

### GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

I am sure that some of you will have heard about the government made an announcement this week that they are allowing schools to take Friday 18th December as a teacher training day. They state that we would have to cancel an already planned teacher training day for 2021 as a result. They state they are doing this because school leaders need to be 'on call' right up until Christmas Eve (6 days after school closes) should there be a confirmed case of COVID within the school as we will have to do the track and trace within school. By having a teacher training day, then I would not need to be on call on Christmas Eve.

After discussions with local primary Headteachers, we have all decided not to do this. **We will be closing as planned on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December.** It will be very difficult for parents to find childcare and we cannot organise an effective teacher training day at such short notice.

It is very important that if your child develops symptoms and have a positive COVID-19 test at the beginning of the holidays that you let school know. You can do this via the school email address [info@usworthcolliery.co.uk](mailto:info@usworthcolliery.co.uk).

If there is a positive case within your child's bubble and your child could have been a possible contact, then I will contact you during the holidays. This will only be before Christmas. Hopefully, I'll not be in contact on Christmas Eve telling you your child has to isolate for 14 days!

### CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

We have had to closed the ASD Base today as we have had a positive case. This only affects a very small number of children and adults due to the systems we have in place to contain the classes/bubbles. They will be isolating all next week. We have done very well to keep the disruption throughout school to a minimum this term and hope to continue this in the new year. As usual, please stay safe and follow government guidelines at all times.

### STAFF PANTOMIME

The staff pantomime 'Trouble in Pantoland' is ready and links to those who have purchased them will be sent out today. Check out the trailer on Twitter

<https://twitter.com/UCPrimary/status/1336693621429575682?s=20>

Access will be £5 per link and you can pay for this via [Sunderland City Council website](http://Sunderland City Council website) (Pay – School meals & expenses – Usworth Colliery Primary – Contribution to school funds). You can pay anytime from now and please make sure that you put STAFF PANTOMIME in the message box when you pay.

All funds raised will go towards school fund. You will be able to access it until the end of December. This means that you can watch it as many times as you like! Oh, yes you can!



### AUTUMN TERM REPORTS

You should receive your child's autumn report today with information about how well they are doing in school.

We have decided to send paper copies home rather than email. This is the most efficient way. We have made sure that the reports have been produced in a COVID friendly way, so that everyone is kept safe.

As well as a covering letter, within the report you should receive general comments/targets and an attendance sheet.

This term has been a challenge for all of us but I am delighted by the progress that all the children have made. I am extremely proud of how the whole school community has pulled together in such a difficult and unprecedented time. Obviously, the pandemic has had an impact upon the education of all children as they were unable to attend school. Despite being able to supply home learning, this is not the same as being taught by a teacher in the classroom.

Schools across the country are working hard to ensure that their children catch up to the expected levels for their year group and make good progress. We have altered our curriculum and we are focusing on filling gaps within learning across all subjects.

At this stage, you would usually receive a document explaining how your child is doing in relation to their year group expectations. However, due to situation and the nature of the 'catch up' curriculum that we are delivering, we do not feel that this information is helpful at this stage. This information will be shared later in the academic year.

Staff are assessing the children all the time from the work they complete and planning lessons to ensure that they are making progress. As your child's teacher has spoken to you at parent meetings and also given you an overview with targets within this report, you should have a clear picture of what your child is doing well at and what they need to improve. Your child's teacher has also uploaded some of their work onto Seesaw so that you will be able to log on and see what they have been doing in class.

### CHRISTMAS DRESS DOWN DAY

On the final day of term, Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December, the children are allowed to wear non-uniform. They can wear Christmas jumpers if they wish, but do not feel that you have to go and buy anything new (you will have enough to spend your money on at this time of year without another expense).

### CHRISTMAS PERFORMANCES

All the children have filmed their parts for the performance and I am starting to put them all together into one video for each key stage now. These will be ready at the beginning of next week and I will email a link and password for you to access them. Even though it has been a different way of doing things, the children have really enjoyed being involved. Thank you for providing the costumes.

I know that you will be very impressed with the final videos.



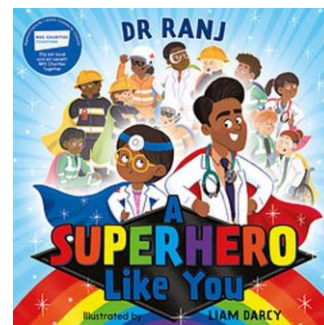
## CLASS PARTIES

As we can't do our usual discos at the end of term, each class will be having their own version of a Christmas party. Some have chosen to do party games and others are doing Christmas crafts. This will be organised by your child's class teacher and will let you know if the children need anything special, but they **do not need to bring in any food**. Again, we will make the most of what we can do.

