



Gosforth Central Middle School

Computing Newsletter

February 2021 Issue 1

Welcome!

It is safe to say that the landscape of teaching has changed vastly in the last year. The changes in the use of technology in education have been at a rapid pace, which we have been proud to have kept up with and in most cases gone beyond - due in no small part to the hard work and support of the staff and parents/carers of GCMS. In order to keep our school community abreast of what we are doing and to address the need for up to date information regarding (amongst many things) e-safety, we are launching a monthly newsletter. We hope you will find it both useful and informative.

This Month's Issue

With our children spending greater amounts of time online, it has never been more important to stay in touch with current trends in e-safety. Additionally we have been made aware of a number of concerns that parents and carers have brought to our attention. We'll also look at National Online Safety, a partner we use for e-safety training and resources. There is also information regarding our online learning platform, Google Classrooms and how we hope that it can be used safely during these unprecedented times. We always welcome feedback and would be keen to know about any topics you want to find out more about. Please note that we have shared links to other websites that we hope are informative, but cannot be held responsible for the content of.

Rob Leonard, Computing Lead.

National Online Safety (NOS)

NOS provides online safety education for the whole school community and that includes parents. As part of our membership parents can enroll and access up to date information, courses and resources. To find out more and join, follow the link below to our website on our parents e-safety portal.

[Enrollment via our website](#)

Trending Concerns - Open Platforms

Parents and carers have raised concerns with respect to what are known as open platforms, including TikTok and Roblox. In both cases we have addressed these issues with all pupils in computing and PHSCE. Open platforms are simply put, any online platform open to all. What sets many apart is the ability to chat to or send and receive messages to anyone with a membership. Roblox itself is a relatively safe platform with a lot of educational (and fun!) value. It can have its chat functions disabled, which we would strongly suggest parents do - information on how to do this can be found on Roblox website at:

[Safety Features: Chat, Privacy & Filtering](#)

TikTok issues have been well documented, featuring recently in a BBC Panorama documentary which can be viewed by following the link below. We would urge that if your child does have a TikTok account that you look into parental controls which the platform is now operating. For more information follow this link:

[TikTok now lets parents set restrictions on their kids' accounts](#):

[Panorama - Is TikTok Safe?](#)

Above all we would strongly recommend that all parents and carers have open and honest discussions with their child about any online platform they have and the pitfalls associated with using them. This has been covered during key stage 2 computing lessons.

Google Classrooms

With online learning continuing until at least 8th March, it is vital for all pupils to be able to access this platform and understand the expectations we have with regards to using it.

Our new acceptable use agreement which you have received a copy of, strongly reflects safe online learning while using our Google learning platform. We would be grateful if you could take the time to share the document with your child if you have not done so already. Under normal circumstances we would ask for a signed copy returned, however due to the practicalities of this, we have created an online version (a link will be emailed separately to you). The process will literally take seconds. If you have already returned this form to school, there is no need to fill in the electronic version.

We are also delighted with the recent upgrade we have had which has enabled new features such as breakout rooms and polls. Combined with some other new tools we are making our online learning provision better still and we hope the children are feeling the benefit of it.

Our online learning offer can be viewed on our website at:

<https://www.gosforthcent.newcastle.sch.uk/covid-related-information>

Issues with Online Learning

As ever, if you encounter any issues with passwords, please contact the school office or Mr Leonard directly for resets. Many issues with logging on can be solved relatively simply - please see our self-help video collection on our YouTube channel [GCMS TV](#). If you are encountering issues with hardware preventing your child accessing online learning, please get in touch to arrange an equipment loan. At present we are unable to help with provision of wifi dongles as our allocation is already out in the community. However, we can apply on your behalf to increase mobile network data. If you feel this would be of help, please get in touch. All contact details are below.

Next Month's Issue

We'll be taking a look at social networking, parental controls on mobile devices and the latest research on best online learning practice. Want to put forward some suggestions? Then please get in touch via the contact details below:

Get in Touch!

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