

Friday 27th March 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing to revisit an important conversation about screen time, mobile phones and the wider digital world. I am very aware that I have “banged this drum” before, and some of you may feel you have heard this message more than once. I understand that. However, I am returning to it because I believe it is one of the most important issues affecting our children right now.

As a parent, and as a foster carer, I completely understand the challenge. The requests for phones, the pressure to allow more screen time, the worry about children feeling left out—it can feel relentless. Holding boundaries in this space is not easy, especially when it feels like you are going against the norm.

Recently, I watched *Louis Theroux: Inside the Manosphere*, and I will be honest—it shocked me. The content itself was deeply concerning, but what unsettled me most was learning about the extent to which harmful material is being created and amplified, including practices such as “click farming,” where individuals deliberately produce extreme or provocative content purely to drive views and engagement. What brought this even closer to home was a moment with my own teenage children who knew immediately who each of these ‘influencers’ were. That stopped me in my tracks and reinforced something we cannot ignore: this content is not being searched for—it is being *pushed* through algorithms that are intentionally designed to keep users engaged; In doing so, they increasingly present more extreme, more attention-grabbing material over time. This means there will almost certainly be children within our school, and within our own families, who have already been exposed to content from these creators.

Alongside this, you may also have seen recent media coverage of a landmark court case in the United States, where a jury found that major social media platforms had been designed in ways that contributed to addictive use in young people, and were held responsible for harm caused. This reflects a growing recognition—not just from educators and parents, but from the legal system—there is a cost to the digital world our children are navigating.

In school, we see the impact of this every day. Changes in behaviour, increased anxiety, difficulties in managing friendships, and challenges with focus and emotional regulation. This is not about blame—it is about recognising the reality of the environment our children are growing up in. At Gulval, our values—Kindness, Respect, Perseverance, Adventure and Responsibility—sit at the heart of everything we do. They are not just words; they are the foundation for how we want our children to grow, develop and treat one another. The online world, at times, can be in direct conflict with these values.

For me, both as a headteacher and as a parent, this ultimately comes down to something very simple: protecting childhood. Children need time, space and safety to develop emotionally, socially and physically. They need sleep, real-world interaction, play, and positive relationships. Increasingly, we are seeing how easily these essentials are eroded by unrestricted access to screens, social media and online gaming—particularly late into the evening.



This is why I want to encourage all families, once again, to feel confident in setting clear and firm boundaries. This may include:

- Delaying access to smartphones for as long as possible
- Setting clear cut-off times for screens in the evening
- Removing devices from bedrooms overnight
- Monitoring apps, games and online interactions
- Keeping open and honest conversations about the online world

I know this is not easy. It may feel like the harder option, and at times it may lead to pushback at home. But increasingly, the evidence—and experiences like those I have described—tell us that these boundaries matter.

As a school, we will continue to support your children through strong relationships, clear expectations and a focus on wellbeing. We know we cannot do this alone and that the partnership between home and school is crucial.

If you are worried about this, would like advice, guidance or a just a conversation then we are here, please do reach out.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Best wishes,



Mr P Baker
Headteacher

