

Welcome!

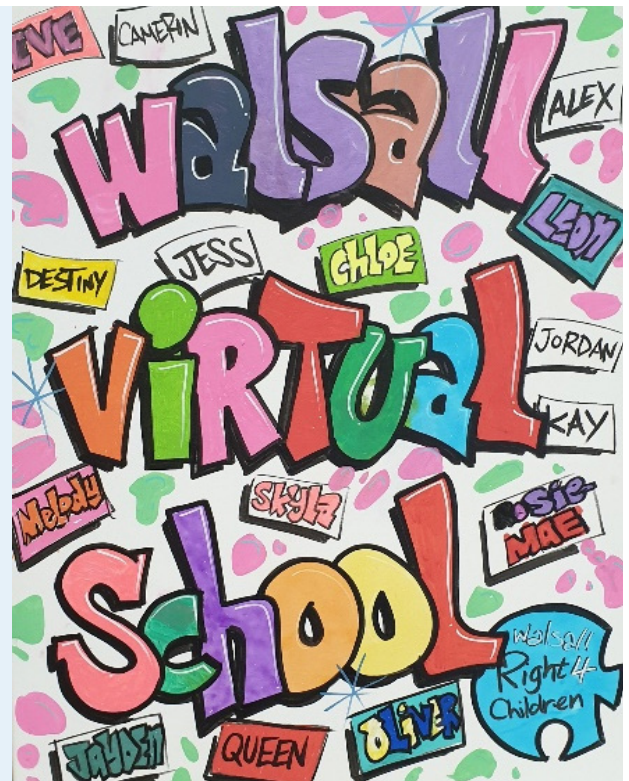
Happy autumn to our Walsall Virtual School community! The autumn term is now well under way

We hope this newsletter finds you safe and well and that you have had a good start to the term.

This term may bring additional challenges as young people and staff try to settle back into familiar routines which have been disrupted for so long. We hope this process is going as smoothly as it can for you, and we are here to support in any way that we can.

As always, don't hesitate to contact us if you have any thoughts, questions or ideas at:

WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk



Virtual School Summer Term Projects and Updates

- login
- home
- Newsletters
- News
- calendar
- About the Virtual School
- Information for Designated Teachers
- Virtual School Offer
- Personal Education Plans
- Pupil Premium Plus
- Information for parents/carers
- Previously looked after children
- Children & Young people's Section
- Enhancement and Enrichment Activities
- West Midlands Children in Care Foundation
- Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker

Welcome to the Walsall Virtual School Website

The **Walsall Virtual School** is not a teaching institution. It is "a model by which the local authority provides services and support for the education of looked after and previously looked after children and a constructive challenge to those providing the services". We work closely and in partnership with education settings, social care, parents /carers and other professionals to ensure there is a holistic and comprehensive approach to the support of looked after and previously looked after children in all areas of their lives and to ensure all children and young people receive a quality provision via all partnerships.

Walsall Virtual School works to ensure that the education of our children and young people is of an exceptional standard. We aim for learners to have access to high quality, personalised and aspirational learning opportunities and strive to ensure they receive this.

ATTACHMENT AWARE SCHOOLS PROJECT

VIRTUAL SCHOOL OFFER

TRAINING CALENDAR

NEWSLETTERS

LATEST NEWS

MEET THE TEAM

New Website

We are very proud to announce the launch of our new website! On it you will find a wealth of information about what we do, how we can support and links to other useful information.

Please do check it out - <https://wvs.sch.life/>



Exam Results!

This summer our Year 11 students gained the best ever results that they have gained as a Virtual School Group. They improved on the previous year by a significant amount. We know that the last sets of exams have been extremely challenging for Year 11 and we would like to say a huge well done to them, for working so hard and gaining such amazing grades. The vast majority of them have now moved onto colleges, apprenticeships or other education providers, where we continue to support them.

