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10 January 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

Happy New Year! I hope you had a good Christmas and new year and were able to enjoy some family time. This week feels like we have hit the road running with all the weather issues. While the cold weather continues, please be very careful in the car park and school entrance as well as on your drive to school. It looks as though it will warm up next week, but please can you ensure your children have winter coats for playtime.

On Monday 20th January we have a session on Child Exploitation and County Lines by Escapeline for Y5/6 children and afterwards there is a parent session for **all parents of any age child. This is at 3.30.** Those who have attended this in the past have found it very useful if slightly scary. It is something we all need to know about unfortunately. I will be running a creche for children so you can attend.

This is some information from Escapeline:

Child Exploitation by County Lines - In the South West of the UK, including all areas of Somerset, there is a significant rise in county lines drug crime, whereby a large amount of young people as young as **6 years old**, are being criminally and sexually exploited by gangs. County lines are illegal business models, in which drug gangs expand their operations from their big city bases, such as London, Birmingham and Liverpool, to smaller cities, towns, coastal and rural areas across Britain. These gangs use their power and position to groom, recruit and exploit children and young people for the purpose of criminal gain.

These gangs proactively recruit young people to drug run in and around the South West, as well as outside the area. The gangs and criminal networks use extreme violence and intimidation towards these young people, which result in these young people feeling trapped and scared. Some of these gangs are forcing vulnerable children from their homes to be trafficked to other parts of the country. As well as criminal exploitation, young people, both girls and boys, are also being sexually exploited by these gangs.

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This session will raise awareness of the signs of Child Exploitation by County Line gangs, how they operate in rural areas and how to keep children and young people safe.

There is also a session on this you can attend at Huish Academy if you are unable to make our session on Monday 20th January at 3.30pm:

Date: Wednesday, 15th January 2025

Time: Starting at 6pm with an estimated end time of 7:30pm

Venue: Room H1, Huish Sixth Form building, Huish Episcopi Academy, Langport, TA10 9SS

To book a place to attend this session please complete this short Googleform:

<https://forms.gle/JJWv7g8KG2MxbJif6>

Below are a few courses that some of you may find useful.

Tuning in to Kids – Tuning in to Kids teaches adults how to use an emotion coaching way of interacting with children. The program supports those in a parenting role to develop an emotional connection with the child that helps the child learn about emotions to foster their ability to understand and regulate emotions.

This will be run by Victoria Gould, our PFSA. This will be held at Hush Academy 9.30 – 11.30 on the dates below. If you wish to attend let me or the office know.

Thursday 27th February, Thursday 6th March, Thursday 13th March, Thursday 20th March, Thursday 27th March, Thursday 3rd April.

FREE bite-size workshops to help separated parents successfully coparent

These are free, online sessions which aim to help give parents practical tools they can use to help themselves, and their children cope better with their separation/divorce. There are 3 bite-size workshops focused on different topics, you are welcome to come to all 3 – there are 2 of each so you can both attend.

Date & time	Topic	Link
Wednesday 15 January 9:30 AM-10:30 AM your	A separated parents' guide to successful coparenting communications	https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1073000546519?aff=oddtcreator
Wednesday 15	Managing handovers and	https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1073028389799?aff=oddtcreator

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January 2 PM-3 PM	transitions for separated parents	
Tuesday 21 January 2 PM-3 PM	Helping your children navigate separation and divorce	https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1073078549829?aff=oddtcreator
Thursday 23 January 9:30 AM-10:30 AM	Managing handovers and transitions for separated parents	https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1073084758399?aff=oddtcreator
Wednesday 29 January 7 PM-8 PM	A separated parents' guide to successful coparenting communications	https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1073016704849?aff=oddtcreator
Tuesday 4 February 7 p.m.-8 PM	Helping your children navigate separation and divorce	https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1073104998939?aff=oddtcreator

Updated area with information and support for separated parents:

There has been an update to the online web support for separated parents: [Somerset children & young people : Health & Wellbeing : Support For Separated Parents](#)

Mental Health Support Team

Calling all Parents & Carers!

The MHST (Mental Health Support Team) are offering a series of FREE helpful webinars over Spring 2025.

