

WEST GRANTHAM UPDATE



WEST GRANTHAM
Church of England Secondary Academy

Friday 08 May, 2026

Tests, Tents, Toast and Tasty Treats

It's been a busy and sun-soaked start to the summer term at WGSA, with plenty happening both in and out of the classroom. We're excited to introduce some brand-new after school club opportunities this term, with Athletics and Rounders clubs now up and running every Wednesday. They are absolutely perfect for making the most of the improving weather and stretching those legs after a long winter. Whether students are sprinting, throwing, catching or simply enjoying being active outdoors, it's a great way to get involved and stay moving.

Meanwhile, our Year 11 students have officially begun their final exam window, marking the start of a hugely important period in their school journey. We wish every one of them the very best of luck! All of your hard work has led to this moment, and we know you'll do yourselves, and us, proud. Alongside their revision, Year 11 have also been busy hosting a fantastic bake sale to raise money for their upcoming prom. With tables packed full of cakes, brownies, cookies and sausage rolls galore, it was a true feast for the eyes (and the stomach). Safe to say, it was a batch-made success!

In Science Club, things have been getting

hands-on in a slightly more unusual way, as students have been dissecting hearts, lungs and eyeballs (don't worry, no human ones!). It's been a fascinating and memorable way to explore biology, giving students a closer look at how living things really work. Out on the field, our Duke of Edinburgh students have been making the most of the brighter mornings, practising how to put up tents as they prepare for their summer expedition. There's been a mixture of teamwork, problem-solving and the occasional "which way does this go?" moment, but they're well on their way to being expedition-ready. If only they were as adept at getting the tents back into the bags afterwards...

We also celebrated St George's Day in delicious style, with a hugely popular full English breakfast served at lunchtime, because nothing says national pride quite like sausages, bacon and a bit of black pudding bravery. And finally, our Year 9 students took part in an important Stay Safe Day, learning from visiting professionals about key topics including online safety, drug awareness, knife crime and harmful behaviours. It was a valuable and eye-opening experience, equipping students with the knowledge and confidence to make safe, informed choices.

A word from...

Anonymous, **Year 9**

I only joined the school earlier this year. I was really nervous about it as I'm not a very confident person normally. So joining WGSA in Year 9 was a bit scary at first because everyone already seemed to know each other, but I settled in much quicker than I expected. People were really friendly and teachers helped me feel welcome straight away. I've made some good friends and started to feel more confident in lessons as the weeks have gone on. There are lots of clubs and things to get involved in, I do 3 clubs after school and that has helped me feel part of the school and settle in nicely. I'm really glad I moved here as it is beginning to feel a bit like a place where I can belong in the future.

WEEK A - MAY 11

Mon

Football Clubs, Fitness Gym, Gardening Club, Library Club

Tue

Library Club
Basketball (Positive Futures)
Christian Union

Wed

Athletics, Rounders, Fitness Gym, Library Club, STEM Club, Dodgeball, Sewcial Club
Y9 RAF Assembly

