

RYECROFT REMINDERS & GENERAL INFORMATION

WHOLE SCHOOL

Safeguarding Tips on Shopping for Electronic Items

The 12 ways that Christmas shoppers can keep children and data safe when buying smart toys and devices (ICO)

Have you finished your Christmas shopping yet? Planning to spend a couple of hours in a Christmas Market or even on Amazon? This Christmas there will be more tech toys than ever before, and many of them will use bluetooth or wifi to link to apps and the wider internet. Some of these toys will have cameras and microphones recording the environment and the child's play. The Information Commissioner recently published an article looking at the risks of using smart toys and it is well-worth sharing it with parents.

<https://iconewsblog.org.uk/2017/11/23/the-12-ways-that-christmas-shoppers-can-keep-children-and-data-safe-when-buying-smart-toys-and-devices/>

Safety alert: see how easy it is for almost anyone to hack your child's connected toys (Which?)

Which? Magazine have also surveyed many connected toys and found that, without appropriate safety features, they can also pose a big risk to your child's safety.

The Which video below shows just how easy it is for anyone to take over the voice control of a popular connected toy, and speak directly to children. Which? found that it is easy enough for almost anyone to do, not only skilled hackers.

<https://www.which.co.uk/news/2017/11/safety-alert-see-how-easy-it-is-for-almost-anyone-to-hack-your-childs-connected-toys/>

Online Safety

The impact of social media can be amazing – the promotion of events, the re-connection with friends from times past and the sharing of memories – are all fantastic ways of communicating.

Unfortunately social media is not always used in such a positive way.

Advice regarding uploading pictures:

Only upload pictures that you'd be happy for a parent to see (the internet is a public place). Don't post pictures of you, or your friends wearing school uniform (this lets people know where you will be). Tick the "no pic forwarding" option on your settings page – this will stop people forwarding your pictures to anyone without your consent. Who are you communicating with? Do you know? Do you really know?? Have you met them? If you know someone ... who knows someone ... who knows someone ... it doesn't make them your friend.

Advice for students:

What you put on social media sites is there forever. Consider the information you share – you don't know who your friend's friends are ... or your friend's friends' friends ... Be aware that information on your profile could potentially be viewed by anyone. Consider your photo – what information does it give about you? Understand the meaning of 'joint enterprise' be aware that university admissions and employers WILL check your internet activity.

11th December 2017

Students, Parents and Carers please visit <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> for further information.

Christmas Jumper Day

Thank you to everyone who supported this year's Christmas Jumper Day on Friday 8th December 2017. We raised a fantastic **£159.00** for the 'Donna Louise Trust'.

Lunchtime Supervisor Vacancies

We currently have two vacancies to join our wonderful team of Lunchtime Supervisors. These positions will be required to start January 2018. The vacancy is for a five day a week term time contract: 1 hour per day (5 hours per week) at £7.85 per hour.

The post involves supervising 9 – 13 year old children from 12.50pm to 1.50pm.

Application Forms and Job Descriptions are available from the school office. All application should be sent to Mrs T Evans, Bursar by midday on **Wednesday 13th December 2017**.

Christmas Disco

Our Christmas Disco will be held on **Wednesday 13th December 2017**, 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

Christmas Church Service

Staff and students will be walking to Rocester Church for our Christmas Service on **Friday 15th December 2017**, between 10.00am and 11.00am.

Christmas Dinner

You are invited to join your child for Christmas Lunch on **Friday 15th December 2017** between 11.45am – 2pm, the cost is £3.00 for adults and £2.15 for pupils (or free of charge for those pupils in receipt of free meals). You should have received a copy of the menu either by email, or pupil post last Friday. However, if this is not the case a copy is on our website.

Due to the increasingly popularity of our Christmas Lunch and to hopefully aid in a swift service, we will be staggering arrival/serving times according to Year Groups. For those of you who have children in different year groups, we ask that you attend the time below for your youngest child, and your older child/ren will join you then.

Year 5 pupils and guest/s	11.45am
Year 6 pupils and guest/s	12.15pm
Year 7 pupils and guest/s	12.45pm
Year 8 pupils and guest/s	1.15pm

Please could you let the school office know how many adults and how many children wish to join us (including those pupils that normally have a school lunch) by Friday 1st December 2017.

