

Parent Bulletin



16th October 2026

Welcome to this week's Parent Bulletin.

As we head into the final week before half term, it has been another busy and rewarding week at Trafalgar. We would like to thank all of the parents and students who attended our Preparing for Year 10 Information Evening. It was fantastic to see so many families engaging with the opportunities, experiences, and support available throughout Year 10 as students begin planning for the future.

This week's bulletin also highlights a range of exciting careers-related opportunities. You can find information about upcoming BAE Systems Apprentice Open Evenings for students aged 14+, along with a recap of our recent Careers with Languages event delivered in partnership with the Solent Languages Network, which showcased the many opportunities that language skills can unlock in the world of work.

We also celebrate our latest Reading Plus Winner of the Week, recognising a student who has shown outstanding commitment to developing their reading skills and making the most of the platform.

As always, there is plenty more to discover throughout this week's bulletin. We hope you enjoy reading it and wish all of our students a successful final week before a well-earned half-term break.

Until next week!

Team Trafalgar

Exploring What's Ahead in Year 10 Futures Event

Thank you to all the parents and students who attended our Preparing for Year 10 Information Evening. We hope you found the session informative and helpful as we looked ahead to the opportunities, experiences, and support available throughout Year 10.

For those who were unable to join us, the event booklet is available on the Careers Hub on our website. It includes all the key information shared during the evening and can be accessed at any time:

🔗 Careers Hub: <https://www.trafalgarschool.org.uk/curriculum/careers/>

We look forward to supporting our students through the many opportunities, experiences, and decisions they will encounter during Year 10. Thank you to our students and alumni who supported the event and shared their experiences.



Key Dates

Monday 26th - Friday 30th October - Half Term

Monday 2nd November - Students back in school

Thursday 5th November - Presentation Evening

Thursday 19th November - Year 9 Parents' Evening (virtual)

Uniform & Equipment

Please ensure your children have the correct uniform & equipment with them each day. If you require any support, contact your child's form tutor. Please ensure students have a bag. You can find full details of what they need [here](#).



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'Careers with Languages' Event Inspires Students to Think Globally

Earlier this month, students had the opportunity to attend the largest 'Careers with Languages' Event to date, hosted by Admiral Lord Nelson School as part of the Solent Languages Network, a partnership we are proud to be involved in.

The event brought together students, teachers, employers, and organisations from across the region to explore how language skills can open doors to a wide range of exciting careers. Representatives from industries including tourism, international business, translation, education, policing, sport, and international relations shared insights into how languages play a vital role in their work.



Throughout the day, students took part in a variety of engaging activities, including careers presentations, mock interviews, multilingual challenges, international careers quizzes, and a Japanese language and culture workshop. Highlights included an inspiring presentation from football language specialist Pierce Kiembi of Futbol Lingo, who discussed the importance of languages in the global sports industry, and a fascinating talk from international interpreter Gloria Vessey, who shared experiences from a career working with celebrities, dignitaries, and members of royal families.



The event had a significant impact on students' perceptions of language learning. Before attending, only 38% of students described languages as being "very useful" for future careers. By the end of the event, this figure had risen to 68%. Similarly, the proportion of students who could not identify a career where languages would be valuable fell from 17% to just 4%.

These outcomes highlight the importance of connecting classroom learning with the world of work. Students left with a greater understanding of the many opportunities that language skills can provide and a broader appreciation of how languages can support careers far beyond travel and tourism.

As part of the Solent Languages Network, we are delighted that our students could be involved in such an inspiring event. It was a valuable opportunity to raise aspirations, explore future pathways, and demonstrate how languages can help young people thrive in an increasingly connected world.

Reading Plus Winner of the Week!

Congratulations to Miguel in Year 7, our Reading Plus Winner of the Week. Miguel enjoys reading history and non-fiction books, while also picking up fiction titles from time to time.

As his reward, Miguel selected *Lunar* by Chris Bradford, a thrilling story of survival in outer space. We hope you enjoy your new book, Miguel, and thank you for your continued commitment to reading. Happy reading!

Also, well done 8G2 for topping the reading leaderboard!

Don't forget, you can help your class climb that leaderboard and be in with chance of winning one of our new books from the book vending machine by keeping up with your English Independent Practice.



