

John Ray Times

Our Core Values: Hope, Perseverance, Trust, Courage, Respect, Responsibility

14th September 2026

Phone: 01376 324107 **Email:** johnrayjunior@compassps.uk **Website:** www.johnray.compassps.uk



@ facebook.com/johnraycompassps

Online learning links

 Accelerated Reader	 Century Tech	 TTRockstars	 Nessy
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Links for permission for children in Y5 and Y6 to bring in a mobile phone: [Request to bring in a mobile phone](#)

Links for permission for children in Y5 and Y6 to walk home alone: [Permission to walk home alone](#)

For uniform orders visit: [Absolute Embroidery](#), or visit the shop at Unit 32-33 Block B, Braintree Enterprise Centre, Springwood Drive, CM7 2YN

For information on Food Bank vouchers email: mkeegan@compassps.uk

For second hand uniform requests email: rcottee@compassps.uk

Breakfast club queries email: hwiltshire@compassps.uk

School dinner menus are on our website:

Spring/Summer Menus:

28.09.26 [Week 1](#) 14.09.26 [Week 2](#), 21.09.26 [Week 3](#)

A Message from our catering provider, Chartwells:

To view the Chartwells Parent Information Leaflet, please [click here](#).

The cost for a school meal is now £2.50 and is payable on your MCAS App. If you think that your child may be entitled to free school meals, please contact Mrs Wiltshire in the school office.

[Zones of Regulation](#)



[School Attendance Difficulties](#)



[Supporting Anxiety](#)



My Happy Mind Parent App

To access these materials just go to <https://myhappymind.org/parent-resources> We will send out a separate letter with the access code to enable you to access these at home.

Assemblies

In our assemblies last week, we discussed the question 'What keeps us going when things get tough?'. This linked in really well with our core value of perseverance. We discovered that between the 2nd and 6th September over 100 men took part in the Tour of Britain Men. This race takes place over 5 days beginning in Lincoln, travelling through Lancashire and Yorkshire before finishing in the Scottish borders. The race covers a nearly 900 kilometres. Building on our assemblies from last week, we listened to some of Dolly Parton's music as we entered and left the hall.

Y6 Mersea residential and Y6 information meeting- 21.09.26 4:30pm

Just a reminder that we will be holding a meeting for Y6 parents on Monday 21st September at 4:30pm. Information regarding the Mersea residential as well as other Y6 information will be shared.

This will be held in the school hall so please enter via the white hall doors opposite the bus stop in Notley Road. Y6 children can also attend. Please note this is the only meeting regarding the Mersea residential.

Individual photos 25.09.26

Individual photos will be taken on Friday 25.09.26. Children who have PE on Fridays should come to school wearing their school uniform and bring their PE kits in a separate bag.

Curriculum Maps

Our curriculum maps for each year group can be found in our website.

[Year 3 curriculum map](#) [Year 4 curriculum map](#) [Year 5 curriculum map](#) [Year 6 curriculum map](#)

Year 3 parent feedback form

We are keen to gather Y3 parents' early views on how the Y3 children have settled into JRJS. If you haven't already, please take a few moments to complete this short survey.



[Y3 parent feedback form – Fill in form](#)

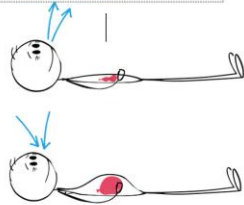
Year 5 Return to school anxiety workshops

During the first week back to school, year 5 took part in workshops led by the Essex Mental Health Support Team. The children talked through the excitement and challenges that returning to school can bring and how they can approach any problems or worries they may have. They learned about how worries can affect them physically, for example, feeling shaky or getting butterflies. Then they talked through different strategies that may help them feel better. Here are some examples of strategies that the children can use in school or at home if they are feeling worried.