Apprenticeships

This year we have had number of our young people take up apprenticeships within the council, in roles such as teaching assistants and vehicle maintenance. Through our pre-apprenticeship scheme all young people on an apprenticeship are allocated a virtual school mentor who supports both the young person and the identified manager. They can also access funding for equipment, clothing and travel. If you have any young people in year 10 or 11 who are interested in an apprenticeship with the council please contact Hannah Yates, our careers advisor at walsallvirtuelschool@walsall.gov.uk

Post 16

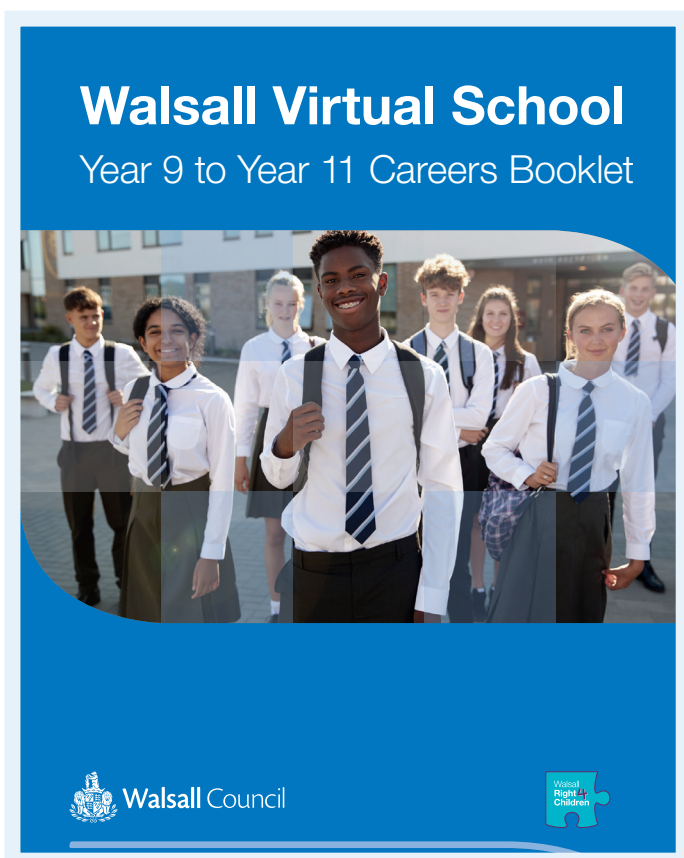
Our Post 16 PEPs have been re-designed and are now live. We will be delivering training on 'How to write a good PEP' for all post 16 providers in the Autumn term- Please check our website for dates.

More careers help for years 9-11

The Virtual School Careers Adviser, Hannah Yates has started to help our students in year 9, 10, or 11 create a careers action plan. The plans look at skills and interests, and encourages young people to start thinking early about what they might like to do when they leave formal education. As students get older, the plans become more focussed and they learn exactly what grades they need, and what steps they need to take to achieve their career ambitions.

Years 9-11 Careers Booklet

Our Careers booklet was completed over the summer holidays and has been sent to pupils in Year 9, 10, and 11. If you would like a copy and haven't received one, please let us know! The booklet gives all students guidance on choosing options, work experience, and advice on what is available post 16.



New Staff at the Virtual School

Primary Key Worker – Bethan McGarrie

We have welcomed a new member of staff to the team this term! Beth has joined the primary team within the Virtual School.

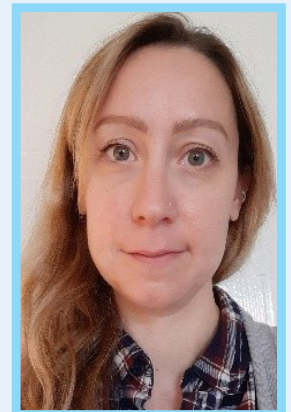
“Hi, my name is Beth and I am the new key worker within the primary team at the Virtual School. My role will be supporting schools and young people within Walsall as they move through primary school to help them enjoy and succeed at school. I have already begun working with some young people in schools and I look forward to working with more of you going forwards.”



Enhancement and Enrichment Officer – Karen O’Neill

Karen has worked with the Virtual School as a tutor for the last year and is now stepping into a brand new role as lead of Walsall Virtual School’s enhancement and enrichment projects. Watch this space for many exciting developments in the coming months!

“Having worked for the Virtual School for the last year, I am really excited to be starting as the Enhancement and Enrichment Co-ordinator. I look forward to being able to bring exciting and engaging activities and experiences to all our children and young people and to support carers to ensure enriching experiences are available to all.”



Access to Music Project

Our Access to Music Project is a joint project with Walsall Music Hub, which offers our Year 4s in Walsall schools the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. We launched it this September and have had a phenomenal start to the project! Reports from children suggest that they are really enjoying the 1:1 lessons and learning to play an instrument. And the wonderful music tutors have reported that they are also really enjoying the opportunity to work with our students and are really impressed by their enthusiasm!



This is a pilot project but we are hoping that if it is a success, we will be able to extend this to further year groups in the coming years!