Leaderboard

Top Classes - Total Avg. Reading Lessons (SR)

1. 8G2/En - 26/27	14.3
2. 8R4/En - 26/27	13.2
3. 7G3/En - 26/27	12.2
4. 8R2/En - 26/27	11.9

BAE Systems Apprentice Open Evenings

Students and families are invited to explore exciting future career opportunities at BAE Systems through their upcoming Apprentice Open Evenings at HM Naval Base Portsmouth. These events are open to students aged 14 and over and provide an excellent opportunity to learn about apprenticeship pathways in engineering, digital technology, radar systems, manufacturing, business, and planning.

Visitors will have the chance to meet current apprentices, engineers, digital specialists, and business professionals, gaining first-hand insight into what it is like to work for BAE Systems. Students can discover how apprenticeships combine practical experience with professional development while contributing to technologies and services that support the UK's defence sector. Opportunities are available from age 16+, making this a valuable event for young people beginning to consider their post-16 options.

Places are limited and advance booking is essential. As the event takes place on a working defence site, all visitors will be subject to security clearance and will need valid photo identification. Under-18s must be accompanied by an adult. Families interested in attending are encouraged to book early to avoid disappointment.

Open Evening Dates

[Tuesday 3 November 2026, 6:00pm to 8:00pm](#)

[Wednesday 4 November 2026, 6:00pm to 8:00pm](#)

Registration closes at 6:00pm on Wednesday 14 October 2026, or earlier if all places are filled.



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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI COMPANIONS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Powered by generative AI models like ChatGPT and Google Gemini, AI companion apps and virtual chatbots such as Character.ai, Snapchat My AI, Replika and Talkie, 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 tools are designed to simulate genuine human empathy, emotional bonding and deep friendship.

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

AI companions are programmed to be endlessly agreeable, attentive, and available 24/7. Unlike human friendships, an AI companion never disagrees, sets personal boundaries, or gets tired. Young people (especially those experiencing loneliness, social anxiety, or low self-esteem) can quickly develop an unhealthy emotional attachment, viewing synthetic software as their 'best friend' or a surrogate romantic partner.

DANGEROUS MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE

AI chatbots possess no genuine empathy, professional clinical knowledge, or moral reasoning. While developers state these tools are not therapists, vulnerable teenagers often turn to them in crisis. Chatbots have previously hallucinated unsafe medical guidance, validated depressive spirals, and failed to safely escalate disclosures of self-harm or suicidal ideation to real-world protective services.

DATA HARVESTING & OVERSHARING

Because conversational bots simulate 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.

DISTORTED SOCIAL SKILLS

Navigating real-world friendships can be messy, involving dealing with conflict, compromise, boredom, and awkwardness. If a teenager spends hours interacting with an AI that is tailored specifically to validate and flatter them, they may become impatient with real-world relationships. Over time, this can lead to social withdrawal, heightened anxiety in peer groups, and isolation: a vicious circle of growing online dependency coupled with a heightened sense that relationships in the 'real world' are too challenging to maintain.

INAPPROPRIATE OR EXPLICIT CONTENT

While most mainstream platforms feature safety filters and guardrails, young people frequently discover 'jailbreak' prompts to bypass them. Some companion platforms subtly nudge users towards mature themes, romantic roleplay, or sexually suggestive conversations. In worse cases, third-party apps with weak safety checks have been found to generate sexually explicit text or intimate images.

"FREEMIUM" UPSELLS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many companion platforms operate on a freemium model. While basic chat is free, features like voice calls, uncensored responses, custom avatars, or 'deeper bonding' tiers are locked behind expensive 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

Demystify how these tools 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 always flatter and be helpful.

ENCOURAGE REAL-WORLD CONNECTION

Ensure technology habits do not replace face-to-face peer 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 set a minimum age of 13+ (or 16+ in the UK/EU). Review the privacy settings together: turn off data-sharing toggles, disable model training where possible, and ensure location permissions are blocked.

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 1111) or Shout (text 85258).

Meet Our Expert

Darren Coxon is the Founder and Executive Director of Kompass 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 Hawking, will be released later in 2026 by Taylor and Francis.



The National College

See full reference list on our website



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