

# Valence News



'...It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...'



Dear Parents, Carers and School Community,

As we move closer to the Christmas break, we hope families are enjoying the build-up just as much as we are here in school.

The bungalows have been alive with excitement this December as our residential students have thrown themselves into the festive season. From cheering at the **Sevenoaks Pantomime** and **climbing aboard the Polar Express at the Spa Valley Railway**, to **ice skating, Bluewater shopping**, and exploring the sparkling lights and winter market at **Wakehurst Place**, it's been a joyful run-up to Christmas filled with fun, laughter and fantastic memories.

Across the school, preparations are well underway for our

upcoming celebrations. The **Primary Nativity** (8th–10th December) is nearly ready to shine, and we're looking forward to seeing everyone wrapped up in festive knits for **Christmas Jumper Day** on 11th December in support of Save the Children. Before all of that, don't forget our **Valence Christmas Fayre on Sunday 7th December (12–4pm)**—a brilliant way to kick off the season together, and to pick-up last-minute gifts, hampers and stocking fillers. **'Father Christmas'** will be visiting us again at this year's Christmas Fayre.'



To help us all get into the spirit, the school is glowing with beautiful Christmas trees, kindly donated by our friends at **Westerham Heights**. Their generosity has brought a wonderful warmth and sparkle across the school, adding to the festive cheer.

Our Newsletter this week includes an update an update from our Therapy Team, and an article on Online Safety. You are welcome to contact us if this raises any queries or concerns.

Wishing everyone a bright, cheerful weekend ahead and hopefully see you on Sunday!

Lisa Kavanagh

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## Trikes & Hand bikes

Valence Therapy Team have recently completed a big push to get as many of our students mobile on Trikes and Hand Bikes. As you will see from some of these fab pictures of smiling students, they have loved the opportunity.

The newest hand bikes were recently secured following the generous donation from the Friends of Valence.

They are allowing more students, who would be otherwise restricted due to lower limbs limitations, to be able to use a bike



# Online Safety Update

Here is a reminder about the social media platform Snapchat



**Snapchat** - With over 900 million users, Snapchat is a popular messaging app among children and young people. It allows users to share fun, spontaneous pictures and videos with friends and family while using playful filters

**Artificial Intelligence (AI)** - Snapchat's use of AI includes features like 'My AI' and AI powered filters, offering interactive experiences that can be fun but also pose risks. These tools may share unfiltered or inaccurate responses and promote unrealistic beauty standards.

**Screen Addiction** - Snapchat boosts user engagement and daily use with features like streaks (daily photo exchanges between two people). If users miss a day, they will lose their 'streak'. This encourages daily use habits and frequent notifications can keep users returning to the app even more often.

**Sextortion** - With Snapchat's disappearing messages feature fostering a sense of safety, users could fall to sending content they believe cannot be saved or shared onwards. Users can still screenshot content on Snapchat or screen record to get around this. Before an image is sent, users need to consider if it is appropriate and safe.

**Inappropriate Content** - There is the potential for inappropriate content to be shared on Snapchat via direct messages or group chats. If anything is shared of this nature, you need to report the user and block the contact on Snapchat via direct messages or group chats.

Here are some links to further external support services online:

Think U Know: [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

CEOP: [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

Internet Matter: [www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)

Safer Schools: [www.oursafetycentre.co.uk](http://www.oursafetycentre.co.uk)

# 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.



#WakeUpWednesday

We're excited to announce that our school will be taking part in Christmas Jumper Day 2025!

On Thursday 11th December, children and staff are invited to come to school wearing their silliest, sparkliest, or cosiest Christmas jumpers to help spread some festive cheer and raise awareness and money for Save the Children UK .



This year, we're keeping things simple. If families would like to make a contribution to Save the Children UK, we kindly ask that donations are made directly through the Save the Children website. Every donation—big or small—helps support the incredible work they do for children around the world.

You can donate and find out more about paying in fundraising here:

[How to pay in your Christmas Jumper Day fundraising | Save the Children](#)

Thank you for supporting this wonderful cause and helping us make a positive difference this festive season!

### **Dear Parents, Carers and Staff,**

The new date for the **Friends of Valence AGM** will be **Monday 15th December at 7pm**. The agenda remains as it was previously.

The role of co-chair is available if anyone wishes to stand for the position. If you wish to stand please email [friends@valence.kent.sch.uk](mailto:friends@valence.kent.sch.uk) at least 7 days before the AGM on Monday 15th December.

Kind regards  
Friends of Valence Committee



Use the QR Code to  
get your raffle tickets

*Valence Christmas  
Raffle*

**£1 A TICKET BUY NOW AT**  
<https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/raffle/valence-christmas-raffle-2025>



**WITH MANY EXCITING PRIZES INCLUDING**

- DOMINIC WALMSLEY EARRINGS
- MANICURE/PDICURE VOUCHER
- PROSECCO & WINE
- EMMA COLE SKIN VOUCHER
- 2 WAGAMAMA VOUCHEHS
- WATER COLOUR SET
- £25 COOK VOUCHER
- GAIL'S ARTISAN COOKBOOK
- PETS CORNER 2KG FOOD VOUCHER
- FREE MAIN ZIZZI'S VOUCHER
- AND
- MANY, MANY, MORE

**TO BE DRAWN AT THE CHRISTMAS  
FAYRE ON 7<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2025  
AT 3.15PM**



*Join us for the*

*Valence*  
CHRISTMAS

FAYRE

DECEMBER

| 7th |

12PM-4PM

STALLS . ENTERTAINMENT . REFRESHMENTS  
FATHER CHRISTMAS

ENTRY FREE

£4 FATHER CHRISTMAS VISIT INC. GIFT

PLEASE EMAIL  
FRIENDS@VALENCE.KENT.SCH.UK  
FOR MORE INFORMATION

VALENCE SCHOOL, WESTERHAM, TN16 1QN

# Senior Staff On-call Rota from 5th December 2025



**Matt Strange**      07894 483673  
**Lisa Kavanagh**    07912 124724  
**Jo Chivers**        07896 905095



Date	Day	Time	DSL	DSL
05/12/25	Friday	09:00 To midday	Jo Chivers	Closed
		Midday to 4pm	Lisa Kavanagh	
08/12/25	Monday	07:30 To midday	Jo Chivers	Lisa Kavanagh
		Midday to 4pm	Lisa Kavanagh	
09/12/25	Tuesday	09:00 To midday	Lisa Kavanagh	Jo Chivers
		Midday to 4pm	Jo Chivers	
10/12/25	Wednesday	09:00 To midday	Jo Chivers	Lisa Kavanagh
		Midday to 4pm	Lisa Kavanagh	
11/12/25	Thursday	09:00 To midday	Lisa Kavanagh	Jo Chivers
		Midday to 4pm	Jo Chivers	
12/12/25	Friday	09:00 To midday	Jo Chivers	Closed
		Midday to 4pm	Lisa Kavanagh	

## Valence CHRISTMAS

- Tues 9th December /Wed 10th December - Primary Nativity**
- Thurs 11th December Christmas Jumper Day**
- Mon 15th December Pantomime performance & Friends AGM**
- Tues 16th December Christmas dinner**
- Wed 17th/ Thurs 18th Winter Wonderland Grotto**
- Fri 19th December Christmas Service**