



WALLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

The Wallington Week

HEIRS OF THE PAST, MAKERS OF THE FUTURE

Tuesday 29th April 2025

Message from the Headteacher

Welcome to the Summer term at Wallington High School for Girls.

The Wallington Walk will be held on Friday 23rd May 2025. All pupils in years 7-10 and in year 12 will tackle the 8km course, we continue to raise much-needed funds for our science laboratory project.

Last year, I invited you to share your views about our school through a parent survey, and I greatly appreciated the thoughtful feedback many of you provided. I reflected on several of the findings in subsequent newsletters, and your insights have contributed to some of the improvements we've made over the past year. This year, we are once again asking for your feedback. Please find the link to this year's survey <https://edurio.com/poll/j12NOw> I hope you'll find time to complete it. Your responses will not only help us understand your current views, but also enable us to compare this year's results with last year's, which will help us evaluate our progress against the priorities we set. Please note that the survey must be completed in one sitting and should take no more than 15 minutes. It will remain open until Friday, 16th May 2025.

30 students will be travelling to Germany this half term for a trip of Rhineland – I am sure they will have an amazing time and really consolidate their language skills while there.



Useful Links

Co-Curricular Activities

SOCs, the school's online system for Co-Curricular activities, will allow your child to see all available activities but also allow you to view after school registers to see if your child is attending and in school.

Careers Noticeboard

For live updates on careers related opportunities please [click here](#).

Current Vacancies

Click here for a link to our [vacancies page](#)

Upcoming Events

1st May- Welcome to WHSG Evening

2nd May- Year 11 Last Day

8th May:

-Year 7 Parents' Evening- In Person
-Y13 Last Day

16th May:

PFA Y10 disco with Wallington Boys

Exam season is upon us! Year 11 last day is Friday 2nd May and Year 13 is Thursday 8th May. Attendance for these last few weeks is essential to pick up last minute revision and exam tips. Both leavers' days are planned to have a fun and memorable range of activities.

On Friday last week we held an incredibly moving memorial service and tribute for Aalia, an ex-student and second year student at Kings College University. Family members, ex-students and staff joined us for a reflection in the school hall and a tree planting ceremony in the front garden.

We opened our new canteen and Sixth Form Refectory this week. The students have been very positive about the new spaces, and I am glad we have been able to improve these facilities and experience for them.

Finally, a huge congratulations to our Head of History and Politics who ran the London Marathon this weekend.

**-Ms T O'Brien
Headteacher**



Calendar

Week B

Monday 28th April

- Y12 EOY Exams
- Y11 Oral Exams
- Y13 A Level Art Exam
- Y9 Stop Hate Workshop- Main Hall (9.00am-15:00pm)
- Late Detention- (15:10-15:30pm)
- Year 7 Athletics Meet @ Croydon High
- Rhineland Parent Information Evening (Main Hall 17:00-18:00pm)

Tuesday 29th April

- Y12 EOY Exams
- Y11 Oral Exams
- Y13 A Level Art Exam
- Late Detention- 15:10-15:30pm

Wednesday 30th April

- Y12 EOY Exams
- Y11 Oral Exams
- Y13 A Level Art Exam
- Y13 Oral Exams
- Central Detention (15:10-15:40pm)
- DoFE Kit Drop for Silver Practice Expedition (15:00pm)
- Workshop 18: Parenting Teens - Conflict & Communication (virtual event – Eventbrite 18:30-19:30pm)

Thursday 1st May

- Y12 EOY Exams
- Y13 Oral Exams
- Junior Mathematical Challenge
- Year 8 Athletics Meet @ Croydon High
- Late Detention- (15:10-15:30pm)
- Welcome to WHSG Evening (Main Hall 17:00-19:00pm)