Thu

Homework Club
Fitness Gym
Debate Club
Chess Club

Fri

Library Club

WEEK B - MAY 18

Mon

Football Clubs, Fitness Gym, Gardening Club, Library Club

Tue

Library Club
Basketball
Christian Union

Wed

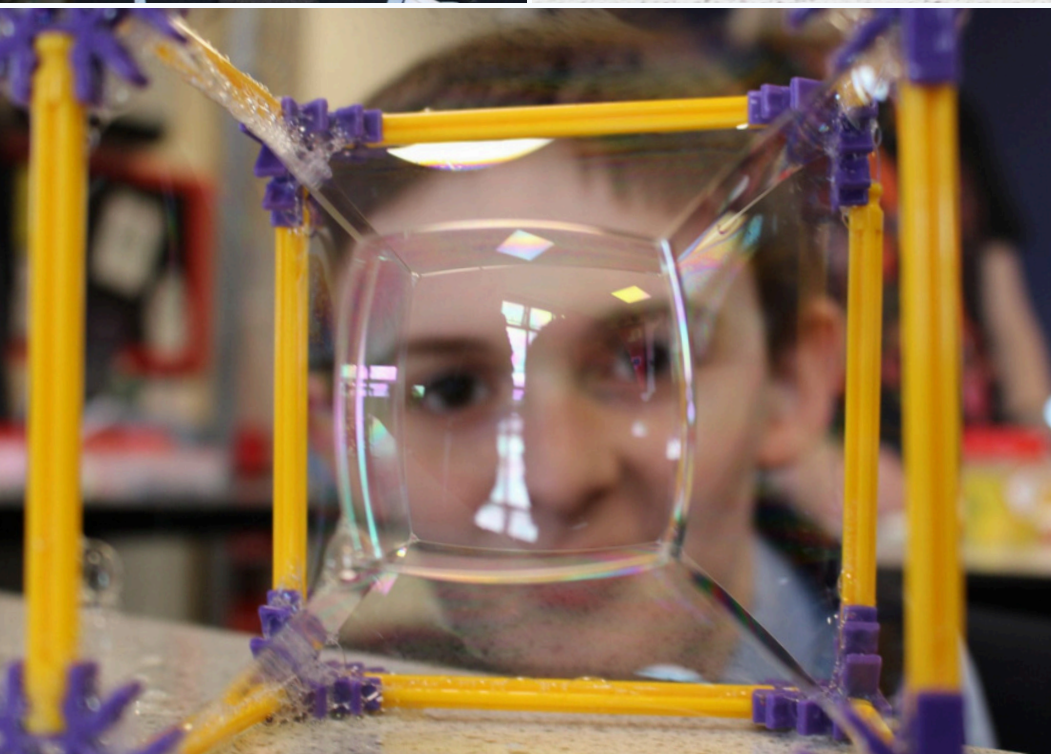
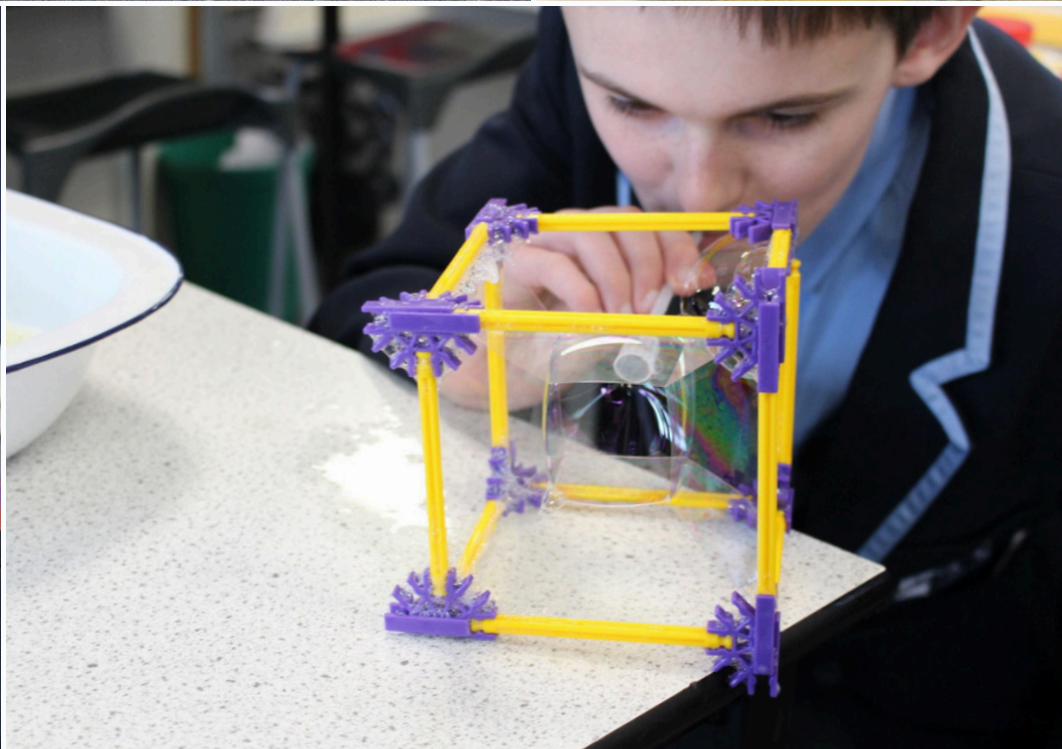
Athletics, Rounders, Fitness Gym, Library Club, STEM Club, Dodgeball, Sewcial Club

