

BRADFIELD CE PRIMARY SAFEGUARDING NEWS

Monthly safeguarding newsletter for families

Keeping children safe:

ONLINE GAMING

Dear Parents & Carers,

Welcome to our first Safeguarding Newsletter, which, this month, features Online Safety when gaming. Many children have talked about receiving phones, tablets and gaming systems for Christmas so we hope this newsletter will support our families to keep them safe whilst using them.

Online games can be a great way for children to keep busy and stay in touch with friends and family. But it is important they play safely. Things to consider:

- age ratings of games they play
- messaging and contact functions on the games
- in-game purchases
- trolling, grieving and scams
- how to report problems
- where they can get further support.

Also, if you have more than one child in your home, be aware that games suitable for one child to play or watch, may not be suitable for another.

What are online games?

Games can be generally split into different types:

- simple, short games like Candy Crush or Angry Birds
- creative games, solving puzzles or building worlds such as Minecraft;

SAFEGUARDING TEAM

If you have any concerns over a child's safety or welfare, please speak to a member of the school's safeguarding team.



Miss Davies
DSL

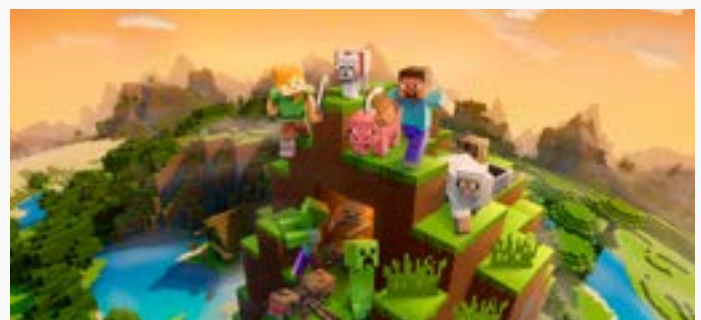


Miss Bisley
Deputy DSL



Mr Millward
Deputy DSL

- games that need strategy and skill to play, like chess;
- adventure games that explore different worlds and conflicts such as Fortnite or Call of Duty. Many games can be a combination of types as well as having other features, like the ability to interact and communicate with others. As well as interacting, players can share content, purchase in-game items, create their own games within the game.



Risks Of Online Gaming

Children may fear being left out or bullied by peers for not playing a specific game. They may be deliberately excluded from a game by their friends, or criticised for how they play. Other players may swear or use abusive language over voice chat, and this can be upsetting for your child.

If your child is experiencing bullying in online games, tell them they can talk to you or contact Childline and show them the blocking and reporting functions in a game, so they can prevent bullies from contacting them.

Some games cost money to download, or players need to buy credits or items so they can keep playing. Many free games are designed to make the player want to continue but need payments to make this possible, which can be very frustrating. We suggest not storing payment card details on devices or in apps, to prevent charges building up.

Some games are designed to be played in teams or against other people, and sometimes players can be based in different locations. Young people can easily play with people they don't know and haven't met, communicating using voice, video or text chat.

Many popular games have official channels with thousands of members. This puts young people at risk of grooming or online forms of abuse, along with the risk of moving the conversation to other platforms or meeting up offline. You should be aware of this across all online activity.

Tips For Online Gaming Safety

Most games have an age rating based on their themes those with violent and sexual content will have a higher rating. The age rating system is provided by PEGI and gives an overview of individual games which can help you to decide if it's appropriate. These ratings don't include communication features, so a game with a low age rating may let children speak to people they don't know. Some games let players turn off communications features, mute voice chat and report other players who behave inappropriately.

All major games consoles have settings that prevent children from finding inappropriate games - look at the settings available to see what's best for your child. You can set limits on how long a young person can play and prevent them from speaking to unknown players. It's a good idea to explore these settings before your child plays the game.

Consider creating a Family Agreement to establish some rules, which would include screen time or game-playing time. Remember that many games take a very long time to play and not all have regular 'save points'. This can be very frustrating for a child who has spent a long time trying to get to a new level only to be called down for dinner. Give them fair warning, e.g. 20 minutes then 10 minutes.

What to think about:



Ways games can benefit children

If your child is a keen gamer, **steer them towards games that will help them to develop life skills** like problem-solving or supplement their learning.



Be aware of game content and themes

It's important to **stay on top of what themes are featured in the games** they play so that you can be aware of how these might influence their view of the real world.

What to talk about

Discuss what they enjoy playing

Have regular conversations about the games they play so you can create an environment where they feel they can come to you if something goes wrong.

