

JANUARY  
2026

# HALSFORD PARK NEWSLETTER



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Dear families, parents and carers,

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2026! We have had a great start to the year with the children quickly getting back into the routines and structure of the school week after the Christmas break, despite the lack of water!

## Parent Forum 27<sup>th</sup> January

The Parent Forum focus this half term was to learn a bit more about our PTA or Friends of Halsford Park as they are known. Huge thanks to Emma (Chair) and Nicola (Committee member) who talked through the roles, meetings and commitment required for any family members interested in joining. We also shared some highlights from our recent parent survey and some plans specifically in relation to feedback around Sports at Halsford Park. The minutes of the meeting and the PowerPoint can be found here-

<https://www.halsfordparkprimaryschool.co.uk/page/?title=Parent+26amp%3B+Inclusion+Parent+Forums&pid=133>

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March at 9.05am – all welcome

## PTA AGM Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January

Many thanks for those of you who were able to join us for our PTA AGM and particular thanks to those family members who have joined the PTA committee enabling us to stay a registered charity and most importantly ensure we are able to run events to support providing key resources and enrichment opportunities to our children. Welcome to new members! The PTA look forward to updating the community on future plans after their next meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> February.

If you would like to make a voluntary donation to help cover the costs of the Gladiator experience please donate here <https://pta.events/Steel>



## Quick Links

Please click here

[Chartwells West Sussex](#)

[ParentPay](#)

[Brigade Uniform Ordering](#)

[PTA Secondhand Uniform](#)

[School Gateway Payments](#)

[Register for Cool Milk](#)

[Whole School Overview](#)

[The Halsford 100](#)

[Homework Guide](#)

[Parents & Carers Code of Conduct](#)

[Attendance & Sickness Information](#)

[Report parking concerns](#)



### Online Safety: A parent guide to social media and mental health

As part of our ongoing commitment to keeping children safe online, each month we'll be sharing a Top Tips Poster focusing on a different aspect of online safety.

An estimated one-third of children have a social media account, so it's important that trusted adults know what content young people are consuming; what they're posting; and what interactions they're having. On social media, it can be easy to go down a rabbit hole that isn't beneficial to our wellbeing. As platforms grapple with managing 'legal but harmful' content, lives are being impacted - sometimes to tragic effect. We might be daunted by the scale of the tech giants and their content which entrals young people, but we can still help children to be mindful of their mental wellness: recognising when something isn't OK ... and knowing what to do about content that upsets them. In the guide, you'll find tips such as how to hide content, setting daily limits and discussing what children have seen online.

Please also be reminded of the parent workshop being run by Eduthing on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February from 7-8pm <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/e-lekEQcQyqHbEn2-wEYJw#/registration>

### First Aid Workshops 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January



As part of their annual committed spend, the PTA kindly fund the whole school to have First Aid Training led by John and Alan at Life Safety. Each year group had a carefully designed/age and stage appropriate workshop teaching the children about key safety skills and first aid including how to put someone in the recovery position and for some of our older children, how to undertake CPR. I hear that some children have even

tried out their skills on family members! John and Alan were really impressed with the children's focus and enthusiasm in taking part in these important sessions:

*"Thank you all for your hospitality last week, you have some great staff and lovely students, we had some great reactions, participation and logical mature questions by students over both days. Both Alan and I enjoyed coming to the school."*

### Polite reminders

**Scooter/bikes:** Please can I remind all families and children that scooters and bikes, including balance bikes owned by pre school children, must not be used on the school grounds to ensure the safety of all pedestrians. Thank you for walking with them instead.

**Parking:** Please can I remind all community members not to park over pavements as this is restricting safe crossings.

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

An estimated one-third of children have a social media account, so it's important that trusted adults know what content young people are consuming, what they're posting and the interactions they're having. On social media, it can be easy to go down 'rabbit holes' that aren't beneficial to our wellbeing. As platforms grapple with managing such 'legal but harmful' content, lives are being impacted – sometimes to tragic effect. We might be daunted by the scale of the tech giants and their content which so enthrals young people, but we can still help children to be aware of their mental wellness: recognising when something isn't OK – and knowing what to do about content that upsets them.