Friday 2nd May

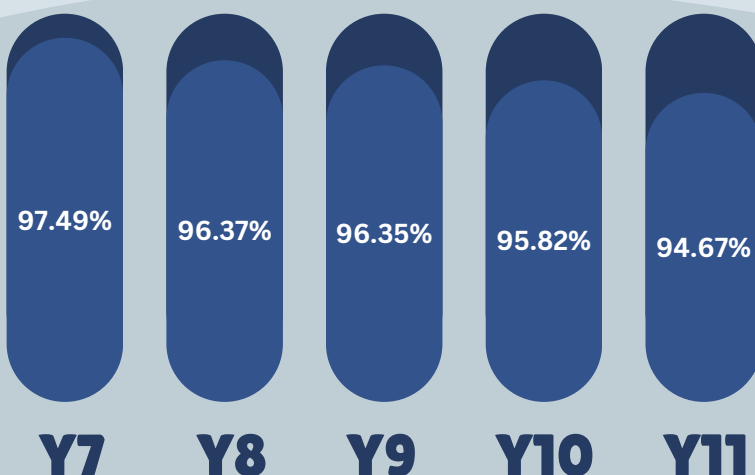
- Y12 EOY Exams
- Y10 Georg visit Rivers
- Y11 Last Day (Leavers' Event)
- Y13 Orals
- Late Detention (15:10-15:30pm)
- Central Detention - (15:10-16:10pm)
- Headteacher Detention-(15:10-17:10pm)

2025 INSET Days

- Monday 16th June
- Monday 1st & Tuesday 2nd September

Attendance Percentages

Between 02/09/24 - 22/04/25





DSL Messages

Wellbeing Award for Schools

We are currently working towards the Wellbeing Award for Schools, developed by the National Children's Bureau and Optimus Education, which recognises the work being done at WHSG to promote mental health and wellbeing within our school community. This award will ensure that mental health and wellbeing continue to sit at the heart of school life and everything we do here at WHSG.

Part of the process requires us to evaluate our current provision and for that we completed an audit at the beginning of the year, sent out questionnaires to parents/carers, staff and students in December to gather feedback on how the school supports mental health and wellbeing and created an action plan as a result of the audit and feedback. Some of main objectives from the action plan include:

- To review our provision and understand how it currently supports emotional wellbeing and mental health, and where strengths, gaps or weaknesses in the provision exist – ongoing
- All relevant school policies (bullying, safeguarding etc.) to be audited to ensure they connect with the school's work on emotional wellbeing and mental health – ongoing
- Work to implement positive ways of talking about, and removing the stigma around, mental health – assemblies, PSHCE, Wellbeing Mentors, student focus groups etc.
- Ensure that pupil voice mechanisms are in place and used at regular points – student focus groups, student council, SHARP etc.
- Identify 'Wellbeing Champions' from across the whole-school community – Pastoral Support Officers and Wellbeing Mentors (students)
- Identify representatives who attend local mental health forums to share information and new learning – Kooth and Off the Record

ZEPETO

ZEPETO is a hugely popular social app where users create custom avatars to explore virtual worlds, play games and chat with others. With millions of active players worldwide, it offers an engaging digital experience – but not without its concerns, especially for younger users.

ZEPETO's vibrant world of custom outfits, interactive spaces and daily challenges might appeal to children – but those same features come with risks. From unfiltered chats and stranger danger to the temptation of in-app purchases, there's plenty for parents/carers to be aware of.

Please find attached a guide offering parents/carers an overview of the associated risks of ZEPETO and what you can do to keep young people safe when having fun online.

DSL Messages

Parent Workshop: Supporting Your Teenager with Emotional Difficulties and Self-Harm

Date and time: Tues 13th May 2025, 19.30-20.30

Facilitator: Dr Danielle Shbero - Clinical Psychologist from Sutton CAMHS

Location: This is a virtual event – Eventbrite

Being a teenager can be difficult to navigate, with lots of change and emotional ups and downs. Parents and carers can have key roles in supporting their teenagers through this by understanding emotional regulation, and how to facilitate healthy responses to difficult or testing situations. This webinar aims to help parents:

- To understand what is meant by emotion regulation
 - To support their teen to self-regulate
 - To gain an overview of self-harm, including what we mean by self-harm, the ways in which somebody may self-harm, and reasons behind it
 - To provide some strategies to manage their teen who is self-harming including: What to do in the moment, shortly after, and longer term safety
- To register for this online workshop please click on this link:

[Supporting Your Teenager with Emotional Difficulties and Self-Harm Tickets, Tue 13 May 2025 at 19:30 | Eventbrite](#)

How to keep your child safe on Instagram

Instagram remains one of the world's most popular social media platforms, especially among teens – used by around 70% of 13 to 17-year-olds. People should be at least 13-years-old to sign up for Instagram.