Deep Breathing

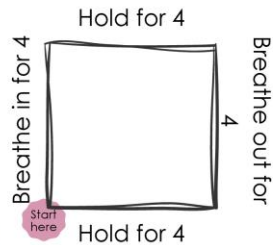
Deep breathing is an excellent way to help re-set our bodies and keep them calm when we are feeling worried.

Belly Breathing

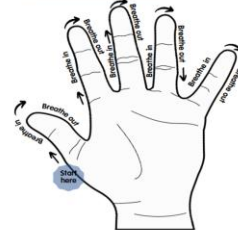


Striving to provide the best care by the best people

Square Breathing



Five Finger Breathing



Muscle relaxation

Tense each muscle in the series below for 5 seconds and then release the tension. Notice how different it feels when you relax the muscles.

- **Hands** – clench your left fist and then relax, do the same with your right.
- **Arms** – bend your elbows and tense your arm and bicep and then relax.
- **Neck** – press your head back and roll it from side to side slowly. Feel the tension moving and then bring your head back into a comfortable position.
- **Face** – focus on the jaw and forehead. Lower your eyebrows into a frown and then raise them. After 5 seconds relax them and clench your jaw for 5 seconds and then relax.
- **Chest** – take a deep breath and notice your chest rising. Hold it for 5 seconds and relax.
- **Stomach** – tense your stomach as tight as you can and then relax.
- **Legs** – straighten your legs and stretch out as far as possible. Bend your feet up



Striving to provide the best care by the best people

5 4 3 2 1 Grounding

When we are feeling worried, we tend to be worrying about something that has happened in the past or jumping way into the future. It can be helpful to reconnect to the present moment and environment. One way to do this is through our senses.



5 things you can see



4 things you can hear



3 things you can touch



2 things you can smell



1 things you can taste



Striving to provide the best care by the best people

After school clubs

After school clubs have started this week.

Apply for a secondary school (year 7) place for September 2027

If your child is in year 6, you can apply for a secondary school (year 7) place between **12th September and 31st October 2026**.

Information can be found on the Essex website: [Secondary school places | Essex County Council](#)

Should you require any assistance, please contact the school office.

Reminder: School fete 18.09.26

Due to the very warm weather in July, our school fete was postponed and will take place after school on 18.09.26. We look forward to seeing you there.

Changes to Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility

DON'T MISS OUT ON FREE SCHOOL MEALS

MORE FAMILIES THAN EVER NOW QUALIFY FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS, EVEN IF YOU'VE CHECKED BEFORE.

- ★ If your child's eligible, they can enjoy a **FREE** school lunch every day, saving your family time and money by signing up
- ★ Nutritious meals help keep your child energised and focused throughout the school day
- ★ From September 2026, all Universal Credit households qualify, regardless of income
- ★ Signing up is quick and confidential, and could really make a difference to your child's day

Click the link to find out more, including how to register for free school meals, or contact Chartwells at education.csu@compass-group.co.uk or on free phone 0800 917 6818.

If your child currently receives free school meals, you will now have to reapply for this academic year. If you do not complete the form, your child will no longer be entitled to receive FSM

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit will be entitled to receive a free school meal. There will no longer be an income threshold of £7400 for the purposes of free school meals.

In order for us to check if you are eligible, please complete this [form](#) if you are in receipt of Universal Credit. One form should be completed per child. Full details can be found on the letter that was sent to parents on the 1st June.

Football Trials

Mr Mills and Miss O'Sullivan are doing football trials over the next two weeks for our year 5/6 boys and girls football team.

The following dates for the trials are:

Monday 14th - Year 6 boys

Tuesday 15th - Year 6 girls

Monday 21st - Year 5 boys

Tuesday 22nd - Year 5 girls

If your child wants to attend, they need to go in for lunch first thing and come to the Astro for 1 o'clock and it will last roughly 30 minutes.

Children need to wear astros/trainers and do not need to wear PE kit unless it is their PE day.

If your child has any questions, please ask them to speak to Mr Mills.