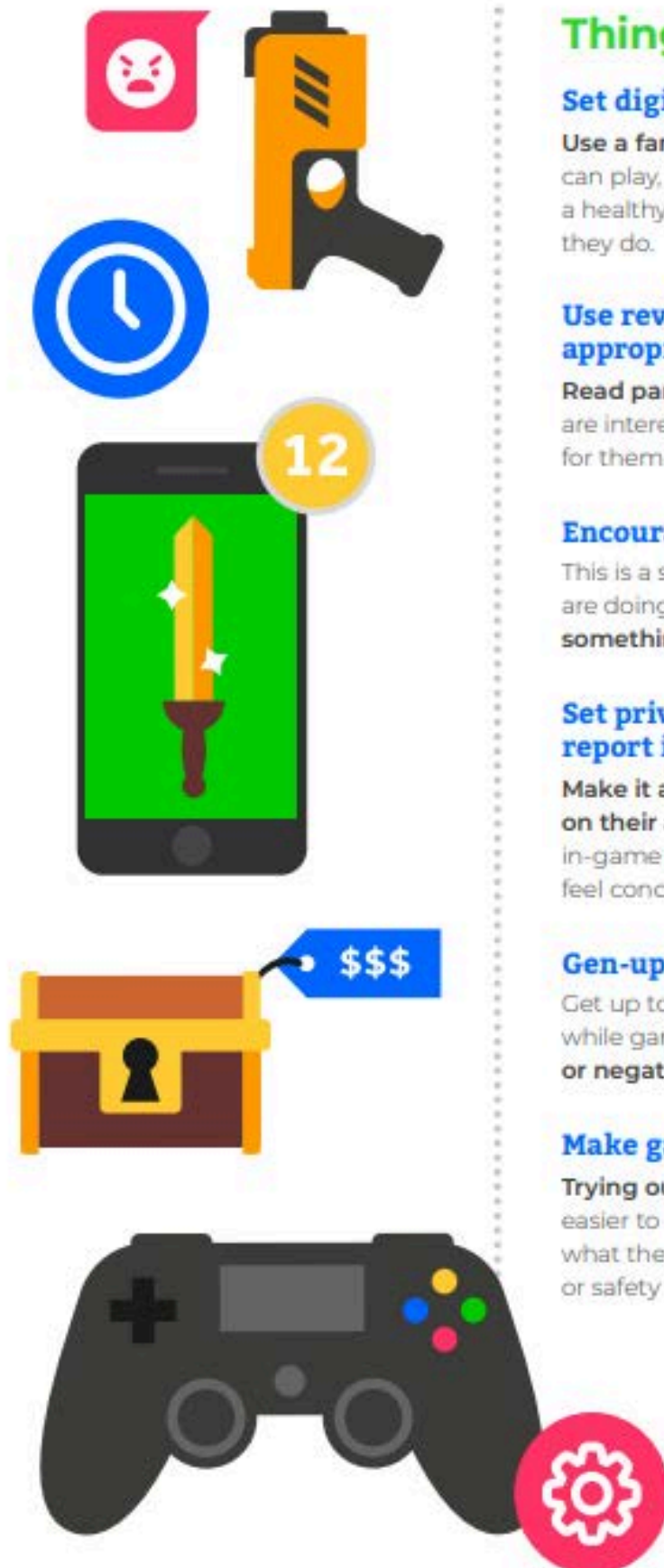
Talk about potential risks

Help them understand the **importance of keeping personal details private** and tell them that not everyone online is who they say they are.

How to cope when things go wrong

If they see something that upsets them or are targeted by another player in a game, it's important to talk about how to handle this situation. **Advise them to come and talk to you or a trusted adult for support.**





Things to do

Set digital boundaries

Use a **family agreement to set rules** on what they can play, when and how long for to help them strike a healthy balance between gaming other activities they do.

Use reviews and sites to pick appropriate games

Read **parents and expert reviews of games** they are interested in to help you choose the right games for them to play.

Encourage them to play in shared spaces

This is a simple way to stay engaged in what they are doing while gaming and **step in if you feel something's not quite right**.

Set privacy settings and learn how to report in-game abuse

Make it a habit to **review their privacy settings on their account** and teach them where to report in-game abuse so they can take action if they feel concerned.

Gen-up on the lingo

Get up to speed on how players communicate while gaming to **spot the signs of cyberbullying or negative behaviour**.

Make gaming a family affair

Trying out new games with children makes it easier to relate and can give you a better sense of what the game is about and prompt conversation or safety measures to help them stay safe.