Attachment Aware Project

We are so pleased to have signed up a further 12 schools onto our Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed Schools Project. We now have 49 schools involved in the project which is fantastic news for our children and young people.

We are so proud that yet again a number of our schools have been shortlisted for the Alex Timpson Attachment Aware Schools Award. The first cohort of attachment aware schools, who have recently achieved their gold awards have been nominated for the special award. The Shepwell School has also been nominated for the special award and Delves Juniors have been nominated for the Primary award. Well done and good luck to all schools.



Aspire to University



This project is run for Y7-11 students who have the potential to go to University. The project is run by the University of Wolverhampton. It is a long term project, so if young people start in Y7, they hopefully continue to be involved until at least Y11. It involves trips to the university and other education providers, and mentoring. All activities are designed to raise the aspirations of our learners and help them learn about what going to University could be like. The below information gives a clearer idea of what students get up to on the project. We are hoping that things will be even busier this year now that covid restrictions are more relaxed.

Aspire to University Outreach Activities

Since May 2021, five virtual outreach sessions have taken place for years 7 to 10 between 5pm and 6pm and were well attended.

Year 7

The University's STEM team facilitated a science outreach activity for year 7's to participate in. The session included exploring some of the fundamental laws of chemistry, physics and engineering. During the session, A2U participants made a Cartesian diver and observed the properties of gases and liquids which could be used to demonstrate the behaviour of gases and liquids when compressed. The activity was a fun way to learn all things science.

Year 8

The University's faculty of Arts lecturer Laura Onions delivered a drawing workshop that engaged participants' ears as well as their hands through playful mark making in response to unusual sounds, noise and music. They also had the opportunity to explore how drawing becomes a language to express certain feelings, or create a sense of atmosphere. The session was a great way for young people to showcase their creativity, as well as having lots of fun!

Years 9, 10 & 11

The 'Speak up' day outreach session was held over two different dates, which was facilitated by 2Engage, a Theatre Company. Both sessions were well attended.

The first part of the session informed young people about speaking in front of large audiences and how to be confident. It was a very informative with valuable advice was provided. The session also included a mix of icebreakers / confidence building and practical tasks related to public speaking exercises. Throughout this process, A2U participants contributed to the session. Tips and advice about how to avoid nerves, common mistakes and techniques were also shared. At the end of the first session, all participants were set a homework task of choosing a topic to speak on for two minutes for part two of the session.

The second part of the session included a quick mix of ice breaking / vocal warm up and for the rest of the session, the group shared their two minutes speeches. These were judged by their peers and 2Engage and the following participants were awarded the following.

COVID catch up premium and new box on PEP

As we're sure you are aware, additional funding is available for schools as a result of COVID-19. Information about the Catch up Pupil Premium is published by the government - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/catch-up-premium-coronavirus-covid-19>

You may have also noticed a new box at the top of the School Profile in the PEP:

Covid Catch-Up

Could you please comment on how Covid 19 has impacted on the child's education and what targeted intervention is school putting in place to enable them to catch up missed learning?

In this section we would like a comment specifically on how COVID 19 impacted that child's education and what targeted interventions school are putting in place to support progress. So far, good examples have included how much school the child accessed over the pandemic and then an explanation of how catch up funding alongside possible pupil premium interventions are in place to support the child academically and with their emotional wellbeing.

Why attachment-aware teaching matters for every child

Attachment is important for every child in your class – not just the vulnerable pupils, says Professor Peter Fonagy https://www.tes.com/news/why-attachment-aware-teaching-matters-every-child?fbclid=IwAR2IxeOWh7Sdb5X2TuWpn03A8XVSRQHXYOC-1B6roXKwcyIPb6Gq_UwK16I

Please do have a look at this interesting article about attachment aware teaching. And contact us if you are interested in joining our Attachment Aware Schools programme next September.



Teacher's Tool Room

Training so far

So far this term we have delivered induction training for new Designated Teachers, a Designated Teacher Briefing session and SDQ training. We are pleased to say there was a great turn out for all 3 training sessions. We are aware that there are schools who couldn't attend the SDQ training but would like to have so we are looking at repeating this session later in the term.

Training Calendar

Please find all upcoming training on our website - <https://wvs.sch.life/Page/Calendar>

We will send an invite closer to each event asking people to email WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk if they would like to attend.

