This special bonus assembly is based on the FYI Investigates documentary Who's Controlling Your Mind?, and the accompanying special report in Issue 984 of First News, and is designed to be used with children in KS2.

News Assembly – Who's Controlling Your Mind?

● **Resources:** script/prompts; documentary excerpt from *FYI Investigates: Who's Controlling Your Mind?* from 8 minutes, 20 seconds to 9 minutes, 52 seconds; dictionary with numbered pages; calculator and a whiteboard and pen; slip of paper showing the ninth word on the 108th page of the dictionary, sealed in an envelope
● **Preparation:** Read the script/prompts. Practise the mind trick. Prepare an envelope with the answer to the mind trick inside. Prepare the documentary to be projected, cued to the times shown above.
● **Duration:** approximately 25 minutes
● **Music suggestions:**

Always On My Mind – Pet Shop Boys or *Can't Get You Out Of My Head* – Kylie Minogue
This Is Me – Keala Settle from *The Greatest Showman*

Music suggestion
Children enter to *Always On My Mind* by Pet Shop Boys or *Can't Get You Out Of My Head* by Kylie Minogue

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1. Introduction

2. Welcome and greeting

Prompt: perform the 'mind reading' trick scripted below. Once finished, explain that it was only a trick and that you couldn't really read their minds. Discuss how it would feel if people could read your mind, then use that knowledge to control what you think and do. Use this to introduce the *FYI* video clip.

I wanted to start today with an amazing feat of mind reading. [*Select two volunteers – probably older children, and at least one who's confident with maths. Give the mathmatician a whiteboard and pen (plus a calculator if necessary). Give the other child a dictionary with numbered pages. Speak to the mathematician first…*] I want you to think of any three-digit number as long as it doesn't have any repeated digits. For example, you could have 345 but you couldn't have 343. Write it on the board for all to see. Ok, now, reverse the order of the digits so you have a different three-digit number. In my example, 345 would become 543. Next, subtract the smaller number from the larger one. [eg 543 – 345 = 198] What's the answer? [*Get them to write it down.*] Now, reverse that number's digits and add the answer to its reverse number. [*eg 198 + 891. Whichever numbers they have chosen, the answer will always be 1,089. Now, talk to the dictionary holder…*] So, look at the first three digits of that total [108] and go to that page in the dictionary. Now, what is the last digit of the number? [9] So, I want you to tell me what is the ninth word on that page in the dictionary. [*Repeat the word out loud so that everyone can hear.*] Finally, open the envelope and tell everyone what it says. [*If you have prepared and performed the trick properly, the words will be the same. Bow to the audience and thank your volunteers.*]

Now, don't worry. I don't have special mind-reading powers. That was just a trick. However, how would you feel if people could read your mind and then use that power to control what you think, how you behave and even what you buy? [*Invite a couple of responses.*] Yes, I'm not sure that I would feel happy about that. But, whether you like it or not, it is already happening, as I found out from this *FYI* Investigates documentary from Sky Kids.

3. Sharing the documentary excerpt

Prompt: play the video excerpt from the documentary *FYI Investigates: Who's Controlling Your Mind* (time 8:20 – 9:52). Acknowledge that we might like to think we control our own minds yet it's disconcerting how advertisers can influence you without you knowing it. Discuss how technology is getting more advanced and can control what we do, if we're not careful. Acknowledge that primary school children should not be using social media but they might have older siblings who do. Every time they post, comment or 'like' something, that information is used to control what they see on their devices. This limits the information and opinions they are exposed to. Also mention the rise of AI 'friends' who mimic the behaviour of 'perfect' friends. Assert that not all technology is bad but everyone needs to think twice before they believe or trust what they see online. They should nurture reliable friendships and identify trusted adults whom they can talk to. Conclude by stating that, ultimately, the only person who should be controlling your mind is you.

[*Play the excerpt from the documentary* **FYI Investigates: Who's Controlling Your Mind** *(time 8:20 – 9:52)*]

Now, I don't know about you, but I found it a little spooky how people can use advertising to influence what you do without you even realising it. I think most of us would like to think that we are in control of our own minds and choices but it seems that is not always the case. What's more, technology is becoming cleverer and cleverer all the time and some people are using that in subtle, almost unnoticeable, ways to try to control what we think and do.

Luckily, at the moment, you're all too young to be using social media … aren't you? But some of you might have older brothers or sisters who are forever on their phones, sharing comments and ideas and connecting with people they think are like them or who share their views. What they might not realise is that unseen people and organisations are gathering all that information and, helped by complicated computer programs called algorithms, controlling what they see and read on their phones. This can mean that their perspectives of the world are getting narrower and narrower, as they are only getting one point of view.

Furthermore, AI – Artificial Intelligence – is now becoming so smart that it can trick people into believing things that are not true. For example, you can now get AI 'friends' to chat with. These so-called friends are very clever at pretending to listen to you and telling you exactly what you want to hear. But they are not real.

So, what can you do? Well, first of all, I want to reassure you that of course, not all technology is bad. It can, for example, help you find out what you want to know very quickly. However, it is really important that you develop the ability to think twice about what you are being told when you are online. There is almost always more than one way to look at something and you need to be able to stop and think whether you are getting accurate information or the whole story.

That is why it is really important to talk to people – real people – whom you trust, such as adults who have shown that they care for you. It is also important to nurture your friendships. Now, real friends – as opposed to AI friends – are not perfect. Sometimes you will fall out. Sometimes you might disagree. But the best ones will stay with you and show by their actions that you can trust them. Isn't that better than opening your heart to a computerised friend who might seem like they're perfect but are, in fact, leading you down paths that are not good for you?

What I'm really saying is that it is better to be aware and be prepared. Because the only person who should be controlling your mind is you.

4. Reflection

Let's take a moment to be grateful for the benefits of technology but also to be wary of its dangers. Let's think about the people whom we can trust and make sure that we, too, can be trusted by those who rely on us. Finally, remember that your mind and your choices should be your own, and what you decide to believe should be done using the best available information. Remember, **you** are in charge of **your** mind.

5. Ending

Take this opportunity to deliver any school notices or other announcements.

6. Final farewell and dismissal

Have a lovely day (or evening, depending on when your assembly is). Mind how you go!

Music suggestion
This Is Me – Keala Settle from *The Greatest Showman*

Back in the classroom

Why not explore this topic further, using one or more of the following ideas?

- Invite pupils to take turns to draw on the board the logo (without words) of a brand they know and see whether the rest of the class can guess what it is. If necessary, start the ball rolling with an example of your own, such as the McDonald's arches. After a few goes, discuss with the class how they think they know all these answers when the only clue is a single image.
- Ask pupils to rate how likely they would be to trust the following people with personal details about themselves on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is the most likely.
  - their best friend
  - their teacher
  - their parents or carers
  - a stranger in a hooded cloak who sits beside them on a park bench
  - their local shopkeeper
  - their doctor
  Discuss their answers and suggest that posting information to unknown people on the internet is no different from telling the hooded stranger on the park bench.
- Hold a class debate on the statement *Children should not be allowed smartphones until they are 16 years old.*