To ensure we have sufficient food for everyone and to help service run smoothly on the day, we ask that the following deadlines are adhered to for both pupils and adults:

Pre-order a Christmas Lunch/s
Payment required for Christmas Lunch/s

by Friday 1st December 2017
by Monday 11th December 2017

Frost Fair

On **Friday 15th December 2017**, we will be holding our Frost Fair from 4.00pm to 7.00pm. There will be lots of different stalls and activities available, including local food and crafts, festive food and drink, student stalls, carols, music, performances etc. All welcome.

Lost Property

11th December 2017

We have accumulated a large amount of lost property, which is all un-named, this includes jumpers, lunch boxes, inhalers, purses, glass cases and glasses etc. If your child has lost anything, please feel free to come and have a look, or ask your child to either look in the lost property boxes in the corridors, or in the office.

Could I also remind you to please name **all** your child's belongings, including purses, glass cases and inhalers etc. This will enable all mislaid items to be re-united with the correct child.

Any lost property that has not been claimed by **Tuesday 19th December**, will unfortunately be disposed of.

Reminder - Changes to Penalty Notices for Absence from School

We have been informed by Staffordshire County Council that the following changes will be commencing **1st January 2018**.

Unauthorised Leave of Absence (term time)

ANY period of unauthorised leave may result in parents / carers receiving a penalty notice.

Persistent Lateness

If your child receives 10 unauthorised late marks (non-consecutive), parents / carers could receive a penalty notice.

Period of time to measure persistent absence and lateness

If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence, or is late 10 times over a twelve week period, parents / carers may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

Football Lessons

Next term all students will be studying football in PE. It is compulsory that they must wear black or white long socks, shin pads, football boots and trainers for these lessons.

YEAR 5

Hockey

This term Year 5 are studying hockey in PE. It is compulsory that they must wear black or white long socks, shin pads and gum shields for these lessons under The England Hockey Association regulations for us to be able to deliver it within school.

YEAR 6

Hockey

This half term Year 6 are studying hockey in PE. It is compulsory that they must wear black or white long socks, shin pads and gum shields for these lessons under The England Hockey Association regulations for us to be able to deliver it within school.

Years 6 Theatre Trip

As part of our enrichment programme and to enhance our English curriculum, we have arranged for an amazing theatre visit for our students in Years 6, 7 and 8 to see 'A Christmas Carol'. This will take place at The Repertory Theatre in Stoke on Trent, on **Thursday 14th December 2017**.

Ski Trip 2019 (current Year 6)

11th December 2017

The next instalment of £50.00 for this trip is due by Friday 15th December 2017. Either cash or cheques are acceptable (cheques made payable to Ryecroft Middle School).

Future instalment dates are as follows: £100.00 by Friday 9th February 2018
£100.00 by Friday 23rd March 2018
£100.00 by Friday 18th May 2018
£100.00 by Friday 13th July 2018
£185.00 by Friday 28th September 2018 (Final instalment)

YEAR 7

Years 7 Theatre Trip

As part of our enrichment programme and to enhance our English curriculum, we have arranged for an amazing theatre visit for our students in Years 6, 7 and 8 to see 'A Christmas Carol'. This will take place at The Repertory Theatre in Stoke on Trent, on **Thursday 14th December 2017**.

Ski Trip 2019 (current Year 7)

The next instalment of £50.00 for this trip is due by Friday 15th December 2017. Either cash or cheques are acceptable (cheques made payable to Ryecroft Middle School).

Future instalment dates are as follows: £100.00 by Friday 9th February 2018
£100.00 by Friday 23rd March 2018
£100.00 by Friday 18th May 2018
£100.00 by Friday 13th July 2018
£185.00 by Friday 28th September 2018 (Final instalment)

Standon Bowers 2018

The Year 7 educational visit to Standon Bowers Outdoor Education Centre will take place from **Monday 14th May to Friday 18th May 2018**.

The next instalment of £60.00 for this trip is due by Friday 15th December 2017. Either cash or cheques are acceptable (cheques made payable to Staffordshire County Council).

Final payment date is as follows: £95.00 by Friday 2nd March 2018

YEAR 8

Years 8 Theatre Trip

As part of our enrichment programme and to enhance our English curriculum, we have arranged for an amazing theatre visit for our students in Years 6, 7 and 8 to see 'A Christmas Carol'. This will take place at The Repertory Theatre in Stoke on Trent, on **Thursday 14th December 2017**.

