

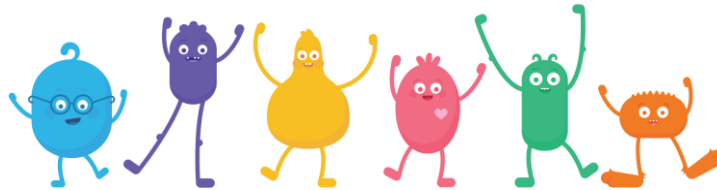
Friday 6th February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Digital Citizenship and National Internet Safet Day

We are delighted to share that Gulval School is launching a new Digital Citizenship Programme, supported by [Common Sense Education](#). As technology becomes an increasingly central part of children's lives, it is more important than ever that we equip them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make informed, safe and responsible choices online. Our intentional approach at Gulval was always to help every child grow into an upstanding digital citizen—someone who thinks carefully, acts kindly and interacts positively in the digital world. Our new programme will add such value to this learning.

Meet the Six Characters of Digital Citizenship



To help children understand the core elements of online responsibility, the programme introduces six engaging characters. Each represents a different part of digital citizenship:

- Head – Thinking critically: Using their minds to evaluate information, question what they see online and make sensible choices, thinking before we click.
- Guts – Listening to our gut to stay safe online: if something seems too good to be true, it probably is and using a strong password to protect our personal information.
- Feet – Using their online footprint wisely: understanding that what they post leaves a trail, always asking permission before making choices online.
- Heart – Acting kindly: Showing empathy, respect and kindness in every digital interaction.
- Arms – Balancing media use: taking breaks, managing time on devices and choosing offline activities and getting outside.
- Legs – Being an upstander: standing up to unkind behaviour online- Block, Report and Tell a trusted adult.

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These characters help us teach children in relatable ways how to navigate the digital world thoughtfully and responsibly.

Why This Work Matters

Brain science is rapidly catching up with what many of us have observed for years: excessive screen time—especially social media—can impact children’s neurological development, influencing how their brains grow. The prefrontal cortex, the area responsible for decision-making, impulse control and emotional regulation, continues developing throughout childhood and adolescence. Devices and apps designed to hold children’s attention can interfere with this development, contributing to:

- Reduced attention spans
- Increased anxiety
- Difficulties with self-regulation

Social media platforms in particular create dopamine driven reward loops, making children more susceptible to dependency and making it harder for them to disengage and focus on real-world interactions.

Beyond the brain, we are also seeing the influence of online content on children’s behaviour, friendships and decision making in school. Viral trends, challenges and inappropriate content circulating online can shape how children treat one another, sometimes contributing to unkind behaviour, unnecessary conflict or increased anxiety. Exposure to unrealistic or harmful narratives can distort their sense of self-worth, their understanding of friendships and what they believe to be “normal” behaviour.

Our children thrive best in environments that prioritise real relationships, play, conversation and face to face interactions. As a school, we want every family to feel confident in setting boundaries around screen time—including resisting pressure to introduce mobile phones before children are developmentally ready. These decisions can be difficult, but they are deeply beneficial for children’s long term emotional and social wellbeing.

How You Can Help Keep Children Safe Online

We encourage all parents to take proactive steps at home, including:

- Monitoring phone and internet use: Regularly check which apps your child uses and who they’re communicating with.
- Using strong parental controls: Set controls on devices and home Wi-Fi to limit access to inappropriate content and manage screen time.

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- o Keeping open conversations: Talk regularly about cyberbullying, online strangers, privacy and the impact of too much screen time.
- o Setting clear boundaries: Establish screen free times—during meals, before bed or on certain evenings—to promote healthy habits.
- o Encouraging offline activities: Prioritise hobbies, outdoor play, sports and family time. Sports clubs in particular offer enormous social and emotional benefits—please come and chat with us if you'd like advice or recommendations; we are more than happy to help.

At Gulval School, we will continue to focus on fostering positive relationships, building resilience and supporting children's mental health through our school values, ethos and curriculum. Our new Digital Citizenship Programme is an important part of this wider commitment. We encourage families to visit the Common Sense Media website, which offers a wide range of practical advice and resources to support children's safe and positive use of technology at home. The materials are designed to help parents and carers have open conversations about digital wellbeing, online safety and healthy screen use, and complement the digital citizenship learning we do in school.

If you would like further guidance or support with managing screen time or navigating online safety at home, please do not hesitate to get in touch—we are here to support you. Keep a look out for our DC characters!

Thank you for your continued partnership, especially on a topic that affects all of us and all of our children.

Yours sincerely,



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