It may be one of the most familiar social media names around but features like AI-powered chatbots and Threads integration have added fresh challenges for families and schools to navigate. Attached is a guide which outlines what these new features involve, the possible risks they bring and how to make the most of Instagram's parental controls to keep children safe online.

DSL Messages

Bluesky Social App

Bluesky social app is a microblogging social media platform that gained popularity after separating from Twitter in 2021. People should be at least 13-years-old to sign up for Bluesky.

It's more than doubled its user numbers in the past six months alone, from 14.5 million in October 2024 to 32 million at present. Since accounts must be public, this opens the door to potential trolling, cyberbullying and the spread of misinformation.

Attached is a free guide offering parents advice and guidance on the tools available to keep children safe while using the popular social media platform Bluesky.



Parent Workshop: Parenting Teens - Conflict & Communication

Date and time: Wed 30th April 2025, 18.30-19.30

Facilitator: Dr Danielle Shbero - Clinical Psychologist from Sutton CAMHS

Location: This is a virtual event – Eventbrite

Join our online workshop, 'Conflict and Communication in the Teenage Years' designed for parents navigating the challenges of raising teens. Discover strategies to manage conflicts at home, gain insights into the teenage brain, and learn how to handle big emotions effectively. This workshop will equip you with practical communication tools to build a stronger, more understanding relationship with your teen.

To register for this online workshop please click on this link:

[Parenting Teens - Conflict & Communication Tickets, Wed 30 Apr 2025 at 18:30 | Eventbrite](#)

Assistant Headteacher Message

At the end of last term, I had the pleasure of leading a study skills session for KS3 parents/carers. This session was a great opportunity for us to come together and explore ways to support our students' learning. During the session, I shared key principles from cognitive science, drawn from our school's 8 Principles of Expert Learning, which are displayed in every classroom. These principles are designed to support students in their studies, and parents/carers can also use them to help their children thrive academically.

The three principles we focused on were:

- 1. Knowledge is Power

Expert learners understand that in order to think deeply about a topic, they need a strong foundation of factual information. The more they know, the easier it becomes to learn even more.

- 2. Learning is the Residue of Thought

The most effective way to learn new content is by thinking deeply about it. Expert learners know that by actively engaging with new material, their minds will recognise the content as important and store it in long-term memory.

- 3. Mastery Takes Time, Variety, and Forgetting

Expert learners acknowledge that there are no shortcuts when it comes to mastering a subject. True mastery requires extensive practice, spread over time, with a mix of different tasks and – surprisingly – a bit of forgetting along the way.

Having considered these principles, we then explored practical ways parents/carers can support their child in making the most of their mind. There were lots of great ideas shared, but some of the key suggestions revolved around the following:

Read – Encourage regular reading, not only of fiction but also non-fiction, to build knowledge.

Reduce Distractions – Create an environment conducive to focused learning by minimising distractions, including smartphones.

Build Routines – Establish a regular time to complete homework helping students develop consistency and manage their time effectively.

Ask Questions – Take an active interest in your child's learning by asking them questions about what they're studying at school.

Most importantly, students need to prioritise their health by eating well, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax and exercise. A balanced lifestyle is essential for both mental and physical well-being, which in turn supports effective learning.

By working together—school, parents/carers, and students—we can foster a collaborative approach to learning that helps every student reach their full potential. Your support at home is a vital part of this journey, and we look forward to continuing to work together to provide the best possible learning experience for all our students.

