



# PARENTS' SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

## St Michael's C of E Primary School

Welcome to our Safeguarding Newsletter where we will share useful information with you about safeguarding your children. This issue focuses on 'protected characteristics' and some useful online safety resources.

### Spotlight on: Discrimination

Discrimination is “treating someone unfairly because of who they are.”

(Citizens Advice, 2022). This means that a person is being treated differently or is put at a disadvantage because of someone else’s opinions or judgements of them.

By law, there are 9 characteristics that are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010:

- Age
- Disability
- Religion/Belief
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage/Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Race/Ethnicity
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

**If someone is targeted or treated unfairly because of one or more of these characteristics, then they are being unlawfully discriminated against. This also includes someone being treated differently because another person thinks that they belong to a group with a protected characteristic, whether it’s true or not. At St Michael's we celebrate diversity and teach the importance of this to the pupils. We do not tolerate discrimination in any form and it will always be challenged.**

It is important that all children gain an understanding of the world they are growing up in, and learn how to live alongside, and show respect for, a diverse range of people. We teach children about the characteristics at an age appropriate level through our PSHE Jigsaw scheme and in other areas of the curriculum. We ask for your support in challenging any unacceptable language or views.



Vodafone have created a fantastic resource for parents including information, YouTube videos, and an interactive resource providing information about parental controls and safety settings. Everything is free and you can find further information [HERE](#).

### National Online Safety Guides



Each term we will also share a 'Need to Know' guide for popular games/apps/sites that we hear the children talk about. This will help parents/carers to understand more about these and how to keep the children safe online. This term it's [Fortnite!](#)

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

# FORTNITE

CHAPTER

4

AGE RESTRICTION  
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## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Fortnite may be something of a veteran in gaming terms (having launched back in 2017), but it remains massively popular – with more than 250 million people playing online every month. That's partially due to the competitive nature of its player-vs-player combat, its pop culture crossovers and its constantly shifting map. Significant updates are rolled out with each new version of the game – known as 'chapters' – and within these sit shorter 'seasons', which bring more subtle changes. The latest iteration, Chapter 4 Season 2, adds a cyberpunk-themed city and anime-style areas, for example, along with new weapons and characters.

## ALWAYS ONLINE

There's no single-player offline mode in Fortnite: it can only be played online. Internet access can sometimes be an issue when you're out and about (both in terms of connectivity and using up data), so you may find that dedicated young Fortnite players are often less enthusiastic about trips away of a certain length – such as days out and holidays – than you might have expected.

## IN-GAME COSTS

Fortnite is free to download and play, but it does offer various additional purchases – cosmetic skins, rare weapons and so on – which don't really impact on gameplay, but can cost quite a significant amount. These items are bought with game's currency, V-Bucks – which can be earned through playing, but are also often purchased from the game's store for real-world money.

## POP CULTURE REFERENCES

Part of Fortnite's appeal is its ongoing crossovers with other popular franchises, ranging from movies and TV shows like *The Walking Dead* to comic book characters including Batman to other games such as *Street Fighter*. This means you could find your child asking questions about the creature from *Alien* or who Geralt from *The Witcher* is a little sooner than you'd possibly anticipated.

## CROSSPLAY AND PARTY CHAT

Fortnite is popular with vast numbers of gamers – of various ages. Crossplay lets friends play with and against each other, regardless of whether they're on an Xbox, PlayStation or PC – while party chat allows them to communicate during the game. This chat feature can also, therefore, put youngsters at risk of hearing inappropriate language from older players in the heat of virtual combat.

## VIRTUAL VIOLENCE

At its core, there's no avoiding that Fortnite is about shooting other players to eliminate them. That said, there's no blood or gore: the violence is generally rendered in a cartoonish style, and there are frequent comical touches to lighten the mood (fishing mini-games, for example). The machine guns, shotguns and other weapons often look and behave realistically, however, so discretion is advised.

## FREQUENT UPDATES

The game's developers release content in 'seasons' that usually run for around ten weeks. Each fresh update sees items added to the in-game store, changes to the environment's map and a different over-arching theme (such as 'medieval', 'pirates' or 'party'). These regular renewals help to hold players' interest – but also give young gamers plenty of reasons to keep returning to their screens.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### MATCH GAMING TIMES

Younger players tend to want to play Fortnite alongside their friends. With this in mind, it could be worth speaking to the parents and carers of your child's social group and trying to coordinate their gaming around certain hours of the day. Safety in numbers is obviously a factor here, but it will also help your child feel that they're getting adequate opportunity to socialise with their friends online.

### SET SPENDING LIMITS

Fortnite's rotating store is a not-so-subtle mechanism for coaxing players into splashing out on those sought-after items before they disappear again for weeks. This could potentially lead to surprise outlays on your card if your child is tempted into an impulse purchase. You could consider setting up a prepaid card for them to use – or ensuring that any online purchases require adult authorisation.

### USE UPDATES AS REWARDS

Fortnite's seasonal updates are free – but each also brings the option of a 'battle pass', unlocking exclusive rewards for playing the game and completing set challenges. The passes cost around £8 (and are available as part of larger bundles) and can be an effective reward to young Fortnite fans for good behaviour or academic performance, or as an incentive for chores like tidying their room.

### BE WARY OF SCAMS

The immense popularity of Fortnite with more trusting younger audiences means that there's no shortage of scammers looking to fraudulently obtain passwords and other personal data through techniques like phishing. As the developers point out on many of Fortnite's loading screens, they never ask for a player's account password outside of the game: make sure your child knows this.

### ENJOY FORTNITE TOGETHER

Fortnite also offers split-screen gameplay, meaning that two people can play simultaneously via the same TV or computer. That's ideal for siblings or when your child's friends visit – but it also offers you an opportunity to spend time doing something fun with your child, while also being able to make sure they're playing the game safely. Who knows, you might even teach them a thing or two!

## Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is Editor in Chief of gaming and esports site GCRecon and has worked in the gaming media for around four years. A long-time gamer, he is also a parent and therefore a keen advocate of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his articles have been published on influential sites including IGN and TechRadar.



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