This term we still have Supporting Care Experienced Children with Communication Needs, which will be led by our Speech and Language Therapist Helen Appert. We also have Social Emotional Wellbeing Plans – Uncovering Behaviour, which will be led by Marnie Aston, Educational Psychologist. Additionally Marnie is running a session with a refresher on Emotion Coaching and how to support parents/carers with this.

Carers' Corner

Secondary Transition – Year 6 to Year 7

Children born between 1 September 2010 and 31 August 2011 are due to transfer to a secondary school (year 7) in September 2022.

It is important that you submit your application by the closing date of 31 October 2021.

It is the carer's responsibility, alongside the social worker, to submit the applications for secondary school. However, we are more than happy to support this process and discuss options.

If you have a child in year 6 in mainstream school, you will have heard from one of our primary key workers to check applications for schools will be in by the closing date. For our children in specialist provision, our SEN caseworker has been working on ensuring secondary provision is identified,

As our children are Looked After Children, they do take priority in admissions, but the application does need to be in on time to ensure this. If you are not sure of long term care plans, please speak to your child's social worker to discuss this to identify appropriate schools. As they take priority, you can name just one school on the admissions form.

If you live in Walsall but any of your preferred schools are outside Walsall Borough, you can still apply in the same way. Walsall Council runs a co-ordinated admissions scheme with neighbouring councils and admissions authorities, so you only have to complete one application.

The same works vice versa if you live in a neighbouring authority, you use their admissions form but name a Walsall school on it.

Please also find further support here - https://go.walsall.gov.uk/schools_and_learning/schools_in_walsall/school_admissions/apply_for_a_secondary_school_place

Applying for a Reception Place – children who will turn 4 before 1.9.22

Children born between 1 September 2017 and 31 August 2018 are due to start reception in September 2022.

Primary school applications (reception and transfer from infant to junior) for September 2022 will open on 15 November 2021.

Having a place in the nursery class attached to a school does not guarantee a place in the reception class at that school. You must send a separate application for a place in the reception class.

If you live outside Walsall you should complete an application from your home local authority, even if you are applying for a Walsall school.

https://go.walsall.gov.uk/schools_and_learning/schools_in_walsall/school_admissions/apply_for_a_reception_place

Applying for a Junior School place for children currently in Year 2 in an Infant School

The same applies as above. Primary school applications (reception and transfer from infant to junior) for September 2022 will open on 15 November 2021.

You will then be able to log on and apply for a junior school place.

https://go.walsall.gov.uk/schools_and_learning/schools_in_walsall/school_admissions/apply_for_a_primary_school_place

E safety

As a parent or carer you play a key role in helping your child to stay safe online.

You don't need to be an expert on the internet to help keep your child stay safe online. We would like to sign post you to some advice and resources to support you as you support your child to use the internet safely, responsibly and positively.



<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>



<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers-whose-children-are-using-social-media>

PANTO FUN DAY



Take part in a drama session & watch a panto performance

AT:



ON: 18 & 19 Dec 2021

**An free event for care experienced children,
young people, friends, carers**

Hi Ho! Hi Ho! We're back with a new show!

Christmas 2021 sees the return of Panto to Walsall Arena with an incredible family spectacular, the magical tale of Snow White.

Walsall Virtual School in conjunction with Artslink, have purchased 30 tickets for our children and their families to attend 2 showings of Snow White.

There will also be a drama workshop before the show, and a chance to speak to representatives from Walsall Youth Theatre AND the cast of the show!

The dates are:

Saturday 18th December 2021-

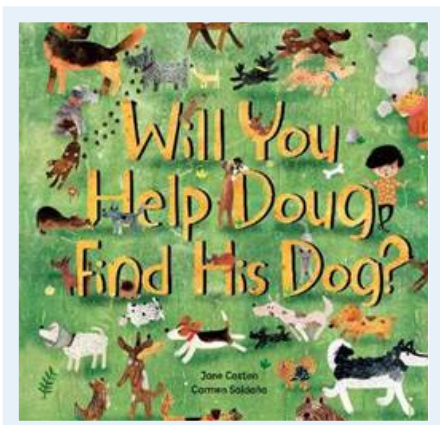
Drama workshop first, performance 5.30pm

Sunday 19th December 2021-

Drama workshop in morning, performance 1:00pm

We will be sending a separate email to carers/parents/social workers after the half term holiday. The tickets will be in high demand so it will be on a first come, first served basis. So please look out for further information!

Literacy Lounge- Books of the Term



Book of the Month for EYFS – Will You Help Doug Find his Dog?