## 1. UNDERSTAND THE ALGORITHM

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Algorithms rank content by user interest: someone who regularly interacts with sports news, say, will see the latest results at the top of their feed. Likewise, if a user browses content that can cause harm, that's what will be recommended to them in future. Someone who's had a bad day and looks for posts which reflect their mood will find similar content being suggested to them more and more.

## 2. AVOID THE MAIN FEEDS

Avoiding the default feeds on social media platforms limits the amount of recommended content that's shown. Users can opt to only scroll through the accounts they follow, use restricted modes, or highlight posts that they don't want to see more of. Explore the platform's safety settings to see how you can take control of what your child's phone shows them when they open the app.

## 3. DISCUSS WHAT THEY'VE SEEN

“ ”

Chatting about what your child's seen online keeps you aware of the content they're interacting with. Don't assume that platforms are screening out inappropriate material, or even that your child would recognise content as being harmful. Discuss who they follow, what posts they like and what comes up in their feeds: if alarm bells ring, it could be time for a more in-depth talk or to seek support.

## 4. LEARN HOW TO HIDE CONTENT

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If your child stumbles across unsuitable content on social media, there's the option to hide that post as well as indicating you'd prefer any similar material not to be suggested in future. On some platforms, you might also be able to block posts that contain specific words, which is an excellent way to start taking control of what your child sees online.

## 5. SET DAILY LIMITS

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Phones and most apps can tell you how much they're being used. Spending too long online can mean a child misses out on other activities that are important to all-round wellbeing. You could set some family rules – for everyone to follow – around device use, such as screen time limits and tech-free spaces: involving your child in creating this agreement makes them more likely to stick to it.

## Meet Our Expert

Shazia Sarwar-Azim is executive headteacher at a specialist primary school and, as an emotional therapy coach, works with school leaders to focus on the SEND, mental health and wellbeing agenda. A passionate advocate for vulnerable learners, Shazia is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching and the author of *The Rainbow Within*, a book which supports children with SEMH needs.



## 6. MONITOR THEIR ACTIVITY

Keeping a discreet eye on how your child is using social media can help ensure they're not entering potentially dangerous situations. As they grow up, of course, children need space to exercise their independence – but you can still occasionally ask to see what they're looking at. Be transparent about your own social media use and try not to sound judgemental about your child's.

## 7. TURN OFF PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

Even for adults, it's tempting to check an email or message as soon as the alert sound rings. Push notifications encourage people to open their apps and spend time on their device, so turning them off will help your child to practise mindful use of tech. Most of us have other things that we need to focus on as a priority – and those notifications will still be there later, when we have more time.

## 8. USE DEVICES TOGETHER

Giving children internet-enabled devices and complete freedom to explore platforms on their own can result in exposure to hugely damaging content. You could consider making a particular area at home a designated space to use phones, tablets and so on – making it much easier to monitor what content your child is viewing and (if necessary) steer them away from any potentially harmful paths.

## 9. ENCOURAGE OTHER ACTIVITIES

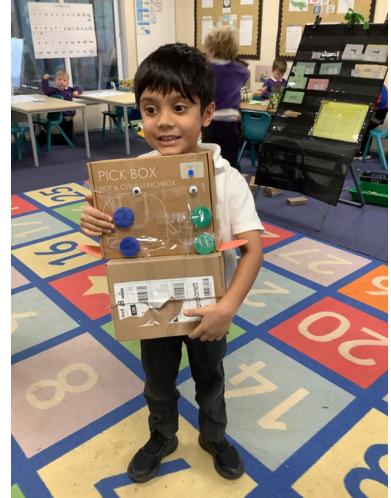
Mental health professionals often highlight the importance of exercise, quality time with loved ones, a balanced diet and restful sleep for our mental wellbeing. Spending hours on social media can cause us to sacrifice other activities that our brains need to feel well – so encouraging your child to put down their phone and enjoy something that doesn't involve a screen can be immensely beneficial.

## 10. TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE

Most platforms default children's accounts to private, so only people they've accepted as friends can see their posts. This reduces the risk of bullying or unkind comments, but – just like offline life – the digital world can still make children feel as if they need to act or look a certain way to fit in. Talk to your child about peer pressure, and listen to any concerns so you can provide the support they need.