WHOLE SCHOOL – DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION

Young Enterprise Group

Three of our Year 8 students have started their own Young Enterprise Group selling kindling. They are charging £2.50 per bag (carrier bag size). If you would like to purchase a bag, or two then please contact Miss Alston, via the school office.

Art Challenge

11th December 2017

Mrs Alston challenges your child to produce 13 pieces of art (1 per week), most of which will be drawing. All work should be no bigger than A4, and it should all be handed in together on **Monday 18th December 2017**.

Don't be tempted to do more than one per week. Mrs Alston is on hand if your child requires any extra materials.

Prizes will be awarded to all those children who complete the whole challenge.

Christian Value

'Peace' is our first value of this academic year. For parents new to our school, we organise our worship through six Christian values. These are the focus for whole school worship and reinforced across the curriculum.

Maths Department

Times Tables Rockstars and My Maths are all updated and ready for students to log on and use for extra maths and homework. Each student needs to check their log in is working and see their class teacher if there is a problem.

Could you please remind your child (Years 5 and 6 only) to collect a 'maths magicians' letter and sign up online for the 'magical maths club' ASAP. Thanks

Hockey Club

Hockey club is available to students in KS3 on Thursday lunch times and KS2 on Friday lunch times. If student wishes to attend this clubs they need to wear black or white socks, shin pads and gum shields.

Inter-House Sporting Competitions

These will be starting over the next few weeks during Thursday's lunch-times. Please encourage your child to sign up on the notice boards, opposite the PE changing rooms to earn points for their house.

PE Kit

It is the school policy for all students to wear **white** socks for their PE lessons. Students must change their socks for hygiene reasons and by wearing white socks, this ensures that they have changed from their black school socks.

If anyone has a problem with getting the correct kit they need to bring a letter, or contact the office to let us know.

Music Department

Instrumental lessons

Could all consent forms and payments for music lessons, please be returned ASAP as places cannot now be guaranteed unless forms are returned. A few pupils have expressed interest in woodwind lessons – this is something that we are looking into and are hoping to be able to offer in the near future.

Choir

The Ryecroft school choir has started up for the new term. All students are more than welcome to join, just head to the music room on Friday lunchtimes for a sing-song!

Bring your packed lunch and join in from 1:20pm.

School Council

11th December 2017

After a process of elections and voting, twelve pupils have been successful in becoming School Council Representatives for 2017 / 2018.

You will be kept up-to-date with the outcome of every meeting, via the Ryecroft Reminders.

Ryecroft P.A.L.S

An initiative this year is to introduce Ryecroft P.A.L.S to our school community. These are students who have expressed an interest in helping around the school, in a variety of ways to improve the opportunities for others. A number of students have started their training in this area and have planned a wide range of sporting, art based, drama and musical activities for pupils to get involved with. Their role includes Play, Advice, Leadership and Safety (P.A.L.S).

GENERAL INFORMATION

School Office Hours

Monday – Thursday	8.30am to 4.30pm
Friday	8.30am to 4.00pm

Ofsted

As you are aware, we were visited by Ofsted on Wednesday 1st and Thursday 2nd November 2017. We are delighted to be able to share the final report with you, which is extremely positive and reflects on the hard work, effort and determination that has gone into moving the school forward.

The school and its '**GOOD**' grading is the direct result of the endeavours and perseverance of every child and every adult who works to improve outcomes, provision and experiences on a daily basis. We sincerely hope that you and your child(ren) feel proud to be part of Ryecroft and the journey of the school.

As you will see, the inspection also identifies areas for improvement and although we are tremendously pleased with our successes, there is so much more we want to achieve and develop for our pupils, in order to become an outstanding school. The points raised in the report will be incorporated into our School Development Plan.

You should have already received a copy of the Ofsted report last Thursday either by email, or pupil post. However, if you have not yet received a copy of the report and would like to read it, it is available on our website.

Drinks in School

Could I please remind everyone that children are only allowed to drink water during lesson and break times. Juice can only be drunk in the dining room along with their sandwiches etc, during the lunch time period.