Author: Jane Caston

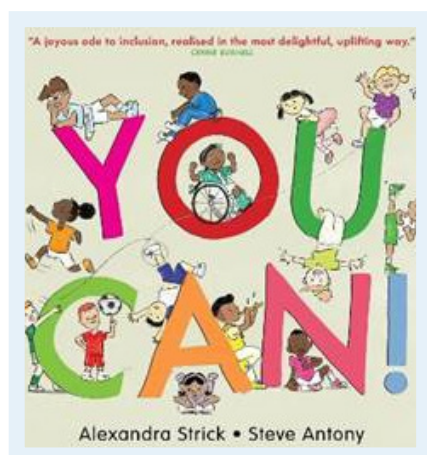
Poor Doug has lost his dog at the park and he needs help finding him. It's up to us, the reader, to become detectives and find the lost canine friend.

On each page, Doug shares clues about his dog, and that's when the interactive part of the book comes in. As Doug describes his dog, listing one characteristic at a time, readers are encouraged to pat the dogs with spots, and tickle all the small dogs, among other funny actions. Little ones will really enjoy stroking, shaking and patting the pages while trying to discover which dog belongs to Doug.

Short in length and with so many things to do and spot throughout, reading this book is perfect for a fun activity – making it great for reluctant readers or those who tend to fidget a lot during storytime.

Illustrator Carmen Saldana does a fantastic job of creating adorable dogs of all shapes, colours and sizes; each with their own unique expressions and personalities.

Not just for dog-lovers, Will You Help Doug Find his Dog? is a great interactive book for one-to-one reading time.



Book of the Month for Key Stage 1 – You Can!

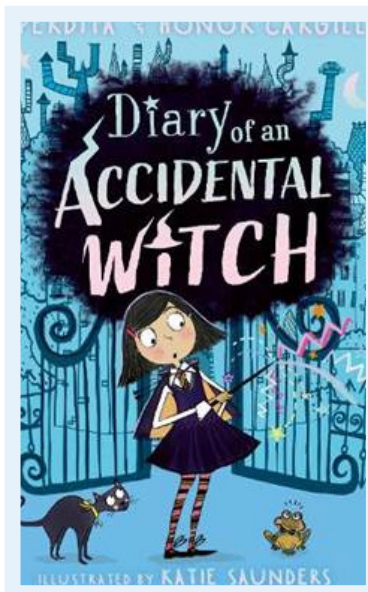
Author: Alexandra Strick and Steve Antony

You can dress up, paint your face, dance and be silly. You can be part of a crowd or lead the way. You can forgive others and yourself, and you can make mistakes and learn from them too. There are so many amazing things that you can do – and whatever you choose, you can be kind, be brilliant, and be YOU.

Based on real children's own voices and messages (including young disabled people), You Can! is a fabulously inclusive picture book that reminds all children that they are valued individuals with a bright future. This is a non-fiction book that aims to empower children, reassuring them that whatever life they may lead, there are opportunities to be supported, loved, happy and fulfilled.

Sometimes – as in the spread featuring a blind runner, with their guide runner helping them stay on track – children are reminded that they can do anything anyone else can do, but they just might have to do it differently (this was a direct quote from a young blind person who contributed to the book). The emphasis here is that if we need additional help, or need to do things a slightly different way, that's fine, which is a useful message for all children.

Steve Antony's marvellous illustration is full of action and emotion, showing a great variety of children growing up from babies to adults, making their choices as they go along and living their own, wonderful, unique lives.



Book of the Month for Key Stage 2 – Diary of an Accidental Witch

Author: Perdita and Honor Cargill
Bea Black is unenthusiastic about moving to the curious village of Little Spellshire and is upset when her dad accidentally enrolls her at the wrong school. She is even more alarmed when she discovers on her first day that the Spellshire School of Extraordinary Arts is, in fact, a school for witches.

Sworn to secrecy by headteacher Ms Sparks, Bea confides only in her diary, where she writes her innermost thoughts and tries to make sense of her baffling new surroundings.

Bea desperately hopes she can transfer to the more conventional Spellshire Academy, preferably before the Halloween Ball, so she can avoid wearing the embarrassing costume her dad is creating. Meanwhile, she must work hard to learn how to use a wand, cast spells, mix potions and fly a broomstick. The strain of keeping witch school a secret from her dad, not to mention mastering magic and making new friends, leaves Bea feeling exhausted.

Full of magical mayhem, this funny tale lightheartedly explores the challenges of moving home, starting a new school and dealing with bullies. The journal-format and amusing black-and-white illustrations make this an accessible and enjoyable read.



