

THE MAWNAN LIGHT

Friday 16th October 2026



COMPASSION • HOPE • PEACE • PERSEVERANCE • RESPECT • TRUST

Thank you and goodbye to Zinnia



Next week our school community will say goodbye to Zinnia, a Mawnan parent who not only designed and built our beloved garden but also embedded it into the heart of the school and made it one of the most cherished aspects of school life.

As we wish Zinnia well in her new ventures, I want to take a moment to look back on the extraordinary amount of time, skill and dedication she has given to the garden over the years and celebrate her visionary work that transformed an unloved corner of the field into the stunning garden space our children enjoy today.

"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow"

Mawnan's school garden was once nothing more than a rickety raised bed next to the polytunnel, which, at the time, was broken and overgrown.

Zinnia, a landscape architect and parent, volunteered to set up an after school gardening club, making the best of what was there.



Then came covid, and during the dark days of lockdown, Zinnia realised there was an opportunity to create an entirely new space where our children could feel inspired by the wonders of nature and enjoy the rewarding experience of gardening.

From making compost to nurturing seedlings, she designed a garden that has become a hive of hands-on activities, where children roll up their sleeves and get stuck into the natural world.

She also designed the garden to be a relaxing, peaceful space where children and adults can be together, improving mental health and wellbeing, giving everyone space to grow.

How our garden grew

We managed to raise a staggering £23,000 to fund the works, with Zinnia giving up hours of her own time to apply for funding opportunities and running two highly successful Crowdfunding campaigns.

The support from our wider Mawnan community was incredible, and Zinnia also drew in labour and materials from several local businesses.

Then the fun part began - seeing Zinnia's masterplan come to life.

Over the next year, the garden began to take shape, with raised beds, paving areas, the shed, new borders and planting. She designed the garden to last, with resin-bound gravel paths that make the garden accessible throughout the year.

As well as the garden, Zinnia has made an invaluable contribution to other areas of our school. She helped with the sitting and landscaping of the gazebo, a highly valued outdoor area.

And she was also instrumental in designing our precious Reading Barn, using her creativity and design skills to make the building tie in beautifully with the grounds, giving the children a truly special space. I know Mr Barnes would have absolutely loved it.

Growing and learning together

The garden is being used in all aspects of the school's broad and engaging curriculum, but particularly in areas on the environment, sustainability and food.

Through her hugely popular after school Gardening Club, Zinnia has taught dozens of children about sustainable gardening. It kicks off in early Spring with Year 3 pupils - sowing seeds, mulching trees and preparing beds. The children learn how to grow a huge range of fruit and vegetables, and they taste everything they grow. The club closes at the end of Autumn, with a big vat of soup made from their own harvest, and a packet of collected seeds to take home.



Teamwork. Resilience. Patience. These are skills that last a lifetime.

"The love of gardening is a seed once sown, never dies"

On behalf of everyone at Mawnan School, we want to say a huge thank you to Zinnia for believing in tomorrow and for planting this garden. The seeds she has sown here at our school will last generations. What an incredible legacy - thank you Zinnia!



Pico Class Trip

As part of their expedition Pico class have learning about rivers. This morning they went to Grebe to do sketches and oil pastels inspired by the artist Ted Harrison who they have been studying. An extra-special highlight of the morning was spotting a tuna leaping out of the water — an incredibly rare sight that made their river expedition even more memorable!



Breakfast Club

We are delighted to see so many children enjoying our Breakfast Club and making the most of the different menu choices each day!

To help us get the school day started promptly, we do need to finish serving breakfast by 8:15am. Please could we kindly ask that children arrive in good time to enjoy their breakfast before this time.

Thank you for your continued support and for helping us ensure a smooth start to the school day!

School Uniform Reminder

Thank you for helping our children wear their uniform with pride and feel part of our Mawnan school community.

