

Queen Eleanor's Church of England Junior School
*An Academy in the Good Shepherd Trust**
Queen Eleanor's Road, Onslow Village, Guildford, GU2 7SD
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Head teacher: Mrs Jo Davies

Thursday 10th September 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Keeping Safe Online and when Gaming/using apps/social media

At Queen Eleanor's we are aware that some of our children enjoy creating their own videos on YouTube in their spare time at home. In the past, it has been brought to our attention that some of the videos have identified them and the school. Please be aware that this presents a safeguarding issue and we therefore ask that you monitor your child/ren's internet usage. Could I ask that all parents check their child/ren's YouTube activity and remove any videos that identify the school they attend. We also advise that you set YouTube to Kids mode and make sure to watch the videos your child/ren are watching as sometimes inappropriate content can be embedded into children's programmes.

We are also aware that many of our children enjoy playing electronic games. Gaming can be a fun hobby and some types of games can even support skills such as problem solving. Unfortunately, many of the games that children love to play and that are being targeted at children actually contain violent content that can be detrimental to their wellbeing. Many studies that have been undertaken into the effects of violent games have shown that, after playing violent games, participants in studies are more likely to display violent behaviour and to show less of a reaction to scenes of real life violence. Other studies have followed games players over time and violent game play has been linked to aggression at a later point. As well as being violent, some of the games that our children love can pose other threats to their wellbeing because they allow strangers to contact children through chat modes or multi-player gaming. Even when children play with their peers online, this can cause distress if incidents of bullying occur. Even if our children are not allowed to play games themselves, they may still be accessing unsuitable content through siblings, friends or through sneaking electronic devices into their bedrooms.

I have included some suggestions for keeping children safe and happy whilst enjoying gaming and online activities.

1. Check the rating to better understand what type of content a game has.
2. Play games with your child/ren to better understand the content, and how your child/ren reacts to content. This can also be a great way to bond and start a conversation with your child. 'The Boy Made of Blocks' by Keith Stuart is an interesting fiction story about a father and son who bond through the game Minecraft.
3. Place video consoles and computers in common areas of the home, rather than in children's bedrooms.
4. Ensure that older siblings are aware of the impact that playing games with grown-up content can have on their younger siblings. Many older siblings misjudge the content of games or may deliberately claim that games are harmless, so that they are given time to play. Younger siblings who are in the room at the time or who are allowed to play with older siblings unsupervised may not be able to cope with what they have experienced.
5. Set limits on the amount of time children can play these games. It is recommended that children spend two hours or less of total screen time per day. It is also recommended that children do not have any screen time before bed as they have been proven to disrupt sleep.
6. Encourage participation in sports or school activities in which children can interact with peers in person rather than online.
7. Turn off the open chat modes in games because, unfortunately, open chat mode allows anyone to contact your child, meaning this can become a place for online bullying or for predators to target children.
8. Use an app such as Kixio to monitor what your child is playing. You can also use this to set time limits and block content.

Further information and sources of research:

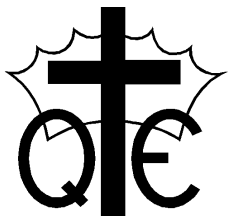
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

<http://www.educationalneuroscience.org.uk/resources/neuromyth-or-neurofact/violent-video-games-make-children-more-violent/>

<https://www.besa.org.uk/news/what-schools-need-to-know-about-fortnite-battle-royale/>

<http://www.esrb.org/>

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<https://www.idtech.com/blog/educational-benefits-minecraft/>

<https://www.commonsemmedia.org/blog/a-parents-ultimate-guide-to-youtube>

<http://www.gettingsmart.com/2012/11/30-of-the-best-educational-ipad-games-kids-edition/>

Popular Games

Below are some of the games children have mentioned at school. We have also copied a brief description of their content and their recommended age rating from commonsensemedia.org or ERSB.

Fortnite - Age 13+

Players use guns, swords, and grenades to fight skeleton-like monsters (husks) in ranged and melee-style combat. Players can also defeat enemies by using various traps (e.g., electric, spikes, poisonous gas). Battles are highlighted by frequent gunfire, explosions, and cries of pain.

Five Nights at Freddy's - Age 12+

Five Nights at Freddy's is a horror game that uses tension and jump scares in place of blood and guts -- and, as a result, is a lot scarier than many other titles. The sense of being trapped and defenceless in a small office quickly becomes real -- and when the animatronic characters jump out at you, you will jump (and maybe scream). This makes the game much too intense for younger children -- and teens should know what they are getting into.

Minecraft Age - 8+

One of the best selling, independently developed and published video games, *Minecraft* immerses children in creative thinking, geometry, and even a little geology as they build imaginative block structures.

Roblox Age - 10+

Parents need to know that Roblox is a game-creation site where users design and upload their own games, as well as play other games in a multiplayer environment. Some of the gameplay is advanced, and many games include weapons. The site offers a safe-chat mode for those under 13, as well as a parent login that lets you oversee your child's use of the site. There have been reports of users thwarting the chat and exchanging inappropriate/predatory messages with young players. Parents may still want to be wary when their children are using the site or connecting with people they have just met. There are in-game currency items called Robux that you can use to unlock additional items, but you will either earn these slowly or pay for additional Robux with real money.

WhatsApp - Age 16

The minimum age of use for WhatsApp is 16 years old. It had previously dropped to 13 years old but in April 2018 returned to 16, as a response to data-protection legislation.

TikTok - Age 13

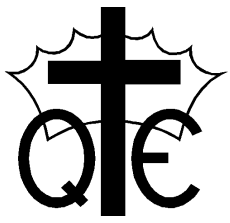
TikTok requires that users be at least 13 years old to use the full TikTok experience, although there is a way for younger children to access the app. Anyone under the age of 18 must have approval of a parent or guardian.

Facebook - Age 13

Facebook requires everyone to be **at least 13 years old** before they can create an account (in some jurisdictions, this age limit may be higher). Creating an account with false information is a violation of their terms. This includes accounts registered on the behalf of someone under **13**.

Instagram - Age 13

Instagram requires everyone to be **at least 13 years old** before they can create an account (in some jurisdictions, this age limit may be higher). Accounts that represent someone under the age of **13** must clearly state in the account's bio that the account is managed by a parent or manager.



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Twitter – Age 13

Twitter requires people using the service to be **13 years of age or older**.

Following this advice will help to ensure that our children are able to be happy and safe whilst playing games. I hope you find these useful and please do not hesitate to contact the school if you require any further support or advice on this subject.

Kind regards

Mrs Davies