Finally, if you would like to know more, I recommend visiting the [Learning Scientists website](#). It's a fantastic resource for both students and parents/carers, offering valuable insights into cognitive science and practical tips on how to make the most of our minds for learning. Parents can also find out about what is being taught by each subject and when, by consulting the '[Subject Curriculums](#)' page on our website.

-Mr J Donnelly
Assistant Headteacher
Wallington High School For Girls

Staff Message

Every pupil should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks. Effective work experience can make a significant difference to the motivation, attainment and progression of students. However, finding a placement can often be a daunting task and so we would appreciate your support in helping your child to find a suitable experience.

Please would you spend some time exploring any contacts which your child can use and help them to explore and research local companies who may be able to provide a work experience placement.

You may also be able to offer a work experience placement to another WHSG student; if this is the case, please contact Mrs. Lisa Parkinson at lparkinson@Wallingtongirls.org.uk.

-Mrs L Parkinson
Careers Coordinator

Student Competition

The Wallington Philosophy Essay Competition 2025

The Wallington Philosophy Essay competition is open to all students and will run in conjunction with the John Locke Institute. The aim of the competition is to widen interest in Philosophy and to encourage ambitious students to think in new and exciting ways. There is no need for you to have studied Philosophy before; we want to develop outstanding writers through independent thought, depth of knowledge, clear reasoning, critical analysis and persuasive style. Our essay competition invites students to explore a question that stretches beyond the confines of the school curriculum and advances the discussion of Philosophy.

Under 15 (Junior Prize): Why do you continue to use your smartphone more than is good for you?

15 years and over: Should we treat non-human animals well because they have rights, interests, neither or both?

Entries will be considered by a panel made up of Philosophy staff, Year 12 Philosophy prefects and a special guest judge. Essay submissions must not exceed 2000 words.

There will be prizes awarded and the top scoring essay in each category will be named Philosophy Scholar 2025. Essays are to be submitted by email to Mrs. K. Bochenski:

kbochenski@wallingtongirls.org.uk The deadline for submissions is Friday 16th May. Good luck!

If you would like some ideas to get you started, we recommend you take a listen to Nigel Warburton's Philosophy Bites Podcast and visit the John Locke Institute essay competition page:

<https://www.johnlockeinstitute.com/essay-competition>

Last Terms Celebrations

Year 7

Top 3 students for SPRING Term achievement points:

Isla Errington

Anaya Sinha

Iman Atta-Ul-Hayee

Top Form for Achievement Points:
Bronte

Top Form for Attendance:
Pankhurst

Year 9

Well done to the Year 9 winners this term.

The top 3 students for achievement points this term were:

- Sarah 9BRO – 60
- Hannah 9SHA – 55
- Zoe 9BRO - 54

The top form for house points were **9 Pankhurst** with 1964 points!

Year 8

Most House Points in the Year group this term:

Emma 8 Curie

Saria 8 Pankhurst

Sreema 8 Pankhurst

Form Spirit:

Avika 8 Athena

Monica 8 Bronte

Angelia 8 Curie

Issy 8 Johnson

Sharlene 8 Pankhurst

Ru 8 Seacole

Hershna 8 Sharman

Form with the highest attendance:

Bronte

Form with the most House Points:

Seacole

Year 10

Well done to the Y10 Spring Term winners:

Most house points accrued this term for Y10: **Sachi Karlekar, Imogen Doe, Parvathi Madhu Pillai**

Form with most house points: **10 Bronte**

Form with best attendance: **10 Athena**

Events

Last half term, students across the school led a range of events to mark some of the religious festivals celebrated by members of our community. Highlights included a vibrant Spring Night hosted by the Christian Union, a colourful Holi celebration organised by Hindu Soc, and an Eid-themed display in the foyer curated by a group of Year 12 students. The canteen also joined in with a special Eid al-Fitr menu. Looking ahead, plans are already underway for a student-led Eid Fest in June to mark Eid al-Adha. Please see below for student reflections on two of these events.