National  
Online  
Safety®

#WakeUpWednesday



## Early Years

In Early Years, we have been focused on our new experience of 'it started with a...' We started the term by exploring Wacky Racers and used it as inspiration for our magic codes in Drawing Club. We even designed and created our own vehicles!

We have also been looking for The Naughty Bus! It has been very pesky and moving around the school! This week we have been getting excited for our hedgehog visit. The children created a hedgehog city using the blocks outside. Take a look at the picture above.

During our welly walks, we have started to spot different birds as part of the big birdwatch. As we move into the end of Spring 1, we will be exploring 'Trap Door' and continuing to use junk modelling to create our masterpieces - please keep bringing recycling in!

## Year 1

Since starting back in January we have started a new phonics scheme which the children are thoroughly enjoying. They have met a new friend called Fred who wants them to blend words together so you may hear them talking about Fred the frog. Please see Mrs Sloane's phonics letter for more information.

In Maths we have been looking at numbers bigger than 10. We have been focusing on teen numbers and identifying how many tens and how many ones we have in each of these numbers. We have been using a range of equipment such as tens frames, numicon and bead strings to make these numbers.

In Science we have been looking at materials. We enjoyed our first lesson where we went around the classroom and found objects made of different materials. We will be looking at why certain objects are made of particular things over the coming weeks.

We have had a visit from first aiders where we learnt basic skills and were able to use what we had learnt to test our skills out on each other.

This term in PE we have been looking at gymnastics. We have been able to balance on different parts of our bodies. We have learnt a few rolls and have been learning to jump safely.





## Year 2

The children have been reading the story 'Mrs Armitage on Wheels' and were very excited to have Mrs Armitage visit them in their classrooms! The children have been using this story to inspire their writing and are working towards designing and describing a car for Mrs Armitage. In art, they have also been learning about Sir Quentin Blake and have been learning how to draw in his style.

In DT, the children are beginning to learn about the parts of a car and how these are joined together. This week, they have experimented with wheels and axles and how they can be joined to a chassis.

In Science, the children have been learning about living things and their habitats. This week they have completed some research about woodland animals and how their habitat suits them.

In maths, we are coming to the end of our learning about shape and will be moving on to start learning about money.

## Year 3

Year 3 have been enjoying our topic on 'Golly Guacamole- Where is Guatemala?' over the last few weeks. To start our adventure, we boarded a flight to Guatemala with official passports and safety checks. When we landed in Guatemala our passports were stamped and our learning began.

We started our topic with an investigation into where Guatemala is located. Using Atlas' the children were able to locate Guatemala on a map and identify its surrounding oceans. Further in Geography, we have learnt about the climate in Guatemala, researching the layers of the rainforest and how this is different to the UK.

In Maths, the children have been working hard on using their multiplication skills to multiply and divide other numbers. We have grouped and shared to explore the different ways this can be done. We have been rehearsing our 4 and 8 times tables to ensure that they are more secure to help when multiplying and dividing.

In English we are writing a setting description of the rainforest based on the book 'The Great Kapok Tree'. The children have read the story and used their senses to describe what stepping into a rainforest would be like. They have all done a fantastic job at including new and interesting words that stand out from our normal vocabulary such as, fragrant, rare and streaming sunlight.

Year 3 are very fortunate that we have a PE coach in every Monday until half term teaching us how to play cricket and on Thursdays we are making brilliant progress with our dance routine. We look forward to sharing this with you!





#### Year 4

Year 4 have had a very busy time in Spring 1! We have really been enjoying our Outdoor Learning sessions, completing activities such as den building, Maths orienteering, wrist band weaving, sawing, drilling and scavenger hunts. We have also immersed ourselves in our Experience, learning all about chocolate and answering the question 'should we stop eating chocolate?'.

In Science, we have carried out an experiment to see the effect of different foods/ drinks on our teeth (in this case, egg shells!) and how this can impact our teeth over time. We have also planned, designed and researched the best chocolate bar packaging in DT. During our lessons we have been looking at nets and created prototypes, before we begin making our final design, ready to put our chocolate bars in after half term. 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' has been a huge hit with Year 4 this term. We have been working hard to create our own chapter to go in the book based upon our own rooms we have created for the factory. In Maths, we have continued to develop our multiplication and division methods.

