



Temple Moor High School

Online Safety Bulletin



This is the second online safety bulletin produced by the school. We will aim to provide a new issue once a half term. The purpose is to provide parents with help and advice to allow them to keep children safe when using the internet. It is important that this bulletin can respond to the needs of parents and to new developments in online safety.

If you have any area that you want the bulletin to address please contact the school on this address.

TMHSONlineSafety@tmhs.rklt.co.uk



The Basics

Keep Talking – In the last issue we highlighted the importance of talking to young people about their online usage. Try the link below for advice about the conversations you might have with students.

https://www.leedsscp.org.uk/start_the_conversation

What's New

Internet Filtering and Monitoring

As part of our safeguarding within school for e-safety, we operate a filtering and monitoring system which prevents access to specific terminology, phrasing and websites. This is fully compliant with the Home Office Anti Terrorism watch list and The Internet Watch Foundation. This means that practically, there are over 245,000 websites and banned phrases that are in effect 'filtered out' from student access. This is added to centrally on a daily basis. In the event that a student does try and search for a filtered word/website, the school receives notification on a daily basis. We then speak to individual students and inform parents if we have concerns. In some cases, this is simply a 'false positive', for example a student researching the Holocaust may see some access denied. We work hard to address such cases to not over limit access to be detrimental to learning.

I would ask all parents to carefully consider what mechanisms you apply within your own homes to prevent access to harmful material. Please check that you have restricted access to material that is not appropriate or monitor this with your children and talk to them about the importance of this.

Online Gaming and Gambling

The school has seen a rise in issues relating to gaming and gambling, these apps/sites require in app purchases which is illegal for children. There is more advice below.

Things to consider if your child games online:

- 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

The Online Safety Bill 2023

Some parents/guardians will be aware of the Online safety Bill gained royal assent on the 26th of October. This means that it has now passed into law, but what does this mean for you and I?

There is greater responsibility placed on social media companies which means they should;

- remove illegal content quickly or prevent it from appearing in the first place, including content promoting self-harm
- prevent children from accessing harmful and age-inappropriate content including pornographic content, content that promotes, encourages or provides instructions for suicide, self-harm or eating disorders, content depicting or encouraging serious violence or bullying content
- enforce age limits and use age-checking measures on platforms where content harmful to children is published
- ensure social media platforms are more transparent about the risks and dangers posed to children on their sites, including by publishing risk assessments
- provide parents and children with clear and accessible ways to report problems online when they do arise

In addition, the bill also;

- make sure illegal content is removed
- enforce the promises social media platforms make to users when they sign up, through terms and conditions
- offer users the option to filter out content, such as online abuse, that they do not want to see

The consequences for not meeting these requirements will include much larger fines being place for the large social media companies, up to 10% of their global income.

Beyond the social media companies, the new law has also strengthened the ability to convict people who are abusive online, carryout grooming or aim to share intimate images.

Age Ratings for Online Services

Age ratings are in place to help protect your child, so we thought we'd provide you with a little reminder of how important it is to check the age ratings of what your child is accessing online. Here are the age ratings of some of the more popular apps that young people are accessing. Did you know that WhatsApp has an age rating of 16?



Whether your child is viewing films, accessing apps, playing games online, using social media or downloading other apps – check the age rating first to see if your child is old enough. In addition, the likes of PEGI include further content descriptors, which will give you an indication of the type of content that your child might view e.g. violence if accessing the app/game etc. It is important to note that whilst age ratings do allow you to see if something may be appropriate for your child, it is also important to review the content yourself. This will allow you to make an informed decision as to whether it is suitable for your child to access and if it would be beneficial to apply further parental controls.

Further information

Parent Zone have published this article about why age ratings matter: <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/age-ratings>

Part of our Gaming & Gambling Series



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What you need to know about... LOOT BOXES & SKIN BETTING



What is it?

'Loot Boxes'

Some video games offer "loot boxes" as a way to purchase items. Similar to purchasing a pack of football stickers, players don't know exactly what they will get. They may get a common item that has a low value in the game. Equally, they may get a rare item that has a high value.

'Skin Betting'

"Skin betting" is when players use virtual items they have earned or purchased in games (often titled "skins" because they are cosmetic features) as gambling currency. Players can use websites or apps outside of the game itself, which are mostly unregulated, to bet with "skins" on eSports competition outcomes. This becomes a legal issue when the "skins" you win can be converted to cash.

Know the Risks

Beware of Overspending

It's important for parents to be aware if children are buying loot boxes and skins for trading or betting purposes, as it can consume considerable amounts of money. It can be much easier to make repeat purchases online compared to buying toys or stickers over the counter.

May Lead to Addiction

Because players can trade and swap items in games, the relative rarity of these items creates a thriving market where they can be exchanged like any form of gambling, this can become addictive as children seek to get the best or most valuable "skins", often dedicating large amounts of time trying to get what they want.