Spring Night

Before Easter, the school's Christian Union hosted their very first Spring Night. The aim of the event was to foster unity and joy among students as well as to commemorate the upcoming Holy Week since it falls in the half term. It was lovely to see students dressed in something pink - this ranged from small pink accessories to full-blown pink outfits - from there things only got better. All attendees enjoyed free food including pizza, cupcakes and other snacks, as well as a range of soft and still drinks. Afterwards, there was a round of games including "match the verses" where people had to find a partner whose verse matched the one they had. Furthermore, there was another game of pick it up and preach where contestants aimed to think of the best spontaneous message on the spot, and all messages were based on the random objects that contestants had been given. Once the games were over, everyone sung (or rather screamed) along to their favourite praise and worship songs, ending the night with an electrifying buzz in the air!

-Princess in Year 12

Holi

This term, we celebrated Holi, the Hindu festival of colours, right here at Wallington. Holi marks the arrival of spring and stands for joy, renewal, and the victory of good over evil. It's a time where communities come together to celebrate love, laughter, and letting go.

As part of Dhyan, a Hindu student organisation, we wanted to bring that spirit to our school. Organising this celebration wasn't just about colour or tradition, but it was about community. We hoped to create a space where everyone, no matter their background or beliefs, could come together and share in something joyful.

Our goal was simple: to start something meaningful. Something that could become a Wally Girls tradition, one that crosses religious boundaries and brings people closer, year after year.

-Mrinmayi in Year 13



Trip

English theatre trip – Paradise Lost

On 27th March, Year 12 English Literature students visited Battersea Arts Centre to watch a staging of Milton's epic poem, 'Paradise Lost,' which they are studying as part of their course. The performance was an impressive one-man show that condensed the biblical story of creation into a captivating 75 minutes. Overall, it was found to be both hilarious and moving, skilfully combining biblical and modern references with contemporary dance to create a thrilling narrative. The trip was not only highly enjoyable but also an exciting and memorable evening for everyone involved!

-Mrs L Randall
KS5 English Coordinator



Well done



Psychology Sunshines

The Psychology department would like to thank the following for being a ray of sunshine throughout the Spring term. They have worked very hard in all of their Psychology lessons and shown dedication and commitment to their studies. To thank them, we have rewarded their hard work with 'Grit' by Angela Duckworth. The winners are: Ruby (10A), Khadeejah (10B), Aizah (10C), Maya K (10D), Megha (11F), Caitlyn (11G), Maja (11H), Esther (12A), Karen (12C), Edna (12D), Maame (13F), Safeerah (13G) and Tia (13H)

Attachment Egg Project

Jael, Allison, Shiya, Sarina, Zaara and Prieyaa won an Easter Egg or Malteaser Bunny as a reward for their egg-cellent Attachment Egg Project!



-Ms H Clayton
Head of Psychology

Student Article

Law Taster Day at Oxford: A Day to Inspire and Delight

By Veronika B

When Layla and I were invited to the Oxford Law Taster Day, sponsored by Clifford Chance, we expected insight and engagement—but we didn't expect to leave so inspired. From dodging Oxford's bicycles to diving into legal debates, the day was packed with eye-opening experiences. After a 4:30AM start, we were welcomed with food and friendly student ambassadors. Emma White, Head of Admissions and Outreach, opened the day with warmth and clarity, setting the tone for what followed.

The first session was a standout: a lively, interactive lecture by Professor Matt Dyson on criminal law. His discussion of the M'Naghten test—especially relevant to our ongoing Mooting competition—was both practical and philosophical, showing us what law is and what it could be. Emma then demystified the Oxford application process (fun fact: the LNAT is more important than your personal statement!), and we caught up with Fola, a fellow mooter we'd met at a previous Politics Conference. Together, we explored Worcester College with the enthusiastic Zoe Campbell, enjoyed an incredible lunch in its Georgian dining hall, and bonded with other students over politics and dreams.