Please remember:

- **Jewellery:** Children may wear one pair of small stud earrings and a wristwatch (no smartwatches). No hoops, dangling earrings or other jewellery should be worn, as these can catch on clothing or equipment and cause injury during play and PE.
- **Hair:** Hair longer than shoulder length should be tied up each day. This keeps it away from children's faces while learning and supports safety and hygiene during practical activities.
- **Socks and tights:** Socks should be **plain white or grey, without branding, logos or patterns**. Tights should be navy or grey.
- **Footwear:** Children should wear black school shoes suitable for school and play, with suitable trainers on PE days.
- **PE uniform:** Please wear the school PE uniform on PE days and when representing the school at sporting events.
- **Appearance:** No extreme hairstyles, unnatural hair colours, make-up, nail varnish or false nails.

Please label all uniform clearly. Full details are available on our [school uniform webpage](#).

Pre-loved uniform is available throughout the year. If you need support, or your child needs an adjustment please speak to us. Thank you for your support.

 Mawnan CE VA Primary School OUR SCHOOL UNIFORM		<i>We wear our uniform with pride and it shows we belong.</i>
EVERYDAY UNIFORM      Socks and Tights   Footwear 		
PE UNIFORM      PE uniform should be worn to school on PE days and when representing the school at sporting events and competitions.		
JEWELLERY   ✓ One pair of small stud earrings ✓ A wristwatch ✗ No hooped or dangling earrings ✗ No other jewellery	HAIR AND APPEARANCE  ✓ Hair should be clean, neat and suitable for school ✓ If hair is longer than shoulder length it should be tied up ✗ No extreme hairstyles or shaved patterns ✗ No unnatural hair colours ✗ No make-up, nail varnish or false nails	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION - Pre-loved uniform is available through the school throughout the year. - If you are finding it difficult to find uniform, please speak to the Headteacher in confidence. We are here to help. - Reasonable adjustments will be considered for medical, religious, cultural, disability or sensory needs.
PLEASE REMEMBER ✓ Label all uniform items clearly. ✓ Look after your uniform and keep it clean. ✓ Wear your uniform with pride and respect.		

✠ Using our God-given gifts to let our lights shine. ★

Football League

Our football team had a fantastic week, playing three matches! They secured an impressive 11–1 victory against Flushing and earned hard-fought 2–2 draws against both Mabe and Perranwell.

The team played phenomenally, showing great resilience, determination and teamwork throughout. They never gave up and worked brilliantly together, looking like a real team! We are incredibly proud of their effort and the way they supported one another. Well done, everyone!

Parent–Teacher Meetings

Our parent–teacher meetings will take place during the **week beginning Monday 16th November**. These are an opportunity to discuss how your child has settled, celebrate their progress and talk about their next steps in learning.

Google Forms will be sent out at the beginning of next half term so that you can book your appointment.

Toys and Precious Items from Home

Please keep toys, collectables and precious or valuable items safely at home. These can distract children from learning and cause upset if they are lost, damaged or become the focus of disagreements.

We understand that some children may need a familiar object to help them feel secure when coming into school. If your child needs a transition object, please discuss this with their class teacher so that we can agree how best to support them.

Thank you for your understanding and support.



Secret Santa Gift Collection

Secret Santa – Donations Needed!

Our much-loved Secret Santa event, organised by our wonderful PTA, will take place on Friday 11th December!

This special annual tradition gives the children the excitement of choosing gifts for their loved ones. Our lovely WI volunteers then carefully wrap and label each present, ready for the children to take home and tuck under the Christmas tree.

To make this magical event possible, we are asking for donations of unwanted, good-quality gifts suitable for all ages, from children to parents and other family members.

What can you donate?

- Toys, puzzles and games
- Books
- Gifts suitable for adults
- Any other lovely gift someone would be delighted to receive!

Items can be new or good-quality pre-loved gifts. Please ensure everything is clean, complete, undamaged and in good condition – something you would be happy to receive yourself.

Please place your donations in the Secret Santa donation box in the school entrance.