#### Year 5

This half term we are asking the children 'What lies behind the funfair?' 'Funfairs and circus' are a great platform for getting to grips with pulleys and motors in Science. We have looked at unbalanced forces and gravity.

Our two key texts are Leon and the Place Between and The London Eye Mystery. The former tells the story of a boy who mysteriously disappears inside a magician's box whilst at the circus. The children have been writing their own version as part of a narrative unit in English.

We have also been looking at the persuasive features and devices used in letter writing. Causal conjunctions and fronted adverbials feature heavily in this genre as do modal verbs. We are going to be writing to Mrs Spencer to try and persuade her to hold a Funfair and another Circus on the school field.



In Maths, we have continued with our work on fractions, focusing on how to turn a mixed number into an improper fraction and then back again. We also looked at adding and subtracting fractions with different denominators - quite a skill! We are now moving on the long multiplication. Incidentally, the dance in PE is coming along nicely and children have enjoyed learning the choreography.



## Year 6

Year 6 have been learning all about the circulatory system and the vital role blood plays in keeping our bodies healthy. We explored how blood travels around the body and why it is so important for transporting oxygen, nutrients and hormones, as well as removing waste. To deepen our understanding, we created a hands-on model to represent the different parts of blood and their functions. Plasma was used to show the liquid that carries substances around the body, while red blood cells represented oxygen transport. White blood cells reminded us how our bodies fight infection, platelets demonstrated how blood clots to heal wounds, and water and hormones showed how messages and materials are moved efficiently around the body. The pupils worked brilliantly, using scientific vocabulary and explaining their ideas clearly. It was a fun and memorable way to bring an important biological process to life.

## Girls Football Final- 20<sup>th</sup> January



Our fantastic girls' football team represented Halsford Park at the Pokemon Primary Schools' Cup down at the Sussex FA Headquarters in Lancing on the 20th January. Our journey to the Sussex Finals saw us winning both the East Grinstead and Mid-Sussex tournaments.

In our first match, the girls played out a closely contested match in which we suffered a 1-0 defeat to Sacred Heart. In our second game, we ran out 2-0 winners against St. Peter and St. Paul's Catholic Primary School.

Our final match of the group stage was steeped in controversy after we had a goal disallowed following a dribble-in. When play was restarted, we unfortunately fell to a 2-1 defeat and consequently did not qualify for the semi-final.

The Halsford Park team played with determination and continued to show respect despite the disappointment of narrowly missing out on the semi-finals. Our girls team have done exceptionally well this year to progress to this stage of the competition and we are incredibly proud of all of them.

We'd also like to thank the parents, carers and other relatives who have taken our team to matches and have been available to support the girls.



Our focus now turns back to the league where we will attempt to retain our title. Mr Stepney

## Basketball Tournament- 28<sup>th</sup> January



The school Basketball Tournament saw eight Year 6 students compete across two intense leagues. The Red Team delivered fast-paced, physical performances, winning 4 out of 5 games to earn an impressive 2nd place finish. The Green Team stormed to 1st place with skill and determination. A standout moment came when Edie scored a brilliant three pointer to help seal the victory.

The tournament was packed with action and showcased the talent and teamwork of all involved. Miss Borrow



## Eco Council

Congratulations to all of you that took part in the Count Your Carbon project!

The Eco Council asked pupils to consider making some minor changes (and asking you to help with these) over December and January. We had around 300 replies.



Overall Combined Carbon Savings of 300 participants =  
**2228.17 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e**

Estimated Carbon Savings	
'Cool It.'	91.3 kgCO <sub>2</sub> e
'Ditch The Drive.'	292.2 kgCO <sub>2</sub> e
'Drop It Like It's Hot.'	717.9 kgCO <sub>2</sub> e
'Veggie Vibes.'	1,092.2 kgCO <sub>2</sub> e
'Meal Plan-et.'	34.5 kgCO <sub>2</sub> e
'Have a Device-Free Day.'	26 kgCO <sub>2</sub> e
<b>SAVE CURRENT FIGURES</b>	<b>SUBMIT FINAL FIGURES</b>

Thank you for encouraging your child to take part and supporting them in this environmental initiative. As you can see these little changes can make a **HUGE** impact on reducing our carbon output.