Lilly Morris took us on a campus tour filled with quirky traditions (lake-jumping, anyone?), and the serenity of the library truly made us want to study harder. Afternoon sessions included a fun tort law lecture—featuring a rogue peanut cart—and a spirited debate on the voting age with Oxford Law students, where our Debate Society experience came in handy.

The day ended with a talk by Clifford Chance lawyers and a bench-breaking moment that brought unexpected laughter. After a final group photo, Layla and I capped off our adventure by exploring Oxford—and dodging more bikes.

This incredible experience strengthened my passion for law and gave me the motivation to aim high. Oxford isn't just intimidating—it's inspiring.



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about ZEPETO

AGE RESTRICTION
14+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

NO PARENTAL CONTROLS

Although ZEPETO is intended for users aged 14 and up, it lacks built-in parental controls or age verification, instead relying on safety features on the device it's played on. This lack of a parental controls feature raises concerns about whom children may be interacting with on the platform.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

As a mix between a virtual world and a social media platform, ZEPETO features a wide range of user-generated content. Some areas may reference mature themes, such as TV series aimed at adults, or include inappropriate material created by other users – all of which children may stumble across without warning.

STRANGER DANGER

By default, users can message and interact with anyone else. This open communication creates an environment where predatory individuals can pose as peers to gain trust, potentially leading to grooming, scams, and exploitation, such as blackmail.

Hi there...

CYBERBULLYING RISKS

As with many social platforms, children can be targeted for bullying, harassment or exclusion by both strangers and their peers. Unfiltered chat and avatar-based interaction can allow bullying and other forms of harassment to continue, impacting children's wellbeing and mental health.

ADDICTIVE GAMEPLAY

Daily log-in rewards, such as coins, and in-game incentives can encourage compulsive behaviour, with some users feeling pressure to check in constantly to avoid missing out. This can lead to excessive screen time and conflict with schoolwork or offline hobbies or commitments.

SPENDING REAL MONEY

While the game is free to play, ZEPETO includes a store offering virtual clothing and accessories for avatars. These items are bought with 'ZEMs' – a paid currency – and the appeal of exclusive items or branded collaborations can make it easy for children to overspend.

Advice for Parents & Educators

ENABLE PRIVACY SETTINGS

Visit the child's profile settings to restrict who can send messages – options include Everyone, Followers Only, or No-one. Encourage children to avoid sharing any personal information on their profile, as this is visible even on private accounts.

LIMIT IN-APP TIME

Use parental controls on Android (Google Family Link) or iOS (Screen Time) to restrict app usage by setting hours or daily limits. Encouraging breaks can help children develop healthier habits and reduce app dependency.

CONTROL SPENDING

To prevent accidental purchases, set up purchase approval systems such as Apple's Ask to Buy or Google's Purchase Approvals. Alternatively, consider removing payment methods or using pre-paid cards with set budgets.

HAVE REGULAR CONVERSATIONS

Talk openly with children about whom they interact with online and the kinds of things they see or experience. Encourage them to speak up if someone makes them uncomfortable or if they come across inappropriate content. Teach them how to recognise red-flag behaviours such as asking for secrets, giving gifts, or requesting personal information.

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist who has written for the likes of Wired, TechRadar, The Telegraph, The Evening Standard, The Guardian and The New Statesman.



The National College®

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about BLUESKY SOCIAL APP

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

With an App Store rating of 17+ & Google Play rating Mature

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

While Bluesky has been around since 2019, it's suddenly taken off in a big way thanks to a significant exodus from X (formerly Twitter). Indeed, it looks and behaves a lot like Twitter before Elon Musk bought the platform. Bluesky has been touted in recent months as a safer, more open-minded alternative to X – but like any social media site, it still has its share of risks.

NO PRIVATE ACCOUNTS

While most social networks allow accounts to be private, at the time of writing, all Bluesky accounts must be public. The development team has indicated this might change in the future, but the app is built on a public-first protocol. If private accounts are ever introduced, it may only be in a limited way – such as through the implementation of group chats.