Illegal Behaviour

It's important for parents to understand that "skin" trades and "skin" gambling are often arranged on websites or apps outside the game itself. These are unregulated and beyond the control of the game creator. Sites that offer the ability to gamble "skins" for cash are often illegal and require a gambling licence. They also shouldn't be advertised to children.

Safety Tips

Discuss What 'Value' Means

It's important that parents work alongside their children as they venture into the world of gaming. Together they can build an understanding of how purchases work and discuss which are really good value, and which are over-priced. Like pocket money, it can be a good way to teach children about virtual currency and online purchases.

Set Spending Limits

Together with your child, you can set-up spending limits to stop accidental purchases. A good approach is to use the pocket money feature on consoles to allow them to spend a small amount each month.

Use Pre-paid Cards

You can also avoid putting your credit card details in by using pre-paid cards that work like book tokens. If you do add credit cards, ensure you set up a password on the account so that children cannot keep spending freely.

Further Support

Report Illegal Gambling Sites

If you discover your child has been gambling on skins websites, you should report the site to the relevant authority immediately. You may be able to do this anonymously and it may help to crack down on any wider criminal activity and the targeting of underage gambling.

Seek Support

If you think that your child has developed a gambling addiction or may be showing signs of developing a habit, you can seek support from external organisations who may be able to help and can provide further education around the dangers of excessive gambling.

Our Expert Andy Robertson



Andy Robertson is a freelance family technology expert for the BBC. He runs the Family Gamer TV YouTube channel and contributes to a range of national media on the topic of video-games and family.

"The industry, as far as we can see as families, are grooming the next generation with a whole set of online games and these are aimed at 7, 8, 9 year olds – that's the next generation who are going to be their income generators" - Liz Ritchie, Gambling With Lives

The digital world that we live in can be a minefield for families and parents/carers. The way in which children 'game' now is completely different to how modern day parents and carers would have experienced. The 'monetization' of gaming is at the forefront of research and there are increasing concerns surrounding online gaming and the subsequent links this has with underage gambling.



From ONLINE GAMING to ONLINE GAMBLING

Recognising the Signs



10 Signs for Parents to Look For:

Disordered gambling is sometimes referred to as the 'silent killer'. Unlike drug or alcohol addictions the signs are sometimes harder to spot and if not dealt with at an early age can have a devastating affect on both the gambler and their families later on in life.

1

EXCESSIVE USE OF DEVICES

This can lead to increased isolated behaviour and lying about the amount of time spent online.



2

SPENDING MONEY ONLINE WITHOUT PERMISSION

If a child is willing to spend money online (invariably on a parent's card) without permission then this should act as an early warning sign to parents to ensure that there are some barriers and parental controls in place.

3

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR

Children may become moody, aggressive or argumentative particularly during or shortly after periods of online gaming.



4

A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TO SCHOOL

Children may display an obvious change in attitude to learning and a more negative view of school.

5

DISENGAGED WITH FAMILY LIFE

Children start to prefer spending time alone online rather than engage in normal family activities.



6

COMPULSIVE EATING

This includes both eating the wrong types of food excessively and not eating healthily.



7

IMPATIENT

Not prepared to wait for anything (mirrored in excessive online game play and in app purchases) and nothing is ever good enough.



8

'THE LOOK'

Compulsive gamblers are often said to look zoned out, have a greyness, look ill, experience a loss of weight and stop taking pride in their appearance. The same can be said of those who are starting to develop a gaming addiction.



9

OBSESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Children who demonstrate obsessive behaviour in everyday life are often reported to be 'at risk' of developing an online gaming disorder.



10

DISHONESTY

This could include starting to tell lies and in the more extreme cases even stealing things.

10 Top Tips for Parents:

If you think that your child may be at risk of developing a gaming addiction then there are a series of measures that you can put in place. This is by no means an exhaustive list but just some strategies that could ensure a potential situation does not escalate.

1

BE AWARE

Do not fall into the trap that it's just what children do – as parents/carers/families be 'on the same page' and do not be allowed to be played off against one another.



2

VISIT THE GP

Although both gaming/gambling addictions are now recognised as a mental disorder, some doctors may not be experts in these areas – families can self-refer to NHS Gaming and Gambling Clinics.

3

DO YOUR RESEARCH

See what help and support is available. Visit www.gamfam.co.uk and become an expert.



4

SPEAK TO THE SCHOOL

Have an open and honest conversation. Schools are investing heavily in mental health and can arrange or direct you to the most appropriate support services.



5

TAKE AN ACTIVE INTEREST

This applies to school work and in creating a learning environment at home. Find activities and hobbies that create a life away from the screen and be part of it.

6

BECOME THE EXPERT

Research the game your child is playing – does the game have loot boxes?



7

PUT BARRIERS IN PLACE

Set up parental controls for all devices (including phones) and set up screen time. Visit the 'Partnership with Parents' section at www.gamfam.co.uk for further details.

