

# WEST GRANTHAM

## UPDATE

Friday 30 January, 2025



WEST GRANTHAM  
Church of England Secondary Academy

### Check-mates, Circuits and Chart-Toppers

The past fortnight at WGSA has been packed with activity, energy and more highlights than a potato battery in STEM Club. Our Year 10s have now wrapped up their mock exams, showing real resilience, focus and only the occasional "Wait... was that this week?" moment. They approached the challenge with determination and good humour, and their teachers have been impressed by how seriously they've taken this important milestone. Year 8s also had their Parents' Evening, filling the school with proud conversations, bright plans and the classic parental line: "They're much quieter at home, I promise."

Enrichment has been buzzing with excitement, especially after the launch of our shiny new Chess Club, held every Thursday after school in the library. It's attracting everyone from curious beginners to students ready to make some pawn-derful moves. You might be dreaming of becoming the next Magnus Carlsen, or perhaps Magnus... Whoever... as long as you've got a decent endgame in mind, there's a board waiting for you. And if you're aiming to pull off grandmaster-level plays or simply trying to remember exactly how the knight moves, you'll fit right in for a truly rook-solid fun. With the club growing rapidly, it's safe to say chess has really taken over WGSA... one square at a time. And if that's not enough entertainment, Open Mic

enrichment continues to take centre stage. With singers, musicians and performers stepping up each week, it's become our number-one hit... the kind of club that really strikes a chord with students. You could even say it's hitting all the right notes.

Our Duke of Edinburgh group have been getting expedition-ready by practising how to correctly pack their rucksacks. Students have been cramming in tents, waterproofs, stoves, snacks and what feels like the entire contents of a small outdoor shop. They're learning key skills like teamwork, organisation and trying not to fall over backwards under the weight. STEM Club has been sparking excitement and the occasional small explosion, firing high-pressure rockets skyward and building lemon-powered and potato-powered circuits to light bulbs. These students are really currently excelling and proving once again that science at WGSA is never boring, especially when fruit and veg are involved.

A group of Year 9 girls also represented WGSA brilliantly at an Inspire+ Boccia Festival. They showed superb sportsmanship, strategy and teamwork, demonstrating precision and patience throughout the day. Their enthusiasm and determination made them stand out, and they were a credit to the academy from the first throw to the final score. On the court, in the field or on the stage, our students continue to impress us with their talent and positivity.

### A word from...

**Aaliyah, Y10**

I signed up for Duke of Edinburgh because I wanted a challenge and something that would push me out of my comfort zone. I'd heard from older students that it's tough but really rewarding, and I liked the idea of doing something that would help me build confidence and independence. Recently we've been learning how to pack our rucksacks properly, which is harder than it sounds. Everything has to fit, and you have to actually be able to carry it!

I'm really looking forward to the expedition in the summer. I know the walking and navigating will be difficult, but I think the sense of achievement at the end will make it worth it. DofE is already helping me build skills like teamwork and taking responsibility, and I know it'll be great for my college applications too. I'm really glad I signed up and we haven't even left the school field yet!

