HILLCREST PRIMARY SCHOOL

GROWING UP IN A DIGITAL WORLD

HILLCREST HUB
SINCE 2026

Helping children build confidence, judgement and safe habits online



For many, technology is part of childhood now.

The question is not just:

“How do we keep children off screens?”

It is also:

“How do we help children make good decisions when we're not beside them?”



Technology can help children learn, create, communicate and explore.

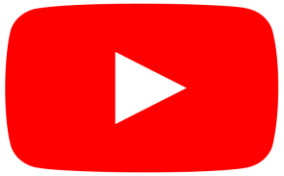
Our role is to prepare them to use it thoughtfully.

The online world is designed to keep moving

1. Recommendations shape the feed

Algorithms learn from viewing, likes and searches.

One video can lead to many more like it.



2. Content finds children

Autoplay, suggested posts, comments and shared links

can introduce material they never searched for.

3. Group chats bring social pressure

Children may feel they must reply, join in,

share images or take sides to avoid being left out.



4. “Seeing is believing” no longer works

AI-generated images, voices and videos can look convincing.

Pause before believing or sharing.

A useful question: “Why do you think this has appeared in your feed?”

Which apps should I be mindful of?

- **Standard YouTube.** Autoplay algorithms can quickly lead young viewers from innocent cartoons to scary, violent, or inappropriate videos. Stick to **YouTube Kids** and switch on the **Approved Content Only** setting so they can only watch channels you handpick.
- **Roblox and multiplayer games.** Games like Roblox, Minecraft, or Toca Boca are popular with reception-age children, but open chat features allow strangers to message them. Disable all chat and friend requests in the game settings before handing over the device.
- **Apps with heavy in-app purchases.** Many free puzzle or colouring games place bright "buy" buttons right where small fingers tap. Always require a password or biometric approval for every download and purchase.
- **Web browsers (Safari, Chrome).** A simple voice search or accidental tap on a pop-up ad can take a young child to adult websites. Hide standard browsers or use a restricted alternative like **SPIN Safe Browser**.
- https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/

AI is already part of children's digital lives

Fake can look real

Images, voices and videos can be generated or altered. Check before believing or sharing.

Consent matters

Never create or share a fake image of someone. Treat other people's images and identity with respect.



Chatbots are not trusted adults

AI can sound confident or caring, but it can be wrong.

It should not replace trusted people or be given private information.

Try asking:

“How could we check whether this is real?”

ChatGPT



The first phone: when is the right time?

There is no magic age.

A better question is:

“Is my child ready for the responsibility?”



Practical need

Do they need to contact you when travelling or attending clubs?

Emotional readiness

Can they manage peer pressure, disagreements and upsetting messages?

Responsibility

Can they follow boundaries, look after a device and ask for help?

A phone does not have to mean a smartphone or unrestricted access.

BEST DUMB PHONES

2026



Before the first phone: agree the ground rules

1. **1 Where does it sleep?** Agree a shared charging place outside bedrooms overnight.
2. **2 When is it put away?** Set phone-free moments: meals, family time, homework or bedtime.
3. **3 Which apps are suitable?** Check age ratings, features and privacy settings before installing.
4. **4 What stays private?** Discuss passwords, location, personal details and photographs.
5. **5 What if something goes wrong?** Promise calm support. Asking for help should never mean automatic punishment.

What children might not tell us

- Left out: feeling they must reply or join a group chat.
- Pressured: being asked to share a photo or join in with a joke.
- Uncertain: not knowing whether a person, message or image is genuine.
- Embarrassed: worrying about something they have already shared.
- Afraid: thinking they will lose their phone if they tell an adult.



“You can always come to me. We will work it out together.”

If something goes wrong: four calm steps

LISTEN

Stay calm. Let your child explain what happened.

REASSURE

Do not blame them. Thank them for telling you.

ACT

Block and report where appropriate; keep relevant evidence and seek advice.

KEEP TALKING

Check in afterwards and remind them they can come back.

Parental controls help but they are not foolproof. Keep settings, conversations and supervision under review.

A UK update parents should know about

Planned changes from Spring 2027

Under-16 social media restrictions

The Government plans to stop covered social media services being offered to under-16s. Exact service scope and implementation details are still being finalised.

Other online services

Further restrictions are planned for high-risk features, including livestreaming and contact from strangers on some services such as gaming.

What this does NOT mean:

It does not remove the need to teach digital judgement. Messaging, gaming, AI, learning platforms and other online spaces still need thoughtful use.

The detailed rules are still being developed; check GOV.UK and Ofcom for updates.

Prepare.

QUESTION	Is what I'm seeing real?
THINK	Why am I being shown this?
PROTECT	What should I keep private?
RESPECT	Would I say or share this face-to-face?
SPEAK	Who can I talk to if something feels wrong?

We want children who understand technology, use it positively and know when to ask for help.

Further advice: nspcc.org.uk • ofcom.org.uk/online-safety • internetmatters.org • childnet.com

Useful, trusted places to start

NSPCC	Practical online safety advice for parents and carers	Open resource ↗
Ofcom	Online safety duties, age assurance and current regulation	Open resource ↗
Internet Matters	Practical guides to devices, apps and parental controls	Open resource ↗
Childnet	Conversation starters and advice for families	Open resource ↗
GOV.UK	Government fact sheet: new rules to protect children online	Open resource ↗