25.09.26 Individual photos *(Children having PE today should bring their PE kit in a separate bag))*

Toys and trading cards from home

This is just a reminder that toys and trading cards of any description e.g. Premier League cards are not permitted in school. Children are also not permitted to bring in their own fidget tools or ear defenders. If children need these as a reasonable adjustment, they will be provided for them by a member of staff.

Nuts and nut products

Please be aware that nuts, including peanuts, or products containing nuts are not allowed in school under any circumstances. This includes chocolate spread with nuts like Nutella and filled crepes and croissants.

Nuts should not be provided as part of a packed lunch.



The Government's Children's Commissioner is conducting a country-wide survey. They are hoping to have as many as 1 million children complete the survey, which explores what it is like to grow up in England today. This includes questions on children's concerns, their experiences in their communities, and their ideas about what a "good childhood" should look like now and in the future.

You can access the survey [here](#).

Year 6 SATs question of the week

Here is a question worth 1 mark from the 2022 Maths Reasoning paper.

Circle the improper fraction that is equivalent to $2\frac{3}{8}$

$$\frac{5}{8}$$

$$\frac{14}{8}$$

$$\frac{19}{8}$$

$$\frac{23}{8}$$

$$\frac{26}{8}$$

Here is a question from the 2022 grammar and punctuation paper. It is worth 1 mark.

Circle the correct **verb form** in each underlined pair to complete the passage below.

William Shakespeare, the famous writer, is / was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564 and later will move / moved to London where he will become / became an actor. Even today, Shakespeare's plays are performed / performed around the world.

Is my child too ill for school?

The NHS has produced useful information to support parents when deciding if their child is too ill to attend school. Information can be found on the NHS website.

[NHS- Is my child too ill for school?](#)

SEN Local Offer

Our SEN Local Offer is amended and published at the end of each academic year. It has the information on provision and processes across the school and the SENCo contact details: [John Ray Junior School - SEND Local Offer \(compassps.uk\)](#).

SEND Local Offer Newsletter

There are lots of activities and events for children with SEND on the Essex Local Offer and from the Local Offer website – sign up here to read more: [Stay up to date with the Essex Local Offer newsletter | Essex Local Offer](#).

This includes our New POP Essex website and location: [POP Essex • SEN Stay & Play And Respite In Braintree, Essex \(pop-essex.org\)](#).

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Don't forget we would love to hear about any children who have been awarded badges or certificates for activities they do outside of school. Please email class teachers with your child's achievements.

Well done to the following children for their achievements out of school:

Aadam (4SJ) fun run, Oliver (3JB) Park Run
 Akasya (6JL) 3rd place swimming gala, Harry (4SJ) stage 7 swimming
 Lilly (6NG) red stipe kick boxing
 Amelie (4SJ) student of the week at theatre school, Amelie (6NG) did a dance show
 Ruby (3BB) BMX competition
 Summer (6RR), Logan (6JL) and Sidney (6CO) were players of the match in football
 Noah (6CO) cricket presentation award

Stars of the week will be awarded this Friday.

3BB: Skyler	4CS:	5AW: Finley	6CO: Blaize
3DB: Archie	4JB: Greg	5CE: Michael	6JL: Akasya
3JB: Liam	4JW: Theo	5DC: Jake	6NG: Brad
3LA: Laney	4SJ: Lily	5KS: Lexie	6RR: Victoria

PE

Children need to come into school on PE days in their PE kit. Children will need an outdoor PE kit i.e., black tracksuit bottoms (or shorts in warmer weather), white T-shirt and a black fleece / tracksuit top.

We are noticing more children coming to school on PE days in wear that is not PE uniform. Please ensure that children have a plain white T-shirt and black shorts or tracksuit bottoms. We may ask children to change into any spare PE that we have in school if they do not come to school dressed appropriately.

