John Ray Times

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

19th October 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

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:

19.10.26 Week 1 .02.11.26 Week 2, 09.11.26 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.

Free School Meals (FSM): Free School Meals (FSMs)

If you receive Universal Credit, your child will be eligible for free school meals.

If you think your child may be entitled to free school meals, please apply using this link.

Once you have submitted your application, you will receive an instant confirmation confirming whether your child is eligible or not eligible.

Zones of Regulation	**School Attendance Difficulties**	**Supporting Anxiety**
		
Curriculum maps are available on our website	Year 3 curriculum map	Year 4 curriculum map
	Year 5 curriculum map	Year 6 curriculum map

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, we discussed the question 'Do we need AI wherever we go?' This linked to the news story that Meta has created a Muse charm, a small device that fits in a pocket or on a key ring. The charm uses Muse, Meta's artificial intelligence technology, and is aimed at adults who will be able to talk to it and ask it questions.

We have also been exploring Black History Month and have been looking at the lives of significant figures in black history. So far, we have found out about the lives of Rosa Parks and Nelson Mandella. We talked about how their life stories linked to our core values of hope and courage. We also explored the life of Pablo Fanque, who was an inspirational Victorian performer. His daring stunts, expert horsemanship and generosity made him one of the biggest names in Victorian entertainment at a time when many black people were mistreated.

Crucial Crew

On Monday 19th October, Year 6 went to Alec Hunter to attend several workshops with Crucial Crew. There were various workshops exploring harms of vaping, how to be safe online, healthy relationships and more. All the children felt more knowledgeable about keeping themselves and others safe, as well as enjoying the eye-opening discussions.

Snacks in school

Children are welcome to bring **healthy snacks** to enjoy during break time. Healthy snacks may also be brought on school trips and for children to enjoy after swimming.

Please ensure that all snacks are healthy. **Snacks, such as cakes, sweets, crisps and chocolate, are not permitted.** Y6 children will also not be able to use the vending machine at the swimming pool when attending the school swimming lessons.

Lost Property

There is currently a large amount of lost property in the boxes located at reception, including jumpers, coats, hoodies, lunch boxes and water bottles.

Please come and check the boxes for any items your child may have misplaced.

Please note that any unclaimed items remaining after Friday 23rd October will either be donated or disposed of.

BBC Children in Need

We are excited to let you know that we will be taking part in a fun run on Friday 13th November in support of Children in Need! The children will have the opportunity to get active, have fun and raise money for a cause that supports children and young people across the UK.

This will be a sponsored event and we would love for the children to get involved in raising money. Every child will have a sponsor sheet where they can keep track of their sponsors and children can ask family members and other adults at home if they would be willing to sponsor them for taking part in the run.

We look forward to seeing the children have fun whilst raising money for a great cause!

Parking around the school site

We have received complaints from local residents regarding driveways being blocked during school drop off an pick up times. Please be considerate when parking around the school.

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.

Unacceptable Behaviour in the School Community

We have updated our Unacceptable Behaviour in the School Community policy. This policy along with our other school policies can be viewed on our school website.

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.

Poppy Appeal

Poppies will be available to purchase in school this week, along with a selection of other items listed below, as well as the traditional poppy with a pin.
Children are kindly asked to bring the suggested donation amount for their chosen item(s) in a named envelope. Purchases can be made during breaktime in the school hall.
Please note we have a limited supply of each item, so initially children will be allowed to purchase one item only, on a first come, first served basis.



Thank you for supporting the Poppy Appeal.

Year 6 SATs question of the week

Here is a question worth 2 marks from the 2018 Maths reasoning paper.



Write the correct symbol in each box to make the statements correct.

11 × 12		15 × 10
90 ÷ 30		60 ÷ 20
120 ÷ 4		160 ÷ 8
30 × 8		100 × 10

Here is a question from the 2018 grammar and punctuation paper. It is worth 1 mark.

Tick one box in each row to show whether the underlined noun is **singular** or **plural**.

	Singular	**Plural**
The customers' hunger was satisfied by the pizza.		
The princess's slippers were made of glass.		
Those are the boys' books.		

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. Although class teachers would love to see photos, we are now unable to publish these photos on our newsletter.