- Supporting your neurodivergent child
- Supporting exam and test wellbeing
- Helping your child to thrive: Boosting self-esteem & resilience
- Understanding and supporting anxiety and low mood
- Supporting your child's big feelings

Find out more & register here: <https://bit.ly/mhstwebinarspring2025>

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SEN Workshops

Also attached to the Newsletter is information about the WISE Workshop booklet which shows all the workshops running this year. If any parents would like to book onto any there is a page that explains how in the booklet. I have also included the link to their website. These include workshops around Dyslexia, Autism, Sensory issues, Social Stories, Emotional Based School Avoidance, sleep etc. They are very good sessions; I recommend booking in on them.

[WISE Up Workshops](#)

Admissions Policy 2026/27 Consultation

This year we are consulting on our 2026/27 admission arrangements. We would like to add in a criteria about attending Toy Box. To view and comment on the arrangements please click here <https://sومersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/2026-arrangements> or visit the school website.

The consultation will end on 20 January 2025 and the final determined arrangements will be published on the school website by 15 March 2025.

Apply now for your child's 2025 school place

Somerset parents and carers of children due to start school or move on to their next school in September 2025 are being urged to apply for their place online and on time.

Parents and carers of children due to start school for the first time or transfer to Junior or Middle School can apply for places for their children from 30 September 2024 until 15 January 2025. Please visit:

[Apply to start school for the first time \(sومerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.sومerset.gov.uk)

There is also information on these pages from [Somerset's SEND Local Offer](#) on Starting school or changing schools if your child has an Education Health and Care Plan: [Education, Health and Care plans and school placements \(sومerset.gov.uk\)](#)

The webpage www.sومerset.gov.uk/admissions holds a wealth of related information including a directory of schools, catchment areas and admissions policies.

Attendance – Unauthorised Term-Time Leave

All children have a legal right to suitable, full-time education. There is no entitlement for children to have time off from school during term-time for the purposes of a holiday, recreational or protest activity.

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools:

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- all references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed, including the removal of the H code for approved leave,
- headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances",
- headteachers do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

We expect all pupils to attend regularly. As such, any requests for term-time leave will be considered but only approved if the reasons and circumstances for that leave are exceptional and unavoidable.

[See policy for more details.](#)

Is my child too ill for school?

It is usually appropriate for parents and carers to send their children to school with mild respiratory illnesses. This would include general cold symptoms: a minor cough, runny nose or sore throat. However, children should not be sent to school if they have a temperature of 38°C or above. Further guidance can be found here - [NHS 'Is my child too ill for school?' guidance](#)

The infographic is divided into two main sections. The left section is titled 'Article 28 The right to education' and contains text about children's views on school and healthcare, along with a QR code for a survey. The right section is titled 'Please share your views on health-related school absence...' and contains two QR codes for parent/carer and young person questionnaires, along with the RCPCH & Us logo and a QR code for more information.

Nut free school (inc. Toy Box)

We have multiple children in school at present with a nut allergy. Please do not give your child food/snacks to bring into school containing any type of nut or nut product, e.g. Nutella and Peanut Butter. Thank you for your support.

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Dates for the diary

Harrier Swimming Huish
Kite Visit – Museum of Somerset
Kite – Parents to share work
Cygnet & Harrier – Parents to share work
Kingfisher – Parents to share work
Inset Day
Half Term
Back to school

Wednesday 15th January
Wednesday 29th January
Monday 03rd February at 3.15pm
Tuesday 04th February at 3.15pm
Wednesday 05th February at 3.15pm
Friday 14th February
Week commencing 17th February
Monday 24th February

If you have concerns about your children's well being or mental health please contact me (Lizzie Reynolds) as the schools Senior Mental Health Lead.

Safeguarding (Protecting children from harm/keeping them safe)

In school we have a duty to ensure that all children are safe and protect from harm or abuse. If we have concerns about a child's wellbeing it is our duty to look into this, talk to the family, and if need be, report it to Somerset Direct.

If you have any concerns about your child, or another, please come and speak to me. Safeguarding is everyone's business and cannot be ignored. Somerset Direct (0300 123 2224) or the NSPCC are useful points of contact, should you wish to share or discuss any Safeguarding concerns you have.

Here are some useful websites recommended by our DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead – Lizzie Reynolds).

SOMERSETDIRECT

Best wishes
Mrs Lizzie Reynolds

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