Monday: 3LA, 6NG, 4CS, 5CE
 Tuesday: Y5, 3BB, 3DB, 3JB
 Wednesday: Y4, 6CO, 6JL, 6RR
 Thursday: Y3, 4JB, 4JW, 4SJ
 Friday: Y6, 5AW, 5DC, 5KS

Please remember that children must remove earrings to participate in PE lessons. Taping over earrings is not permitted.

PE kit is black joggers / shorts and a black hoodie or sweatshirt with a white T shirt along with trainers.

We expect that children will either wear one of the black John Ray logo hoodies from our supplier or a plain black hoodie/sweatshirt and plain black joggers on the two days a week that your child has PE.

CASHBACK WHEN SHOPPING ONLINE

The Friends of JRI and JRJ have created a cash back account through **Easy Fundraising**. This is a fantastic way to raise much needed extra funds to support both schools.

The link below can be used for you to register:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/invite/47ha4n/>

Once registered, for ease, you can download the app. Every time you shop from the app, across over 4000 online retailers, our schools earn cash back. It's free to join and includes top names like

EBay, Argos, Iceland and John Lewis. You can share this link with friends and family members too. A letter with more information can be found on our [website](#).

Safeguarding Are you worried about a child?

As a school, we consider safeguarding to be a priority. We welcome parents and carers talking openly to us about their concerns for the safeguarding of children and families. **Remember, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.** If you have any concerns about a child, you can contact one of our Designated Safeguarding Leads via the school office. Please ask to speak to Karen Harrison, Rachel Cottee or Meriel Keegan and specify that you have a safeguarding concern.



National Online Safety: What parents and carers need to know about Character. Kids

Character.AI lets users create and chat with AI-powered characters that can behave like friends, mentors, fictional favourites, or romantic partners. While these conversations can feel engaging and supportive, their convincing human-like responses can blur important boundaries. Young people may encounter inappropriate content, misinformation and privacy risks, or begin forming an unhealthy emotional attachment to an AI companion.

For parents and educators, understanding these risks can make conversations about AI companionship more constructive. This #WakeUpWednesday guide explores warning signs such as secretive or excessive use and withdrawal from real-world activities, while offering practical advice on checking age restrictions, protecting personal information, questioning chatbot advice, and responding appropriately when safeguarding concerns arise.

www.nationalonlinesafety.com

CLASS TEACHERS' EMAIL ADDRESSES

We understand that for many people email is a quick and efficient way of communicating and we are therefore happy to provide class teachers' email addresses. Although email is a quick and easy way for parents to communicate with staff, matters that require urgent attention should be communicated via the school office. Staff are not expected to respond to emails after 5pm, during weekends/holidays or when off work due to sickness. A parental agreement relating to email communication with teachers is available from the school office or on our website under the communication tab.

Year 3	Year 4
3BB: tbeeson@compassps.uk , kbrighton@compassps.uk	4JB: jbird@compassps.uk
3DB: dbanks@compassps.uk	4CS: csteadman@compassps.uk
3LA: larcher@compassps.uk	4JW: jwhitehouse@compassps.uk
3JB: jbrennan@compassps.uk	4SJ: dsayer-jones@compassps.uk
Year 5	Year 6
5KS: kswann@compassps.uk	6NG: ngibson@compassps.uk
5CE: cellis@compassps.uk	6JL: jlarbalestier@compassps.uk
5DC: dcasey@compassps.uk	6CO: cosullivan1@compassps.uk
5AW: awilson1@compassps.uk , rcottee@compassps.uk	6RR: rroberts@compassps.uk

Please contact class teachers in the first instance to resolve any issues. Should you feel you need to escalate the issue, please contact:

Miss Coffee (Assistant Head) if your child is in Y5 or Y6 – rcoffee@compassps.uk

Mrs Breen (Assistant Head) if your child is in Y3 or Y4 – kbreen@compassps.uk

RECENT LETTERS INCLUDING NEWSLETTERS – MANY OF OUR LETTERS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE

All communication will be sent through Bromcom. Please ensure that you have given us a current email address. Issues with Bromcom communication should be emailed tojrcontact@compassps.uk