Facebook

Keep up to date with all the latest news from Ryecroft – Like our Facebook page:

[facebook.com/ryecroftmiddleschool](https://www.facebook.com/ryecroftmiddleschool)

Bullying

To support the schools continuing work in helping to eliminate bullying, we have introduced an online bully box, which pupil and parents are now able to use. The email address is bullybox@ryecroft.staffs.sch.uk. Any concerns can be sent to this monitored email address and will be followed up in school.

This is something which pupils have requested, in addition to the other methods they already have available to them. These include: speaking to any adult in the school, writing a note to put in the Bully Box (which is located near reception) or speaking to a Ryecroft P.A.L.S.

Lost Property

Since we started back in September we have accumulated a large amount of lost property, which is all un-named, this includes jumpers, lunch boxes, inhalers, purses, glass cases and glasses etc. If your child has lost anything, please ask them to either look in the lost property boxes in the corridors, or in the office.

Could I also remind you to please name **all** your child's belongings, including purses, glass cases and inhalers etc. This will enable all mislaid items to be re-united with the correct child.

Ryecroft Carpark

Could I please remind all parents / carers that the school carpark is for Ryecroft and Dove staff ONLY. Could all parents / carers please park outside the school grounds. This is to ensure there is no obstructions within the carpark and also for the safety of the students. Thanks.

New Trustee Needed for the Uttoxeter Learning Trust

Want to give something back to help your local community? Have you the financial/audit experience and expertise required to lead the trustees in supporting and challenging the schools in the Uttoxeter Learning Trust? This is like the role of the chair of the finance committee of the school governors, but it covers all of the schools in the ULT multi-academy trust. The ULT Board of Trustees sits above the school Governing Bodies and holds all of the schools to account. Like a school governor, it is a voluntary, unpaid, but very responsible, role. You would be expected to chair the ULT Finance Committee at their half-termly meetings and to report back at the Board of Trustees meetings which are also half-termly. Both start at 5.30pm and last no longer than 2 hours. It's a challenging role, but very rewarding.

If you are interested in the role, please email the ULT Chief Executive, Mike Osborne-Town, on osbornetown@tahs.org.uk.

Attendance

If your child is poorly and unable to come to school, please ring the school office (01889 590394), or email (office@ryecroft.staffs.sch.uk). **The new rule from Educational Welfare is that you must call the school on each day of absence.** This is not only to ensure the safeguarding of your child, but also to save the time of the office staff ringing home chasing absent children.

This is part of the school's attendance and safeguarding policy. This also ensures that your child does not get an unauthorised absence in the register.

Could you also please ensure that the school have your correct contact details eg: changed address, telephone numbers etc. This information is vital in case of an emergency, or if your child becomes unwell during the school day.

Holiday Update

On the 6th April 2017, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously against the father who had won an earlier legal battle in relation to a fine imposed following a term-time holiday, which was taken without permission. The Magistrates' Court and the High Court had previously decided that the father had no case to answer because his daughter had attended school regularly, in that her attendance was over 90% for the academic year to date, as at the end of the period of unauthorised absence.

The Supreme Court however, disagreed, stating that 'regularly' did not mean 'evenly spaced' or 'sufficiently often' but instead 'in accordance with attendance rules'. A leave of absence may only be granted by the school in exceptional circumstances (Education Regulations 2006).

The most common response to an unauthorised leave of absence is a fixed penalty notice, which would be issued in Staffordshire by the local authority, depending on the local code of conduct, and which has a £60 / £120 limit (per parent / per child), depending on when the fine is paid. If the fine is paid, then no further action is necessary. The Staffordshire Code of Conduct for issuing a penalty notice can be found at: <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/Attendance/home.aspx>.

If you would like to discuss your child's school attendance in more detail, then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Digital 5 A Day

The Children's Commissioner for England has launched a campaign, aimed at parents and carers to help them to encourage their children to enjoy the online world without being totally consumed by it. The campaign, Digital 5 A Day, is based on the NHS's evidence-based five steps to mental well-being, and gives children and parents practical steps to achieve a balanced digital diet.

The five elements of a good digital diet are: connect, be active, get creative, give to others and be mindful.

The address to access the resource is:

<https://www.childrencommissioner.gov.uk/2017/08/06/digital-5-a-day/>

Contact Details

Have you received either a new home or mobile phone number?
Have you changed your email address?
Have you moved house?
Have your personal circumstances changed?
Has any medical information for your child changed?

