



Willow Primary Academy

SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER— 4

JANUARY 2024

Safeguarding Team

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



Debra Arthur

DSL/Family Welfare Officer



Mandy Walton
Piper Centre
Manager /DDSL



Carly Tonks
Deputy Head & DDSL



Pete Hales
Head teacher & DDSL

Dear Parents & Carers,

This month's newsletter is going to be about Online Safety, knowing the children have possibly got phones, tablets, gaming systems for Christmas this may help 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 Bird
- creative games, solving puzzles or building worlds such as Minecraft;
- 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.

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Risks of online gaming

Children can be bullied for not playing a specific game, or have FOMO. 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 keeping children safe while gaming online

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. Look at the settings available to see what's best for your child. All major games consoles have [settings](#) that prevent children from finding inappropriate games. 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.

If you're stuck, not sure what to do, or if you're worried about your child, you can also contact our trained [helpline counsellors](#) on 0808 800 5000.

[How to Ensure Your Children Stay Safe While Playing Online Games | NSPCC](#)