Dates for the academic year 2025-2026 (new dates or changes in red)

[Please see the website for the term dates](#)

Academic diary dates for 2026-27

Autumn term	Spring term	Summer term
14.09.26 After school clubs start 18.9.26 (delayed) Summer Fete 21.09.26 Y6 meeting 4:30pm (Mersea and Y6 information) 25.09.26 Individual photos (Children having PE today should bring their PE kit in a separate bag)) 14.10.26 Enhanced one planning for specific children 15.10.26- SEND tea and chat 9:30-10:30 20.10.26 3:40 – 6:30 Learning Conferences 21.10.26 3:40 – 6:30 Learning Conferences 26.10.26 Half term week 31.10.26 Secondary school admissions close 13.11.26 Non uniform day in exchange for a donation for the PTA gift shop 19.11.26 Wonderdome for Y5 children 20.11.26 Children in need (non – uniform: children can wear spots / stripes in return for a donation) 28.11.26 Christmas fete at JRIS 30.11.26 last week for after school clubs 03.12.26 PTA gift shop	04.01.27 Children return to school 11.01.27 After school clubs start 01.02.27-7.02.27 Children's mental health week 09.02.27 SEND tea and chat 9:30-10:30 03.02.27 Enhanced one planning for specific children 05.02.27 Individual photos (Children having PE today should bring their PE kit in a separate bag)) 9.02.27 Safer internet day 15.02.27 Half term week 04.03.27 World book day (Children are invited to dress as a book character or bring in a prop from a book) 05.03.27 Science week 9.03.27 Learning conferences 3:40 – 6:00 10.03.27 Learning conferences 3:40 – 6:30 22.03.27 Last week for clubs 24.03.27 Y5 and Y6 to walk to St Michael's church for an Easter service (This takes place in school time and is for staff and children only. Children should wear suitable shoes for walking) 26.03.27 Last day of term	12.04.27 Children return to school 19.04.27 First week of after school clubs 10.05.27 SATs week 19.05.27-21.05.27 Mersea residential for Y6 25.05.27 Sports day (Y5 / 6 in the morning, Y3 / Y4 in the afternoon, picnic 12-12:45) 31.05.27 Half term week 07.06.27 Multiplication check for 3 weeks (Y4 only) 08.06.27 reserve sports day in case of poor weather 09.06.27 Enhanced and focussed one plans 21.06.27 Secondary school transition week (schools will choose their own dates) 28.06.27 Last week of after school clubs 29.06.27 School group photos (Children having PE today should bring their PE kit in a separate bag)) 29.06.27 Class swaps – children to spend time in their new class 02.07.27 Y6 leavers' disco 5pm-7pm 07.07.27 Open afternoon 3:30-4:30 08.07.27 Annual reports sent out 13.07.27 Y6 production for 6JL and 6CO 2pm and 4:30

05.12.26 Christmas fete at JRIS Note change of date 07.12.25 SEN tea and chat 2-3pm 16.12.26 Y3 and Y5 Christmas dinner day <i>(children in Y3 / 3 are welcome to wear a Christmas jumper and / or accessory)</i> 17.12.26 Y4 and Y6 Christmas dinner day <i>(children in Y4 / 6 are welcome to wear a Christmas jumper and / or accessory)</i> 17.12.26 Y3 and Y4 to walk to St Michael's church for a Christmas service <i>(This takes place in school time and is for staff and children only. Children should wear suitable shoes for walking)</i> 18.12.26 Last day of term		14.07.27 Y6 production for 6RR and 6NG 2pm and 4:30 16.07.27 Last day of term for children
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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about CHARACTER.AI

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Character.AI is an entertainment platform where users create and chat with AI-powered characters. These chatbots can act like existing favourite characters from movies or books, or like friends, mentors, or even romantic partners, responding in an emotional, personally engaging way. Although this can encourage creativity, it can also make a generated conversation feel like a genuine relationship, which is concerning if it takes the place of human relationships.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

AI replies are generated in real time rather than chosen from a fully checked script. Even with safety filters on, conversations can still move into sexual, violent, discriminatory, or self-harm material. These AI characters are often made by users, so a familiar name or child-friendly description does not guarantee that every response from the character will be suitable for a young person.