All we can ask now is; **Can You Keep It Going?** (Yes, you can!) Mrs Lochwood

## A Team



On Monday, the A Team took part in a workshop on 'Wonderfully wired minds - calming the chaos', led by Jane Crawford from the Autism and Social Communication Team. The children shared ways they calm and regulate themselves at home and at school. These ideas were then made into word clouds. The children then made their own focus aids, sticking different

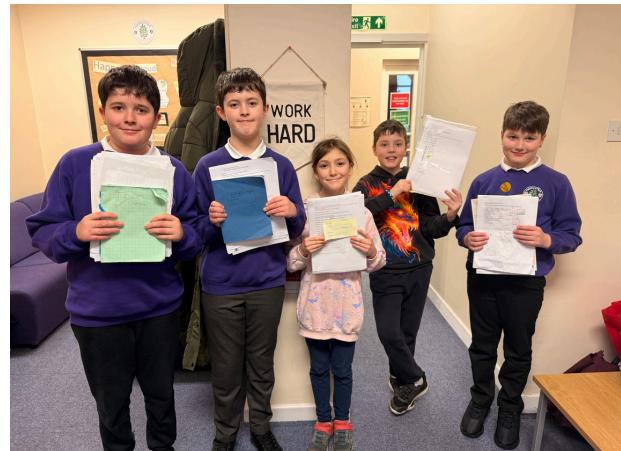
textures onto each face of a cube. They particularly enjoyed the different textures of velcro - some preferring the 'prickly' side, others finding the 'smoother' side more relaxing. Worth thinking about as can be a cheap and easy to find tool at home! Thank you to Jane for leading this workshop. Ms Davies

What helps you calm the chaos at school?

using my focus tool    making shapes with hands  
 cuddling soft toys    going out of class  
 talking to my friends    reading  
 talking to people    colouring  
 crocheting    going outside  
 playing with fidget toys    going for a walk

What helps you calm the chaos at home?

playing with fidget toys    punching my squishmallows  
 punching    minecraft    hugging my guinea pigs  
 roblox    origami    facing timing my cousins    you tube shorts  
 youtube    gymnastics    reading    origami    colouring  
 playing with mini figures    crocheting    drawing    going into my fort  
 organising my vanity    talking to my friends  
 playing with my puppy



## Congratulations!



Congratulations to Stanley who was awarded 'Park Runner of the Year' beating a great many adults to the award. This is an incredible achievement and we are very proud of Stan's efforts when it comes to running. We are also not surprised as he even undertook a park run on Christmas and New Year's Day.

Well done Stan, we are very proud of your determination and dedication to the sport!

Also a huge well done to all the children who completed their work which was set on Google Classroom on the few days when the school (and most of the town!) was without water. Some of the children received Headteacher's Awards for their efforts and can be seen above and below.

## Upcoming Assembly Themes

Week beginning:

## **26th January** Eat them to Defeat Them Campaign

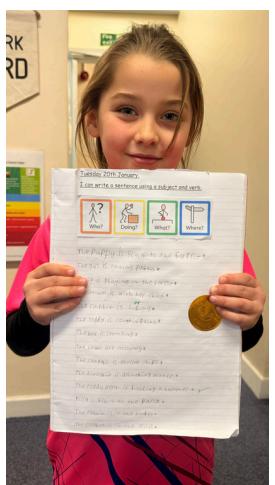
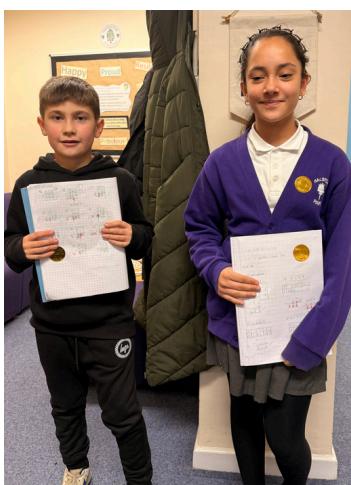
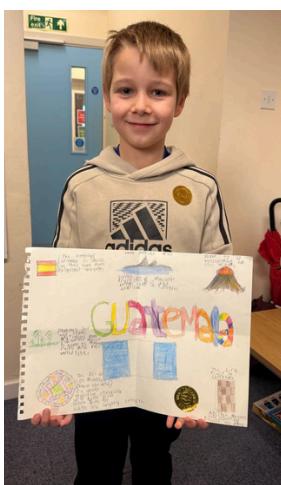
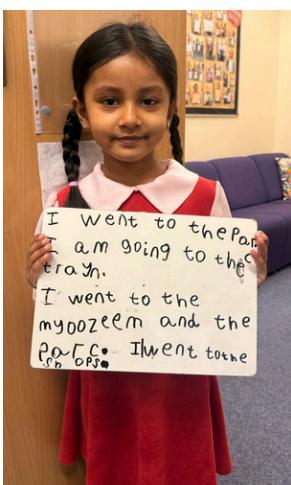
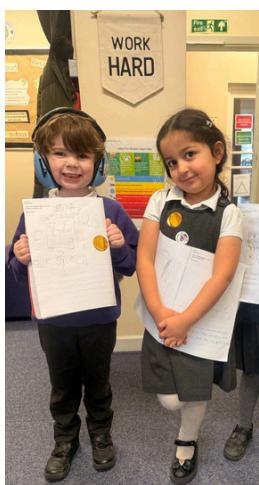
**2<sup>nd</sup> February** Children's Mental Health awareness and LGBT History month \*see letter where you can view materials on website

**9<sup>th</sup> February** International Women and Girls in Science Day and Safer Internet Day 2026

We look forward to seeing you at our Family Learning Conferences next week. Please note both myself and Miss Loftus will be available to speak to should you want to discuss anything about your child's education and wellbeing.

Thank you for your on-going support in ensuring our children 'Soar to Success'.

Claire Spencer - Headteacher



## Dates for your Diary

<b>February</b>		<b>May</b>	
3rd	Family Learning Conference 3.30-6.30pm	4th	Bank Holiday- School Closed
5th	Family Learning Conference 4-7pm	5th	Parent Forum 9.05am
13th	Last Day of Term	11th-14th	Year 6 SATs Week
14th	Half Term Holidays	21st	Sports Day- AM
23rd	Return to School	22nd	Last Day of Term
27th	Year 5- Level 1 Bikeability	23rd-31st	Half Term
27th	KS1 Phonics Workshop- 2.30pm	<b>June</b>	
<b>March</b>		1st	Return to School
5th	World Book Day	8th	Year 2 School Trip
6th	INSET Day- School Closed to Pupils	18th	Reserve Sports Day
18th-20th	Year 4- Hindleap Residential	19th	Transition to Year 1- EYs Parent Workshop 2.30pm
20th	Comic Relief 2026	23rd	Parent Forum 9.05am
23rd- 26th	Year 6- Bikeability	23rd	Class Photographs
26th	Celebration of Learning	<b>July</b>	
27th	Last Day of Term	22nd	Year 6 Leavers Assembly- PM
28th-12th April	Easter Holidays	22nd	Last Day of Term
<b>April</b>		<b>Sporting Events Calendar - Spring Term 2026</b>	
13th	Return to School	<a href="https://halsfordparkprimary.ovw6.devwebsite.co.uk/_site/data/files/users/parents/149113AAFDBD11DD5D8E0A361612817E.pdf">https://halsfordparkprimary.ovw6.devwebsite.co.uk/_site/data/files/users/parents/149113AAFDBD11DD5D8E0A361612817E.pdf</a>	

## Class Assemblies - 9.00- 9.30am

6th Feb	5 Anning Class Assembly
13th Feb	6 Turing Class Assembly
13th March	3 Farah Class Assembly
27th March	3 Simmonds Class Assembly
17th April	4 Elton Class Assembly
24th April	4 Elgar Class Assembly
1st May	2 Knight Class Assembly
19th June	1 Hart Class Assembly
26 <sup>th</sup> June	1 Sharratt Class Assembly
3rd July	2 Blake Class Assembly
10th July	EYs Floella Class Assembly
17th July	EYs Donaldson Class Assembly

TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY, 7PM - 8PM

[eduthing.co.uk](https://www.eduthing.co.uk)

CLICKING WITH CONFIDENCE:

**HELPING CHILDREN STAY SAFE ONLINE**

FREE Parent & Carer Online Safety Webinar

**eduthing** in conversation with **SCREENSAFE**

We are excited to again be celebrating the upcoming Safer Internet Day by hosting a virtual parent & carer support session with Anna Sargentson, ScreenSafe and experts from the eduthing Professional Learning team, and you're invited!