INTERACTIONS WITH STRANGERS

Every account being public means that anyone can be contacted by anyone else. While users don't have to respond and can easily block people and move on, it does mean that youngsters are at particular risk of being conned by scammers, messaged by predatory adults or exposed to others with ill intentions. These hazards can be compounded by the fact that Bluesky doesn't require its users to provide their real name.

TROLLING AND BULLYING

While Bluesky currently feels a lot friendlier than X seems to have become, its lack of private accounts means that there's nothing to stop users from trolling and cyberbullying younger people. While accounts can be blocked and reported, a persistent bully could simply create a new profile, potentially making their victims feel unsafe in continuing to use the app.

DANGEROUS MISINFORMATION

Established news organisations have fact-checking and editing processes, but social networks have no such controls and can often serve as breeding grounds for misinformation and disinformation. Bluesky will possibly be no different once it reaches a certain size, and children may not have the critical thinking skills to tell fact from fiction – or to discern an informative, honest user from a malicious one.

ADULT TARGET AUDIENCE

Bluesky isn't designed with children in mind, and there aren't many parental controls on the platform. In an interview with the BBC, Bluesky's CEO originally said that the app would only allow users aged 18 and above to sign up, but a spokesperson later clarified its age restriction as 13+. This could imply the app was originally meant for an adult audience and suggests that making the platform more child-friendly might not currently be a priority.

RAPID GROWTH

At the time of writing, Bluesky seems calm in comparison with other social networks where moderation is lax and the atmosphere toxic – but that's due at least in part to its smaller community. The app has recently been adding as many as a million users per day, and if that continues, there'll be more unpleasant users to handle, and moderators could struggle to maintain the pleasant environment Bluesky is currently known for.

Advice for Parents & Educators

USE THE ADULT CONTENT FILTER

Bluesky doesn't have much in the way of parental controls, but there are content filters which can hide sexual and graphic imagery. These are enabled by default for underage accounts but can be manually turned on in the 'Moderation' section of the app's settings. The 'advanced' Bluesky Moderation Service lets you restrict content even further, hiding – for example – self-harm content, extremist rhetoric, and even rude posts.

ENCOURAGE BLOCKING AND REPORTING

Another tool that Bluesky uses to ensure a decent experience is muting and blocking accounts. The former prevents you from seeing a specific user's content, while the latter stops them from seeing yours. If a child is encountering trolls or bullies on the platform, encourage them to use this function, while also reporting the offenders to help make the platform a nicer place for everyone.

LOOK OUT FOR FAKES

Impersonation is a problem on all social networks. While the consequences are usually benign, imposters sometimes attempt to scam or groom children by pretending to be a popular influencer or online personality. Bluesky is unique in that it can be connected to official domains, with users' handles linking to other sites; while this isn't widely used right now, it could be a reliable way to verify celebrities and public figures in future.

KEEP AN OPEN DIALOGUE

As with all social media platforms, moderation and content filters can only do so much; it's highly likely that a child will eventually face something unsavoury. For that reason, it's important to make sure that young people are aware of the risks and know how to handle the technology if anything they see on the app makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist who has written for the likes of Wired, TechRadar, Tom's Guide, The Evening Standard, The Guardian and The New Statesman.



#WakeUpWednesday®

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Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/bluesky-app>

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about INSTAGRAM

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

Instagram remains one of the world's most popular social media platforms, especially among teens – with around 70% of 13 to 17-year-olds using it. Owned by Meta, Instagram allows users to share photos and videos, create interactive 'stories', broadcast live, send private messages and follow others. With regular updates and new features, it's essential for parents and educators to stay informed about how children are using the app – and what the risks are.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EXCESSIVE SCREEN TIME

Instagram's design encourages prolonged use through endless scrolling of trending content and generating a fear of missing out (FOMO). Children can quickly lose track of time browsing posts from friends, influencers, and strangers, which may disrupt their day-to-day activities.

AI CHATBOT CONCERNS

Meta's AI, which is available on Instagram, allows users to chat with an in-app chatbot. While often helpful, it can blur boundaries for young users, who may ask for or read content that is inappropriate or see it as a real friend or confidant. Privacy issues also arise, as conversations may not be as secure or private as children assume.

