

## E-safety Update: Online Gaming

Dear Parent's/Carers,

### **Important Information for KS2 parents/carers regarding keeping your child safe whilst playing games online**

As a school we think it's very important to stay up to date with the latest trends on games, including online games and websites. It has come to our attention, through various class and assembly discussions, that children from Reception to Year 6 are playing games outside of school hours which are not deemed suitable for them according to PEGI ratings.

Games such as Fortnite are increasing in popularity amongst children under the age of 12. Now although the game itself doesn't use profane language and has a PEGI rating of 12, the online gaming element can leave young children vulnerable to offensive language from random strangers. This could come in the form of on-screen text chat or via a headset (which is crucial to the game). If children are wearing headsets then parents and carers may not hear what is being said or discussed by other children or complete strangers and also opens up channels for potential groomers.

Please read the advice below from Internetmatters.org which gives a quick breakdown of what online gaming is and how you can keep your child safe while they're online. We've also included the PEGI ratings for your guidance.

**Online gaming** means you can play in real time with people across the world through a computer, games console, tablet or smartphone connected to the internet. Games can offer children a world of adventure to immerse themselves in, but it's important to understand how children can stay safe and what games are appropriate for their age.



## **What do I need to know about online gaming?**

Gaming is a fun and sociable way to spend time, encouraging teamwork and developing skills. All good stuff, but there are a few things you need to be aware of:

- Get involved by finding out what type of games your child enjoys and making sure they're appropriate for their age
- Some games let children play and chat with anyone in the world. This means they might come across offensive language and bullying
- Not everyone online is who they say they are. Children should avoid giving out personal details that could identify them or their location
- Some games encourage players to buy extra elements during the game – children have been known to run up large bills without realising
- In extreme cases bullying, also known as 'griefing', can be used as a tactic to win games. Children may find themselves either bullying or being bullied.

## **Keeping your child safe whilst online gaming**

There is nothing like sitting down with your children and joining in some of their games to find out just why they find them such fun. Here's how to keep their gaming experience healthy:

- Find out what sort of games your children enjoy – do they prefer role-play games, sports games, strategy and quest games or first-person shooter games?
- Ask who they play with online, who they meet and talk to, and what kind of language is being used in live chat (usually via headphones). Gaming sites often have ways of reporting abusive chat and excluding anti-social players. Make sure your child knows how to do this
- Especially for younger children, change the settings on your tablet or smartphone to 'airplane' mode. That way, they can play the game offline without making accidental purchases or connecting with someone they don't know
- Make sure you and your family agree what games can be played and that children understand why some games are allowed and others aren't. Agree how long they're allowed to play for
- Teach your children to protect themselves – remind them not to share personal information and to keep gaming friends in the game only rather than adding them to their other social networks
- Read each game's advice for parents and play the game yourself to help you understand more about how the game your child is playing works and its appropriateness

## PEGI games ratings explained



### PEGI ratings explained in full

Information taken from The Video Standards Council/Games Rating Authority website.

#### **PEGI 3**

The majority of games in this category do not contain anything that requires rating or warrants a content warning. Games given this rating are considered suitable for all age groups.

Some violence in a comical context or child-friendly setting is acceptable, as is nudity when shown in a completely natural and non-sexual manner such as breast feeding. Eg Yoshi, Angry Birds, FIFA

#### **PEGI 7**

Any game that would normally be rated at 3 but contains some possibly frightening scenes or sounds may be considered suitable in this category.

A little more violence is permissible at PEGI 7. It is always unrealistic and often directed towards fantasy characters, though very mild non-realistic violence to humans may also feature. Implied violence (for example the bombing of a city where violence is not seen directly) is also dealt with at this level. EG Splatoon, Lego Harry Potter, LittleBIG Planet2

#### **PEGI 12**

At a PEGI 12 level more graphic and realistic looking violence towards fantasy characters is allowed. Any violence towards human characters must look unrealistic unless it consists of only minor or trivial injury such as a slap.

Sexual posturing of the type often seen in music videos is also allowed at this level as is sexual innuendo.

Some bad language is allowed but it can be no more than mild swearing.

PEGI 12 is the minimum rating a game which teaches or encourages gambling can receive, though the descriptor also appears on PEGI 16 and PEGI 18 games.

A game at this level may feature horror content such as strong threat and dread or graphic injury details. EG Fortnite, Wildstar, Zelda, Ben 10

## **PEGI 16**

At the 16 level you can expect to see more mature and realistic violence against human characters. The game may deal heavily with death and injury to humans. Gory and bloody violence may be included at a PEGI 16 level but only if the game is arcade style.

Sexual activity can be shown but it must not include visible genitals. Depictions of erotic nudity may feature.

The worst forms of bad language can be heard and will often include sexual expletives.

The use of tobacco and alcohol may be encouraged, and the game can feature the use of illegal drugs. The game could glamorise crime. EG Titancreed, Outcast, Halo 2, Call of Duty, W2K17

## **PEGI 18**

The adult classification is applied when the level of violence becomes gross. Gross violence is classed as horrific methods of bringing death or severe injury, including torture, decapitation or dismemberment.

Violence against vulnerable characters such as children and the elderly may feature, along with motiveless violence against multiple innocents. Sexual violence and threat are also classified at PEGI 18.

The game may include detailed descriptions of criminal techniques, or it may glamorise the use of illegal drugs.

Sexual activity with visible genital organs can be shown. EG Call of Duty, Grand Theft Auto, Assassins Creed, Doom (many games that children routinely tell us that they play)

## **Content labels**

As well as the age rating, there are content labels, or descriptors, to explain why the game was given its rating. These are displayed on the packaging of the game (see image at the top of the page).

Through lessons provided at school, assemblies, guest speakers, and PSHE lessons, we do our best to provide our children with the awareness and knowledge they need in order to recognise and avoid dangerous, destructive, or unlawful behaviour and to respond appropriately. However, it is only through a collaborative effort between parents and teachers that we will succeed in creating responsible and safe cyber citizens.

We hope that you find this information useful.

Many thanks,