

Safer Internet Day 2026: Whole-School Focus on Artificial Intelligence

On Tuesday 10th February, our school marked Safer Internet Day 2026, joining millions of children and educators around the world in exploring this year's global theme: the safe and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This theme reflects international guidance highlighting AI's increasing influence on children's online experiences, learning habits, and digital interactions.

Why AI? A Relevant and Timely Focus

AI is no longer a distant concept—children encounter it in learning tools, search engines, voice assistants, games, and creative platforms. Global campaigns this year emphasised how AI is rapidly reshaping how young people study, communicate, and make decisions online, and why AI literacy is now essential for safeguarding. These messages reinforced our decision to centre the day around building pupils' understanding and critical awareness of AI.

Whole-School Approach

We adopted a fully inclusive, whole-school approach, ensuring all pupils—Early Years through to Year 6—had meaningful, age-appropriate opportunities to explore AI:

Early Years & Key Stage 1

Younger pupils explored the question “What is a robot and what can it do?”, looking at simple AI-powered toys and discussing how technology helps in everyday life. Staff focused on developing early digital awareness, particularly the idea that “not everything we see online is real”—a concept increasingly important in an era where AI can generate convincing images and videos.

Key Stage 2

Older pupils examined AI more deeply, discussing:

What AI is and how it works in a child-friendly way.

How AI assists learning, such as translation tools, homework helpers, and creative apps.

The advantages and opportunities AI brings, including improved accessibility, creativity, and problem-solving.

The disadvantages and risks, including misinformation, deepfakes, online scams, and the importance of protecting personal data.

Pupils were encouraged to think critically about digital content, recognising that AI-generated material may appear trustworthy but could be inaccurate or intentionally misleading.

Developing Critical Thinking and Digital Literacy

Much of the international guidance for Safer Internet Day stresses the need for young people to develop strong digital literacy—the ability to evaluate online content and understand how AI systems collect and use information. These principles were embedded throughout the day's learning:

- Classes explored how AI learns from data, and why it is important not to share personal information with online systems.
- Pupils examined examples of AI-generated images or text and discussed how to spot signs of inaccuracy or manipulation.

- Teachers led conversations about responsible decision-making online, echoing global messages that AI should be used “safely, smartly, and in control.”

These activities helped pupils recognise that while AI can be a powerful tool, it must be approached with awareness and caution.

Promoting Safe, Responsible and Ethical Use

As highlighted in this year’s global theme, understanding AI means learning both its benefits and its potential misuse. Discussions in class linked directly to international concerns about AI-driven scams, deepfakes, impersonation, and privacy risks—issues now affecting children and young people worldwide.

- Pupils also explored the ethical dimensions of AI:
- Should we always trust a chatbot?
- How can AI be used positively?
- What should we do if something doesn’t feel right online?

By engaging with these questions, children not only strengthened their safeguarding awareness but also built resilience, curiosity, and confidence as digital citizens.

Impact on Pupils

The impact of this focus was evident across the school. Pupils demonstrated a growing ability to:

- Explain what AI is and where they encounter it.
- Describe both the helpful and the harmful uses of AI.
- Make informed, responsible choices when using digital tools.
- Recognise when content may have been generated or influenced by AI.

Teachers reported increased engagement, thoughtful discussion, and a strong desire among pupils to share their learning with others. These outcomes reflect international findings that equipping children with AI literacy empowers them to navigate the digital world more safely.

A Strong Foundation for Ongoing Digital Safeguarding

Safer Internet Day 2026 provided a valuable opportunity to advance our school’s digital safeguarding curriculum. As AI continues to influence children’s online lives, we remain committed to ensuring pupils develop the knowledge, critical thinking skills, and confidence needed to stay safe, informed, and empowered in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.