumn parents' evening
11 th November	Autumn parents' evening
12 th November	Foundation Diwali Dance Workshop
13 th November	Children in Need
16 th November	ETFS open evening
20 th November	Non uniform day
25 th November	Flu vaccinations
December	
1 st December	School trip to the Panto
3 rd December	Hazel Christmas Performance
4 th December	Christmas Fair
7 th December	Elm Christmas Performance
8 th December	F2 Christmas Performance
9 th December	Hawthorn Christmas Performance
9 th December	Christingle assembly
10 th December	Christmas jumper day
10 th December	F1 Christmas Performance
18 th December	Christmas parties
18 th December	Last day of Autumn 2 term
2027	
January	
4 th January	1 st day of Spring 1 term
February	
9 th February	Valentine disco – Foundation & KS1
11 th February	Valentine disco – KS2
March	
23 rd March	Easter disco – Foundation & KS1
24 th March	Easter disco – KS2
April	
15 th April	Year 3 residential
26 th April	Year 4 residential
May	
27 th May	Year 5 residential
June	
30 th June	Year 6 residential
July	
9 th July	Summer Fair
14 th July	Summer disco – Foundation & KS1
15 th July	Summer disco – KS2
16 th July	Parent picnic
23 rd July	Last day of Summer 2 term
26 th July	INSET day
27 th July	INSET day
28 th July	INSET day

Mr Whittle

Head Teacher

Mr Latkowski

Deputy Headteacher