Football: players of the match – Afnan (4SJ), Harry (4SJ), Reggie (4JW)
Dancer of the week – Willow (4SJ)
Theatre school student of the week – Amelie (4SJ)
Reached the finals for dancing – Ashiya (3JB)
Gymnastics level 3 – Lorelei (4JW)
Rugby player of the match – Jack (3DB)
BMX Essex Regional Series 1st place – Ruby (3BB)

Stars of the week

3BB: Thea	4CS: Annaiyah	5AW: Oliver	6CO:
3DB: Renee	4JB: Winter	5CE: Freddie	6JL: Finley
3JB: Zara	4JW: Henry E	5DC: Nehir	6NG:
3LA: Khanya	4SJ: Frankie W	5KS: Lilly-Rose, Daisy	6RR:

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.



Keeping children safe: What parents and carers need to know about AI companions
AI companions are becoming increasingly popular with young people, offering round-the-clock conversations with virtual characters designed to feel like genuine friends. Platforms such as Character.ai, Replika and Snapchat My AI can provide entertainment and creative opportunities, but their human-like interactions also raise concerns. This guide explores potential risks including emotional dependency, inappropriate content, oversharing personal information and harmful mental health advice.

As AI companions become more convincing, helping young people understand the difference between synthetic relationships and genuine human connection is increasingly important. This guide offers helpful advice for parents and educators on discussing AI friendships, reviewing privacy settings, managing subscriptions and encouraging healthy offline relationships. It also highlights the importance of seeking support from trusted adults rather than relying on chatbots.

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 3DB: dbanks@compassps.uk 3LA: larcher@compassps.uk 3JB: jbrennan@compassps.uk	4JB: jbird@compassps.uk, kbreen@compassps.uk 4CS: csteadman@compassps.uk 4JW: jwhitehouse@compassps.uk 4SJ: dsayer-jones@compassps.uk
Year 5	**Year 6**
5KS: kswann@compassps.uk 5CE: cellis@compassps.uk 5DC: dcasey@compassps.uk	6NG: ngibson@compassps.uk 6JL: jlarbalestier@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 Cottee (Assistant Head) if your child is in Y5 or Y6 – rcottee@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 to johnrayjunior@compassps.uk

17/09/26 Year 5 Wonderdome - Year 5 only
30/09/26 Colchester Castle - Year 4 only
23/09/26 The Snowman – Year 5 only
02/10/26 Learning Conferences – All year groups
05/10/26 Enhanced One-Plan – Selected children only
05/10/26 Focused One-Plan – Selected children only
09/10/26 The Compass Eko Trust Strategy 2026-2031 - All year groups

Dates for the academic year 2026-2027 (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**
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 07.11.26 Open morning for new parents 9:30-11am 13.11.26 Children in need sponsored event (non – uniform: children can wear spots / stripes in return for a donation) 19.11.26 Wonderdome for Y5 children 20.11.26 Non uniform day in exchange for a donation for the PTA gift shop 20.11.26 Dick Whittington panto in school 23.11.26 4CS and 4JW to Colchester Castle 24.11.26 4SJ and 4JB to Colchester Castle 30.11.26 Year 5 to Charter Hall for The Snowman	**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 22.03.27 School Council to visit the Houses of Parliament 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*	**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

30.11.26 last week for after school clubs 03.12.26 PTA gift shop 05.12.26 Christmas fete at JRIS 07.12.26 SEN tea and chat 2-3pm 10.12.26 Chartwells school meals parent taster session in hall 3:30pm 16.12.26 Y3 and Y5 Christmas dinner day *(children in Y3 / 3 are welcome to wear a Christmas jumper and / or accessory)* 17.12.26 Y4 and Y6 Christmas dinner day *(children in Y4 / 6 are welcome to wear a Christmas jumper and / or accessory)* 17.12.26 Y3 and Y4 to walk to St Michael's church for a Christmas service *(This takes place in school time and is for staff and children only. Children should wear suitable shoes for walking)* **18.12.26 Last day of term**	*for staff and children only. Children should wear suitable shoes for walking)* **26.03.27 Last day of term**	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 14.07.27 Y6 production for 6RR and 6NG 2pm and 4:30 **16.07.27 Last day of term for children**