Book of the Month for Key Stage 3 – Aarti & The Blue Gods

Author: Jasbinder Bilan

Aunt often tells Aarti that she is an 'Indian princess in the Scottish wilds' but Aarti doesn't really know what that means.

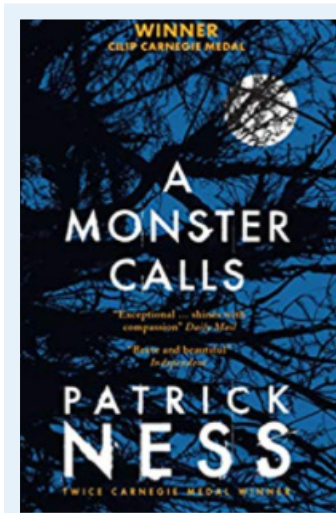
Aunt also says the world is full of bad things and cruel people and that they are lucky to be safe and alone on their island. But sometimes Aarti doesn't feel lucky: not when Aunt gets her out of bed in the middle of the night to go fishing in the cold or when she sends her out to stand in the snow, barefooted, for hours on end.

And Aarti is sure Aunt is keeping secrets from her and that the answers to her many questions lie behind the mysterious, locked door that Aunt won't talk about.

Then something happens that forces Aarti to take control of her own future – and she can only do that by finding out about her past.

This delicious mix of mystery, adventure and fantasy is gripping and irresistible as readers only get the hints about what Aarti's truth might be as she discovers it herself.

The story is packed with unexpected twists and turns and draws on some remarkable similarities between Scottish and Indian mythologies. An exciting, magical tale of faith and belonging.



Book of the month for Key stage 4 – A Monster Calls

Author: Patrick Ness

Conor has the same dream every night, ever since his mother first fell ill, ever since she started the treatments that don't quite seem to be working. But tonight is different. Tonight, when he wakes, there's a visitor at his window. It's ancient, elemental, a force of nature. And it wants the most dangerous thing of all from Conor. It wants the truth. Patrick Ness takes the final idea of the late, award-winning writer Siobhan Dowd and weaves an extraordinary and heartbreaking tale of mischief, healing and above all, the courage it takes to survive.

Imagination Library

The Walsall Virtual School are registered with the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. A book gifting programme devoted to inspiring a love of reading in the hearts of children everywhere.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library works with over 200 affiliate partners and delivers more than 40,000 books every month to children in the UK. Each month children from birth to age five, receive an age appropriate book in the post, free of charge. Idea sheets to accompany the books are emailed out to parents and carers where email addresses have been provided.

Further details of the scheme can be found at:

<https://imaginationlibrary.com/uk/>

If you have any questions about the book programme please contact us at:

WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk

We hope you enjoy reading these books together.



Mindfulness Moment



Our Learning Platforms

Just a quick reminder that as part of our Virtual School Offer, children have access to the following learning platforms. We are more than happy for these to be used in school and at home.

Reading Eggs / Doodle Maths – Years 1 – 6

We have purchased subscriptions for Reading Eggs for all children in Year 1 -6 so you have these to access thousands of reading books, activities and games!

We have also purchased subscriptions for Doodle Maths for all children in Year 1 -6. Doodle Maths is a digital learning platform which creates individual work plans for children from Reception to Year 6, with curriculum-aligned questions delivered in short, fun and snappy exercises on computer, tablet or phone. Little and often works best – just 10 minutes a day is all you need to boost your child's confidence and ability in maths.

- <https://readingeggs.co.uk/>
- <https://www.doodlemaths.com/>

Please do log in to these platforms and explore them with your children. Your children's schools have also been given the login details!



The login details for the children are below, should you also wish to use them with the children in school:

Username:

All children's usernames have been changed so that they are their First names, followed by the first letter of their second names, followed by Walsall.

So a child called Joe Bloggs would have the username JoeBWalsall.

Password:

The password has been set as WalsallVirtualSchool

Secondary Learning Platform:

Mathletics - Years 7 - 11

For young people in years 7 – 11, you have access to Mathletics.

Support your students' mathematics learning at home! The best learning is enjoyable learning. Mathletics blends rewards with creative adventures to create captivating experiences that will test learners' knowledge and abilities. Built on a foundation of solid curriculum-led content and designed by a team of veteran educators, Mathletics complements and reinforces schoolwork and classroom learning.

So do remember to use your Mathletics Username and Password to log in!