A huge thank you for supporting this wonderful tradition. Our Secret Santa simply couldn't happen without your generosity, and your donations help our children experience the joy of choosing something thoughtful and special for their family members.



School Immunisations: November 6th 2026

Please see the attached letter and information leaflet about the upcoming school immunisations. **The online form needs to be completed by 10am on 4th November 2026.** <https://www.kernowimmunisations.co.uk/Forms/Flu?schoolcode=EE112002>

The attached leaflet provides helpful information about what to expect, how to prepare your child and the support and reasonable adjustments that may be available.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's vaccination, or if your child has any individual needs that the vaccination team should be aware of, please contact the School Aged Immunisation Team directly Tel: 01872 221105

Individual School Photographs: Thursday 12th November

Hatchbox Photography will be visiting Mawnan School on the morning of Thursday 12th November to take individual/sibling photographs of the children. Please ensure your child comes to school looking smart and ready for their photo!.

Contacting School

Reporting an absence

Please telephone or email the school office by 9.00am on every day that your child is absent. Please tell us the specific reason why your child is unable to attend. Please do not use class dojo for this.

Changes to collection arrangements

Tell the class teacher at the beginning of the day or telephone the school office. This ensures the message reaches the correct member of staff before collection time. Please do not use class dojo for this because the teachers are teaching during the school day and won't have the opportunity to check messages.

Medical appointments

If you need to collect your child during the school day, please notify the office in advance. This allows the class teacher to be informed and your child to be ready without unnecessary disruption to learning.

Questions about learning or wellbeing

Please speak to your child's teacher at the beginning or end of the day, or arrange an appointment if a longer conversation is needed. Brief ClassDojo messages are welcome, but staff will not check or respond during teaching time.

Safeguarding concerns

Please speak to Miss Pridmore, our Designated Safeguarding Lead, or Miss Law, our Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Important Dates

MONTH	KEY DATES
October 2026	Mon 26–Fri 30 – Half-term holiday
November 2026	Fri 6 – School Immunisations Thurs 12 – School individual photos Week beginning Mon 16 – Parent–teacher meetings
December 2026	Thu 3 – Christingle Service at St Michael's Church Fri 11 – Secret Santa Tue 15 – Candlelit Carols for KS2 at St Mawnan Church Fri 18 – Last day of autumn term
January 2027	Mon 4 – Children return Mon 22 - School Disco
February 2027	Mon 15–Fri 19 – Half-term holiday
March 2027	Week beginning Mon 15 – Parent–teacher meetings Tue 23 School Eucharist at St Michael's Church Thu 25 – Last day of spring term
April 2027	Mon 12 – Children return
May 2027	Mon 3 – Bank holiday; school closed Mon 10–Thu 13 – KS2 SATs Mon 31 May–Fri 4 Jun – Half-term holiday
June 2027	Mon 7–Wed 9 – INSET days Thu 10 – Children return Mon 7–Fri 18 – Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check window Week beginning Mon 14 – Year 1 Phonics Screening Check
July 2027	Fri 9 – Sports Day Fri 23 – Last day of academic year & Y6 leaver's service

What Parents & Educators 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.

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 foster 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

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" UPSOLLS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many companion platforms operate on a freemium model. While basic chat is free, features like voice calls, uncensored responses, custom avatars, or 'steep bonding' items 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

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 18+ 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 111) or Shout (text 85258).

Meet Our Expert

Darren Cason 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.

See full references list on our website.

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Mawnan School PTA
proudly presents



MOVIE NIGHT

COMING TO THE SCHOOL HALL ON **20.11.26**



SHOWING 1
KS1:
3.15 - 5.00

£5 includes pizza & popcorn

BYO drinks bottle

SHOWING 2
KS2:
5.10 - 7.00



'A MASTERPIECE'

AUSTIN - YR1



'NOT TO BE MISSED'

CHARLIE - YR3

BEAN BAGS, BLANKETS & PJS WELCOME!

Book your tickets:

<https://mawnan-school-pta-shop.sumupstore.com/product/film-night-entry>