RISKS OF GOING LIVE

The livestream feature allows real-time broadcasting to followers – or anyone, if the account is public. This increases the chance of unwanted contact from strangers and pressure to act in ways that gain attention, including engaging in inappropriate behaviour. Viewers may also post offensive or harmful comments during live sessions.

THREADS INTEGRATION

Threads is Instagram's sister app for public, text-based conversations. Posts from Threads appear in users' Instagram feeds and can lead children to view, share, and comment on public conversations with strangers. The content may not always be age-appropriate and can be misleading or false.

SCHEDULED MESSAGING

Instagram's newer ability to schedule direct messages means that children could receive messages late at night or early in the morning. This can disrupt their sleep or keep them preoccupied before the school day even begins.

EXCLUSION AND LOW SELF-WORTH

Feeling left out online can have a real emotional impact. Being left out of photos, receiving fewer likes, being unfollowed, or being ignored in chats and comments can leave children feeling excluded, which often hurts as much as in real life. There is a risk this can lead to reduced self-esteem and a sense of not belonging.

Advice for Parents & Educators

USE INSTAGRAM'S SUPERVISION TOOLS

Instagram's built-in Family Centre lets parents monitor how much time their child spends on the app. Specialised 'teen accounts' are private by default and offer controls on who can message them. Make sure that children use their real age when registering their account to ensure they have these protections.

OPEN UP THE CONVERSATION

Talk regularly to the children in your care about what they enjoy on Instagram – and what makes them uncomfortable. Encourage honest chats about filters, body image, and online approval. Reassure them that they don't need to edit their appearance or chase 'likes' to feel valued.

SET BOUNDARIES FOR THREADS AND AI

Parental controls on Instagram also apply to Threads. These allow parents to monitor time spent in the app, check follower lists and adjust exposure to sensitive content. Discuss AI features, too, therefore helping children understand that chatbots aren't real people and should be used with care.

BE MEDIA-SAVVY WITH INFLUENCERS

Parents should follow a few of the influencers their child watches, so they can better understand the content they're seeing. Use this as a springboard to talk about the difference between genuine recommendations and paid promotions – and how online personalities can shape opinions and behaviour.

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.



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Attendance

Requests for absence, including illness or appointments should be sent to:

attendance@wallingtongirls.org.uk

Please provide at least 2 full school days notice of a planned absence for the school to complete the required processes before the event.

Absences for longer than one day need to be confirmed at least 2 weeks prior to the event. Families should note that requests for holidays during term time will not be approved and penalty fines can be issued.

To notify WHSg of a leave of absence, please complete this form and return to the email above

Contact Information and emails

If you need to update your home address or contact telephone number, emergency contacts or any other information, please send the updates to:

KS3 and 4 –

mandrews@wallingtongirls.org.uk

KS5 –

jday@wallingtongirls.org.uk

When replying to any SchoolComms emails, please use the individual contact email provided and for general enquiries use info@wallingtongirls.org.uk



Parking

Parking Please note that parents are unable to park or drive into the school grounds between the hours of 7.30am-4.30pm for safeguarding reasons.

Families can contact our reception to ask for permission, where the need arises for a pupil with mobility issues.

reception@wallingtongirls.org.uk

Please also ensure that when dropping your child at school each day, you are respectful of our local residents by not blocking drives and roads or impacting others' safety by parking or dropping off your child(ren) irresponsibly

Punctuality

Punctuality Good punctuality to both lessons and to school is expected of all students. We know that employers place great importance on punctuality and attendance, therefore it is important for our students to understand the value of being on time.

WHSg will issue same day, 20 min detentions for students that are late into school, without a valid reason or persistent lateness to classes. Parents and students will be notified as soon as possible of the detention and the reasoning by email.

We ask that parents support these actions as important processes for the school and understand that detentions cannot be moved for any after school clubs or enrichment events. Should a detention clash with a medical appointment, evidence will be requested for the school to show flexibility.