8

FINANCIAL CONTROLS

Turn off in-app purchases. Do not link your debit/credit card to your child's device and use a prepaid card instead. For example Monzo, Go Henry, Nimbl or speak to your bank for advice.



9

DISCUSS LOOT BOXES AND SKIN BETTING

Have a conversation about loot boxes and skin betting. Many games can still be played and completed without using loot boxes on the console version but be mindful of the mobile versions.



10

DO NOT LEND MONEY FOR GAMBLING

Or if you think it will be used for online gaming, without your permission.



The above guidance has been produced by



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about CRYPTOCURRENCY

What is cryptocurrency?

Cryptocurrency is software enabling the exchange and storage of digital 'coins' representing financial value. To monitor who owns which coins, platforms save an online record of every transaction, called a 'ledger' or 'blockchain'. This is secured by cryptography: a set of methods for protecting sensitive information. Bitcoin, released in 2009, was the first cryptocurrency; other platforms have since launched such as Ethereum, Tezos and Filecoin. As cryptocurrency becomes a more established part of digital life, young people are bound to encounter it – so it's vital that trusted adults understand its risks, and how it can be explored and used safely.

COMPLEX TECHNOLOGY

Like any new software, cryptocurrency comes with bugs, flaws and limitations. Broadly, it hasn't yet evolved to be as user friendly as web browsing or social media. Using it safely means spending time learning about the complicated technology it uses. We would strongly suggest anyone considering getting involved in cryptocurrency should consult specialised tutorials to learn about it properly in advance.

WIDESPREAD EXAMPLES

Cryptocurrency software for smartphones is often free to download from app stores. Emails with links to cryptocurrency services can land in any inbox. Cryptocurrency is also advertised on search engines, on social media and in online games (for example to buy add-ons which help players level up). It can't be purchased easily without a credit card or bank account, but young people will still be exposed to cryptocurrency in various settings.

CHANCE OF SCAMS

Cryptocurrency provides another opportunity for scammers to extract personal data and money from unwary web users. Unlike credit card transactions or wire transfers, a bank can't reverse cryptocurrency transactions after a suspected fraud – making it an appealing channel for online extortion. These transactions do leave evidence in the blockchain, however, which means that cryptocurrency scammers can and do get caught.

BEING LOCKED OUT

If you forget your online banking password, you can reset it by proving your identity in another way. In the world of 'crypto', however, the private key to access your funds can't be reset. Cryptocurrency operates without intermediaries like banks – so no-one stores a copy of users' private keys. This has security benefits, but also presents the huge risk of permanently losing access to your account. Learn how to store private keys securely before purchasing any significant amounts of cryptocurrency.

RISKY INVESTMENT

Prices can be very volatile, so cryptocurrencies are considered high-risk investments. If you might need your savings soon, don't hold them in cryptocurrency as their value could drop suddenly and sharply. Sometimes, cryptocurrency may be a profitable investment – but note that any gains are taxable. You may even have to pay tax when exchanging one cryptocurrency for another if the currency you're exchanging is priced higher than it was when you bought it.

Advice for Parents & Carers

AVOID IF UNSURE

In the UK, cryptocurrency is considered risky, because users aren't well protected if something goes wrong. Most cryptocurrencies use software developed by decentralised communities, so there's no customer service and no support if your funds get stolen or you lose access to your mobile cryptocurrency wallet. Unless you understand cryptocurrency, it's probably best not to use it. After all, if you couldn't comprehend the highway code, it wouldn't be safe for you to drive.

CHECK CREDENTIALS

Buying cryptocurrency for the first time involves wiring funds from your bank to a cryptocurrency exchange – a business that converts your money into cryptocurrency. They can also store cryptocurrency for you, though this could present a security risk. Cryptocurrency businesses in the UK must now comply with money laundering regulations: the Financial Conduct Authority's website has a list of all businesses that are approved, and it's best to avoid dealing with any that aren't.

EXPECT EXPOSURE

If your child plays online games that involve some form of virtual currency, and has access to some kind of payment method, they may find themselves in a position to buy and use cryptocurrency. There's probably no immediate danger, but discussing the potential risks with them could be useful. If your child is old enough to understand the concepts of spending and saving or to grasp the basics of programming, then they're old enough to learn about cryptocurrency.

STAY CAUTIOUS, STAY INFORMED

Approach cryptocurrency with caution as well as curiosity. Don't click on links in unexpected emails referring to cryptocurrency and beware of promotions promising free cryptocurrency in exchange for personal information. Avoid mentioning on social media that you own cryptocurrency, as this can attract scammers. Stay informed of potential new risks and regulations by regularly checking specialised sources (such as CoinDesk).

Meet Our Expert

JP Vergne is an educator and associate professor at University College London's School of Management. His award-winning research on technology and organisation has been published in leading academic journals as well as in two books. JP is also a speaker and advises on startups. He tweets at @PirateOrg.



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