Thu

Homework Club
Fitness Gym
Debate Club
Chess Club

Fri

Library Club



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

School avoidance refers to reduced attendance or non-attendance at school by a child or young person. In 2022-23, more than one in five children in England were found to be absent from school over 10% of the time. This guide focuses on school avoidance with an emotional basis, offering expert mental health advice. However, it's important to remember that school avoidance is a hugely subjective experience which requires a tailored, individual approach.

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

REASONS FOR ABSENCE

School avoidance is sometimes underpinned by several factors rather than one single cause. This could include something going on for the child or young person within the family or at school. A child may have caring responsibilities at home, for instance, or a change in family dynamics; bullying and friendship difficulties at school; pressure to achieve in schoolwork and exams; or moving from primary school to secondary school.

PATTERNS OF ABSENCE

You may notice patterns in regular absences or children regularly expressing that they don't want to attend school (particularly being reluctant to leave home on school days). If a child or young person is neurodiverse, there is some evidence to suggest there are more aspects of school life which can cause distress – such as changes in the environment, changes of routine and sensory stimuli.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

There may be an increase in a child or young person's complaints about physical symptoms, particularly on school days or the evening before school. These could include tummy aches, headaches, or saying they feel ill when there doesn't appear to be a medical cause. Always check with the GP first to rule out medical causes or illness.

IMPACT OF SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

School refusal can negatively impact a young person's learning and development. Attending school on a regular basis not only supports academic attainment but is also important for the development of key life skills and the growth of children and young people as citizens.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

The difficulties associated with school non-attendance can be far reaching and may have a negative impact on long-term outcomes. It may, for example, lead to reduced future aspirations, poor emotional regulation, mental health difficulties, limited academic progress and restricted employment opportunities.

CYCLE OF ABSENCE

Consistent absences may contribute to sustained school avoidance over time. Further to this, the longer a pupil is out of education, the more likely it is that there is a rise in their ongoing need to avoid the activity making them anxious – increasing their desire to stay at home.

Advice for Parents & Educators

WORK TOGETHER

If there's a concern about a child's absence and emotional wellbeing, it's important that there is clear communication and a consistent approach between the child's parents and the school, so you can take a child-centred approach together towards a plan of support or reintegration. This ensures a consistency of approach from both home and school, creating better outcomes for the child.

FOLLOW REGULAR ROUTINES

Children can benefit from a regular and consistent routine. This could be a morning routine, from waking up and having breakfast through to getting dressed, packing their bag and leaving the house. A consistent evening routine which is calm and spent away from screens can also give children much needed predictability and familiarity. Schools can help create a timetabled routine for the child's school day, if required.

MANAGE OVERWHELMING FEELINGS

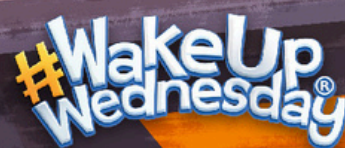
Acknowledge the child's worries, listen and discuss coping strategies together to help them manage difficulties. These could include mindfulness, deep breathing or going for a walk. This helps them understand that you are working together towards a common goal, and that these strategies can be used when bigger feelings arise.

RECOGNISE POSITIVE STEPS

Drawing attention to a child's successes – be they big or small – can help to give them some much-needed confidence and motivation. Celebrate these daily victories – such as getting out of bed on time or completing school work – and don't hesitate to let the child know when you're impressed or proud of them. Such an approach can go a long way.

Meet Our Expert

With 30 years' experience as a teacher, trainer, consultant and interim executive board member, Anna Bateman has a superb understanding of what works in pedagogy, school improvement and leadership. She has also advised the Department for Education on their mental health green paper.



The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: nationalcollege.com/guides/school-avoidance