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI COMPANIONS

Powered by generative AI models like ChatGPT and Google Gemini, AI companion apps and virtual chatbots such as Character.ai, Snapchat My AI, Replika and Talkie, allow users to create, customise, and chat to synthetic avatars around the clock. While many young people use them for harmless entertainment, creative writing or homework help, these tools are designed to simulate genuine human empathy, emotional bonding and deep friendship.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

AI companions are programmed to be endlessly agreeable, attentive, and available 24/7. Unlike human friendships, an AI companion never disagrees, sets personal boundaries, or gets tired. Young people (especially those experiencing loneliness, social anxiety, or low self-esteem) can quickly develop an unhealthy emotional attachment, viewing synthetic software as their 'best friend' or a surrogate romantic partner.

DISTORTED SOCIAL SKILLS

Navigating real-world friendships can be messy, involving dealing with conflict, compromise, boredom, and awkwardness. If a teenager spends hours interacting with an AI that is tailored specifically to validate and flatter them, they may become impatient with real-world relationships. Over time, this can lead to social withdrawal, heightened anxiety in peer groups, and isolation: a vicious circle of growing online dependency coupled with a heightened sense that relationships in the 'real world' are too challenging to maintain.

DANGEROUS MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE

AI chatbots possess no genuine empathy, professional clinical knowledge, or moral reasoning. While developers state these tools are not therapists, vulnerable teenagers often turn to them in crisis. Chatbots have previously hallucinated unsafe medical guidance, validated depressive spirals, and failed to safely escalate disclosures of self-harm or suicidal ideation to real-world protective services.

INAPPROPRIATE OR EXPLICIT CONTENT

CENSORED

While most mainstream platforms feature safety filters and guardrails, young people frequently discover 'jailbreak' prompts to bypass them. Some companion platforms subtly nudge users towards mature themes, romantic roleplay, or sexually suggestive conversations. In worse cases, third-party apps with weak safety checks have been found to generate sexually explicit text or intimate images.

DATA HARVESTING & OVERSHARING

Because conversational bots simulate warmth and understanding, children often lower their guard and treat the chatbot as a trusted friend. They may disclose sensitive personal information, including full names, school details, private family problems, or secrets, unaware that their conversations are being logged, may be analysed by third parties (including advertisers), or used to train future AI models.

"FREEMIUM" UPSELLS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many companion platforms operate on a freemium model. While basic chat is free, features like voice calls, uncensored responses, custom avatars, or 'deeper bonding' tiers are locked behind expensive monthly recurring subscriptions or in-app token purchases. This can lead to significant hidden costs and pressure on young people to spend money to maintain the 'friendship'.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALK OPENLY ABOUT FAKE RELATIONSHIPS

Demystify how these tools work. Explain to young people that an AI companion has no feelings, memories, or consciousness; it is simply calculating the next most mathematically probable word based on its training data. It is helpful to explain to them the mechanics of large language models so that they understand how they are trained and how they are designed to always flatter and be helpful.

ENCOURAGE REAL-WORLD CONNECTION

Ensure technology habits do not replace face-to-face peer socialisation, sports, hobbies, and family time. Create healthy boundaries at home (such as keeping phones and tablets out of bedrooms overnight) to prevent late-night, unmonitored attachment loops with conversational chatbots when young people are at their most vulnerable.

AUDIT PRIVACY SETTINGS & AGE LIMITS

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CENSORED

Check which companion apps are installed on your child's phone or tablet. Many dedicated companion apps carry an App Store rating of 17+, while platforms like Character.ai set a minimum age of 13+ (or 16+ in the UK/EU). Review the privacy settings together: turn off data-sharing toggles, disable model training where possible, and ensure location permissions are blocked.

REINFORCE WHERE TO GET REAL HELP

Make sure young people know that a machine can never replace professional pastoral or mental health care. Remind them of the trusted adults they can turn to at school - such as their Form Tutor, Head of Year, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) - as well as dedicated youth support services like Childline (0800 1111) or Shout (text 85258).

Meet Our Expert

Darren Coxon is the Founder and Executive Director of Kompass Education, a consultancy specialising in supporting educators, students and parents in making wise choices with AI. His book Ethical AI and Education, co-authored with Clara Hawking, will be released later in 2026 by Taylor and Francis.



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See full reference list on our website

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