It is vital this information is kept up to date so we can contact you in case of an emergency. If you have answered yes to any of the above, could you please inform the school office as soon as possible, so we can update our records.

Uniform / Sports Kit

Our school jumpers (£16.00) and ties (£3.50) are available from our main office.

Please ensure your child attends their PE lesson wearing the correct PE uniform, this includes: white Ryecroft (house colour) top, black shorts / trousers, Ryecroft jumper, suitable trainers (any colour) and white ankle socks and a drink (not fizzy). Also, with the forever changeable weather, please ensure your child brings a waterproof jacket.

You can purchase all of our house sports kit from our supplier Trutex. They can be contacted by:

Telephone: 01782 310111

Online: www.trutexmeir.com

Shop: Trutex (Sportland) Meir, 41 Weston Road, Meir Stoke on Trent, ST3 6AB

Our house colours are: Arkwright – Blue, Heywood – Green, Sheldon – Red

Online Safety Sites

As children now spend most of their time on the internet / phones, we thought we would inform you of some useful sites to keep your child safe online:

- <http://knowaboutcse.co.uk/parents/> a detailed website for all ages to refer to concerning child sexual exploitation and grooming.
- 'O2' have teamed up with the NSPCC to create a series of free resources to help parents talk to children about online safety. Sign up at <http://nspcc.o2.co.uk>

- The Safer Internet Centre has a useful guide to setting up online accounts at <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/key-things-remember-when-helping-your-child-set-new-profile>.
- Guidance on privacy settings on some of the social media sites: <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/social-media-media-checklists>

Health and Safety Reminders

For health and safety reasons, only watches and one pair of stud earrings may be worn in school.

For future reference, if your child is thinking of having their ears / body pierced, could I please kindly request that this procedure is done over the 6 weeks summer holiday, to enable sufficient healing prior to returning to school. This is to enable your child to continue to take part in school sporting activities.

Any child who has recently had their ears / body pieced and is still unable to take the piecing out by themselves, will be excluded from PE until their piercings have completely healed. No plasters will be issued to cover piercings.

School Dinners

Please be reminded that school dinners are £2.15 per day, and cheques are to be made payable to Staffordshire County Council.

Children are able to pre-order their school dinner and sandwiches for the present day and / or the following day, by informing the kitchen staff directly at either breakfast club, or at break-times. This will help the kitchen staff with their food quantities, but also your child will have their preferred choice off the menu.

School Gateway App

Have you downloaded the school gateway app yet?

This is a free app that is linked to Schoolcomms, our school communications system that has many benefits:

- 1 Ryecroft can send you text messages for free via the app. You will receive a notification on your phone.
- 2 You can also reply for free!

So please download the app now and you help save both of us money!

It is simply to set up, all you require is your email address and mobile phone number (must be the same number Ryecroft has on file for your child) to register on the app, it will then send you an access code. If you have any problems logging in, please contact the school office where we will check our records and then hopefully the app will work.

Dates for your Diary

Autumn Term 2017

Monday 4th September: Inset day (school closed to pupils)

Tuesday 5th September – Friday 20th October (school open to pupils)

Monday 23rd October – Friday 27th October: Half Term

Monday 30th October: Inset day (school closed to pupils)

Tuesday 31st October – Tuesday 19th December (school open to pupils)

Wednesday 20th December 2017 – Tuesday 2nd January 2018: Christmas Holiday

Spring Term 2018

Wednesday 3rd January: Inset day (school closed to pupils)

Thursday 4th January – Friday 16th February: (school open to pupils)

Monday 19th – Friday 23rd February: Half Term

11th December 2017

Monday 26th February – Thursday 29th March: (school open to pupils)

Friday 30th March – Wednesday 11th April: Easter Holiday

Summer Term 2018

Thursday 12th April & Friday 13th April 2017: Inset day (school closed to pupils)

Monday 16th April – Friday 25th May: (school open to pupils)

Monday 7th May: May Day Holiday (school closed to pupils)

Monday 28th May – Friday 1st June: Half Term

Monday 4th June – Friday 20th July: (school open to pupils)

Monday 23rd July – Friday 31st August: Summer Holiday (school closed to pupils)

Thomas Alleynes High School

Please see the latest news from TAHS under the following link: <https://tahsroundup.wordpress.com/>