



09/01/2023

Internet Safety updates for parents

Child Safety and the Metaverse

Christmas has now come to a close and a new year has begun. As pupils and staff return to school, the annual playground inquisition will begin. Among their peer group young people will begin to discuss what they got for Christmas. For many the answer will almost certainly be 'a Fortnite battle pass, a new PC, a PlayStation 5 etc'. All devices which allow both unfettered access to the internet and expose children to voice chat, text chat and photo sharing with complete strangers. This year presents an acceleration of vulnerability window as, VR headsets, connected to Facebook's Metaverse have been released onto the marketplace. The Metaverse seeks to link users to the internet as a Virtual Entity through the use of Virtual Reality Headsets. This amplifies the danger children are exposed to online. Over the coming months it will be vital for DSL's to understand these Christmas gifts and the issues linked to them. To help you understand this new, fast changing issue the NSPCC has published a guide to both the Metaverse and VR headsets. To find out more please follow the link:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2022/christmas-vr-safety-advice-for-parents-metaverse/>

Understanding the Playground - Fortnite

Since its release 2017, the battle-royale simulator – Fortnite, has become ubiquitous in classrooms and playgrounds throughout the world. The game, which features cartoonish renderings of characters, bright colours and non-visceral consequence free violence, has had a mass appeal to children. Each Christmas another draft of young pupils are induced into its overcrowded multi-player lobbies, to the point that there is not a school pupil in the country who hasn't owned it, begged their parents for it or played it round a friend's house. As a result more children than ever are exposed to multi-player chatting with strangers, and financial exploitation via the game's spend-to-gain-advantage operating style. Allowing



children to use real world money to gain perks and costumes. From criminal blackmailing, to the coercion of nude exchanges by online 'friends' posing as children, the danger this game presents from a safeguarding perspective is clear. As an added complication, the verbiage surrounding the game used by pupils is near-incomprehensible, frustrating adepts to secure their safety. Fortunately to allow for greater comprehension of reports to staff involving the game, Internetmatters.org has published a guide to understanding the game and its terms. You can find the link below:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/guidance/fortnite-battle-royal-parents-guide-keep-kids-safe-gaming>

A Guide to Online Safety and Gaming

As a new generation of young people arrive onto using multiplayer games and the internet in general this new year, it is more important than ever to make your pupils aware of how to stay safe online. The SWGfL has published a pamphlet on how to best keep safe whilst using online software and games. With advice on reporting and blocking, online socialization and the considerations on online gaming, the pamphlet can be a useful resource for any teaching staff, giving lessons on the topic. You can find a link to that resource below:

<https://swgfl.org.uk/assets/documents/online-safety-and-gaming.pdf>

Building Healthy Relationships whilst Socializing Online

The use of the internet among young people is now everywhere. The rise in the cultural acceptance of internet relationships between young people and strangers that they play or talk with online, has opened the door to dangers. Yet it is only a small amount of these relationships which turn out malicious, but children and young people may find it difficult to understand when that arises. The Information Commissioners Office, the UK's information rights agency, has published guidance on what to look for when these relationships turn sour. And more importantly, what to do about it. It is an excellent source of help when discussing with pupil's their internet social life. Aiding to bring educational personnel up to date when it comes to the social world within which their pupils exist, outside of school. To find the guidance please follow the link below:

<https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/media-centre/news-and-blogs/2022/02/respect-and-healthy-relationships-online-how-the-children-s-code-can-help/>

New Resources from the NYSCP

The North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (NYSCP), is now running a hub of resources and information linked to raising awareness of safeguarding. The hub, designed for use by parents, carers, and young people, is also aimed at tackling child exploitation. You might recall that last year, we examined the issue of victim blaming and the language we use around crimes perpetrated against children. A portion of the NYSCP's website is dedicated to this issue. And an excellent next step for those interested in this vitally important topic. To find out more please follow the link below:

<https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/beaware/>