Join us in conversation as we explore the best ways to support our children and young people navigating the online world covering topics such as:

- Artificial Intelligence - What to know and how to support your children and young people
- Resources to facilitate discussion with children and young people on online safety
- Top Tips and Tricks for Parents & Carers  Particular Apps or Features to be aware of!
- Interactive Q&A Session

### ABOUT SCREENSAFE

I started Screen-Safe to help more parents, carers, teachers and anyone working with children, have access to support, the information they need now and the tools they need for the future when it comes to keeping our children and young people safer online. As a parent myself, I know just how challenging and sometimes, overwhelming it can be to navigate the digital world our children are growing up in. The online world can provide incredible opportunities but also some serious risks, especially where children are concerned.

We want them to be able to recognise the risks, be able to call out fake profiles or misinformation and have the confidence to say NO and get away from anything or anyone online that doesn't feel right or safe to them.

### ABOUT EDUTHING

eduthing are a leading technology provider to schools across the UK. As well as providing technical support to ensure teaching and learning runs smoothly, eduthing work with teachers, parents, carers and students with Computing, EdTech and Online Safety support and workshops.

We are passionate about ensuring the safety of children and young people when they experience the online world and immerse themselves in a safe and measured way.



### SESSION REGISTRATION

Click here to register for the upcoming session:

<https://eduthi.ng/SIDW-2026> Please note that this is a live session.

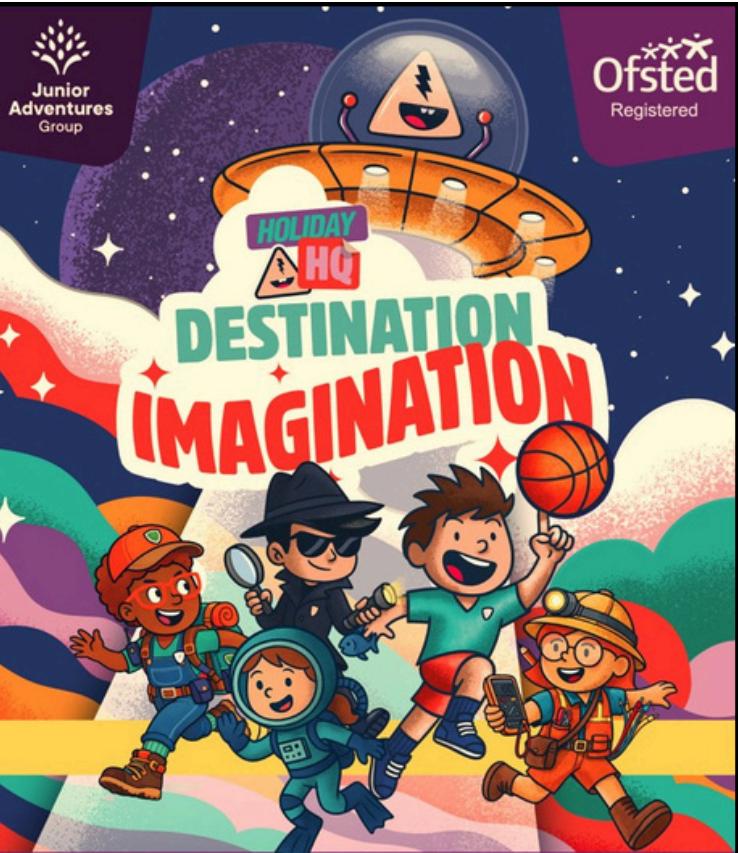
Coming to Halsford Park Primary School on Monday, 9 March...

**STEEL**

(AKA Zack George)  
from the BBC's  
Gladiators TV series



Inspiring children to become more active, eat more healthily, and grow in confidence!



Where imagination turns into action this February half-term

Multi-activity holiday childcare clubs

Early bird: **Save 10%** with code **DESTINT10** by 1 February, 2026