BLURRED BOUNDARIES

Characters on Character.AI can use the language of friendship, love, and empathy without ever feeling anything. Vulnerable young people may struggle to separate this simulation from genuine understanding. Romantic role-play or a character that demands attention, loyalty, or secrecy could also risk distorting young people's expectations around consent, disagreement, and the give-and-take involved in healthy human relationships.

UNRELIABLE ADVICE

Characters, like other chatbot platforms, are at risk of inventing facts or giving inappropriate advice while sounding completely confident. Characters may also echo a young person's assumptions instead of questioning them. This can become particularly risky when users rely on a character for guidance about health, mental wellbeing, relationships, money, or personal safety instead of checking with a credible source or trusted adult.

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

Character.AI chatbots can appear endlessly attentive, supportive, and affectionate, which is one of the hallmarks of the generative AI models that such companions are built on. A young person may start turning to a character chatbot whenever they feel lonely or upset and believe that it understands them better than the humans in their life. This can become more concerning when chatting starts to replace sleep, schoolwork, hobbies and friendships.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Character.AI chats may feel private, especially when a bot sounds personal and caring, but they take place on a company's online systems. Users could intentionally or unintentionally reveal their name, school, location, routines, images, or intimate concerns. Character.AI says some data may be retained to improve its services and AI models, so young people should never treat a chatbot like a confidential diary.

UNHEALTHY ENGAGEMENT

Be aware of warning signs such as secret accounts, bypassing age restrictions, hiding phone use from adults, chatting late at night, distress when access to the platform or character stops, withdrawal from other people, falling interest in school, or believing the character is conscious. Increased use may also signal that the young person is already lonely, anxious, or seeking help.

Advice for Parents & Educators

KEEP CONVERSATIONS OPEN

Ask what the young person enjoys about Character.AI and invite them to show you how the platform and their favourite characters work. Useful questions include, "Has it ever said something that felt wrong?" and "How can you tell it doesn't have feelings?" Avoid shaming them for using platforms like Character.AI or making them feel there is something wrong with them for doing so.

PAUSE, CHECK AND ASK

Teach young people to pause before accepting an answer from characters on Character.AI. Encourage them to check important claims against a trustworthy source and ask a safe adult when the issue matters. Never use a character as the sole source of medical, mental health, legal, financial, or safeguarding advice. Remind them not to share passwords, contact details, school information, live locations, or private images.

CHECK AGE, SETTINGS & LIMITS

Character.AI's minimum age is 16 in the UK, but open-ended companion chat is restricted to adults aged 18 or over. Users aged 16 to 17 receive a different experience built around guided 'Stories' and other creative or social features. Check their current settings, never help or encourage a young person to give a false age, and apply the same safety rules to other chatbot apps.

NOTICE AND RESPOND

Take action if chats involve sexual content, threats, coercion, abuse, self-harm or danger. Save relevant evidence, report the character and follow the setting's safeguarding process; educators should involve the designated safeguarding lead. If anyone is in immediate danger, contact emergency services. Childline is available on 0800 1111 and the NSPCC Helpline on 0800 800 5000.

Meet Our Expert

Darren Coxon is an educator with almost 30 years' experience across teaching, school leadership, and governance. He works internationally, supporting schools and colleges with AI leadership and governance, as well as teaching the key fundamentals of AI use and safety to educators at The National College.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

See full reference list on our website

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