### WEEK A - FEBRUARY 2

**Mon**

Football Clubs, Fitness Gym, Gardening Club, Library Club

**Tue**

Library Club  
Basketball (Positive Futures)  
Christian Union

**Wed**

Fitness Gym  
Library Club  
STEM Club  
Dodgeball  
Sewcial Club

**Thu**

Homework Club  
Fitness Gym  
Debate Club  
Chess Club

**Fri**

Library Club

### WEEK B - FEBRUARY 9

**Mon**

Football Clubs, Fitness Gym, Gardening Club, Library Club

**Tue**

Library Club  
Basketball (Positive Futures)  
Christian Union

**Wed**

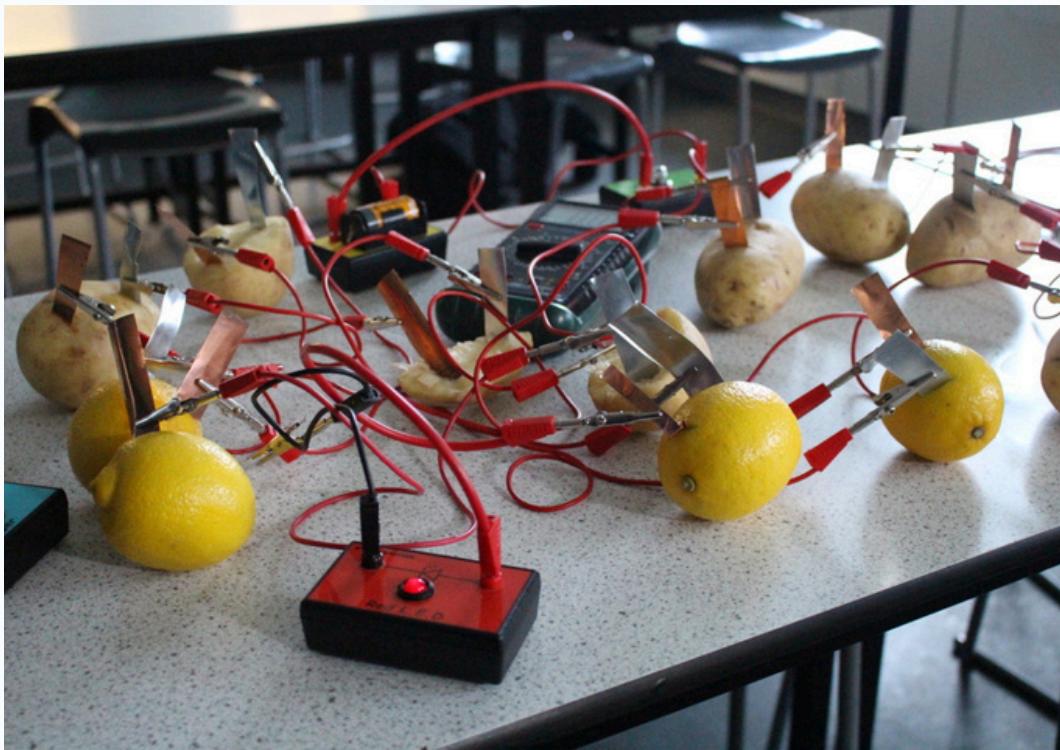
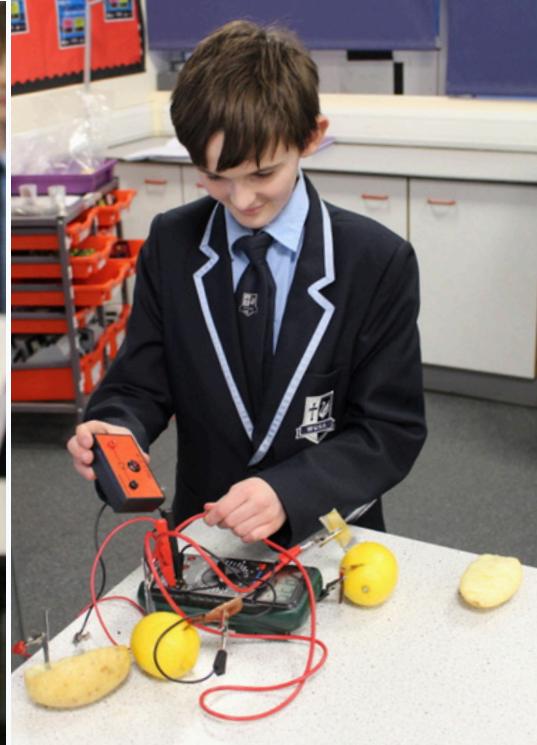
Fitness Gym  
Library Club  
STEM Club  
Dodgeball  
Sewcial Club

**Thu**

Homework Club  
Fitness Gym  
Debate Club  
Chess Club

**Fri**

Library Club





# SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

## 10 Conversation Starters for Parents

Talking about mental health to children is sometimes hard. To the point that we can put off raising the subject, not wanting to unearth problems or raise overwhelming subjects that we perceive our child is too young or not ready for. But rather than keeping children in the dark, this guide is designed to help you confidently talk about mental health, so they feel comfortable talking about their own worries and end any stigma before it begins.



### 1 LISTEN

This sounds obvious, but it is not something we are always great at. Active listening is where we listen without interrupting or making judgements and shows interest in what is being said. If your child feels listened to in the 'smallest of problems' they will become confident that you will listen when the 'biggest of problems' arise.

### 2 ASK TWICE

The campaign from time to change is great. <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/support-ask-twice-campaign>. Be tenacious about your child's wellbeing. Children instinctively know when your questions and support come from a place of wanting to help and care.



### 3 THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A STUPID QUESTION

This advice also relates to the first point. If your child can ask you any questions about the smallest of things and you listen and answer without shaming or belittling, then they will have more confidence to ask the biggest of questions.



### 4 BE OPEN AND HONEST

Children appreciate honesty, particularly if you are having to share information or talk about a difficult subject. For example, you may be talking about death or loss; 'It's very sad that Nana has died' or 'I feel sad that Nana has died'. How you talk about a subject will differ depending on their age and developmental maturity. Talking about death to a younger child for example will be different to that of an older teen, as their experience and understanding of death is different.

### 5 KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Assess the severity of the mental health difficulty you are noticing. Is the difficulty making it hard for your child to function regularly throughout everyday life? How frequently is your child affected, how long does it last and how persistent is it? Are they having problems controlling the difficulty? Talk to your child about your concerns and that it is likely they will need further support beyond family and friends.



### 6 TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH NATURALLY

Speak about mental health as part of everyday life, so that talking about our feelings and those of others is normalised. If the usual 'are you ok?' is not creating an opportunity for dialogue then say something like 'I know when something like that has happened to me I felt like this... is that how you are feeling or are you feeling something else?'

### 7 EMPATHISE

'It makes sense that you would feel this way, it is understandable'. Children often worry about things that we, as adults, might see as trivial or silly. However, for them at their age and stage it is a big concern and they need our kindness and care when they show their vulnerability and share their worries.



### 8 HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL SAFE

Teens particularly feel that by talking about their worries or concerns that this will make things worse. Reassure your child that you will discuss a plan of action together and what may or may not need to happen next. If they are a younger child, it is likely you will need to lead the conversation and explain next steps.



### 9 MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Be mindful of the language you use at home to describe and talk about mental health. Stigma often arises from misconceptions and a choice of language which is harmful. Using the word 'mental', 'man-up' or other such words in a derogatory way won't encourage your child to talk about their mental health for fear of being belittled.



### 10 IT IS OK TO SAY 'I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT'

Adults do not have all the answers but often children think they do. It is ok to acknowledge that what your child is experiencing is not something you have come across before or know anything about, but that you will work it out together and seek help together.



## Meet our expert

This guide has been written by Anna Bateman. Anna is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department of Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.



## Sources of Information and Support

Your GP

Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/v>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/parenting-tips/2016/november/a-simple-guide-to-active-listening-for-parents/>

<https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health>