## RECOMMENDED READING – NEW RELEASES

### A SUPERHERO LIKE YOU BY DR. RANJ

A celebration of incredible key-workers by Dr Ranj, presenter of CBeebies series *Get Well Soon*, resident doctor on ITV's *This Morning* and front line NHS paediatrician. Lily knows exactly what she wants to be when she grows up: a superhero! But she's not interested in being a *silly* superhero. She doesn't want to wear her pants outside her trousers! Lily wants to be a REAL superhero: the kind who helps people and makes the world a better place. Join Lily as she meets the extraordinary superheroes all around us, from doctors, teachers and air ambulance paramedics to scientists, recycling truck drivers and carers. Discover the amazing work these real-life heroes do using their incredible superpowers of kindness, care and love. This uplifting picture book celebrates key-workers, and shows little readers that we *all* have the potential within us to be superheroes.



## DOJO POINTS

Here are the final totals for both the classes and houses for the Autumn term:  
1) Pegasus – 4265 2) Hercules – 3976 3) Orion – 3956 4) Phoenix - 3865

The top 3 classes for the term are as follows:

1) 6CJ – 2502 2) 1JB – 2117 3) 4CS - 1825

Finally, here are the top scorers from each class:

Base - Aiden Soulsby, 1JB - Ellie-Rose Ward, 2ES - Ruby-Leigh Marr, 2CB - Mya Mulley, 3CR - Jake Robinson, 3CH - Megan Bloomer, 4CS - Livvy Whiteley-Bell, 4RD - Emily Rae, 5BR - Isla Turnbull, 5EP - Darnell Mullen, 6CJ - Leo Brewster, 6JM - Neve Wallace & 6SMM - Freddie Tonge.  
Well done, Everyone. Prizes will be given next week.

## AUTUMN TERM DATES 2020

Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> December	Christmas dress down day
Monday 21 <sup>st</sup> December to Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> January	– CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS
Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	TEACHER TRAINING DAY
Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Children back in school

## WEEKLY ONLINE SAFETY GUIDE – FORTNIGHT BATTLE ROYALE (see below)

## TWITTER STARS

Remember to check out this week's Twitter Stars! These are tweeted on: @TStarKS1\_UCPS or @TStarKS2\_UCPS. They also appear on @UCPrimary and on our website Twitter feed.

## ATTENDANCE WINNERS

These classes have the highest attendance this week. Well done everyone!

Whole school attendance – 95.5%  
EYFS/KS1 – 2CB with 97.3% KS2 – 4RD with 97.4%

Mr Gary Wright

Headteacher



There's a very good chance you've heard of Fortnite, but what exactly is it? And why is it so popular amongst young people? Fortnite is an online multiplayer "battle royale" game developed by Epic Games, and is playable on Playstation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, PC and mobiles. It gained popularity in late 2017 and has since become the biggest game in the world, thanks to its rapid and engaging gameplay. As with most games, Fortnite itself is a highly enjoyable and safe experience, but it pays to be vigilant, as the safety is not water tight.



What parents need to know about

# FORTNITE BATTLE ROYALE



## BATTLE ROYALE

Battle Royale games have become very popular over the last couple of years, and most tend to follow a very similar setup. Taking Fortnite as an example, 100 players drop into a map, loot buildings for weapons and armour and attempt to beat all the other players to be crowned victor at the end. If you've ever seen the Hunger Games movies, you'll have an idea of what this entails. Each game can take up to 20 minutes (assuming you last to the end) and can be restarted relatively quickly once 100 free players have been found.



## IS FORTNITE ADDICTIVE?

Fortnite is at the forefront of gaming addiction discussions because it is so popular with young people. But whether it actually contributes to gaming addiction is up for debate. WHO (World Health Organisation) have classified gaming as a legitimate addiction, but this is not solely a concern with Fortnite. Signs of addiction can include irritability when not playing, lying about the amount of time played and a preoccupation with thoughts of the next gaming session. Realistically, it must be down to parents and carers to recognise these symptoms and act accordingly if they think they are developing.



## FREE TO PLAY... OR IS IT?

While Fortnite is technically free to play (in that you can download and play it without paying) it does come with the caveat that spending money on things like skins and emotes in-game is heavily pushed to players. The currency used in-game is called 'V-Bucks' and can be bought with real money through the game's online store. It's worth remembering that these purchases are absolutely not necessary, are cosmetic only and that V-Bucks can be earned in-game with enough play time.



## SEASONAL UPDATES

Every 10 weeks or so Fortnite is updated with a new season. This essentially adds new things like skins and emotes to the game, while also sometimes changing up the game map in interesting ways. These seasons are free to everybody and don't require additional money to play, though battle passes for each season can be bought with V-Bucks. A battle pass will typically allow a player to earn experience faster and gain fun in-game items by completing a host of daily challenges.



## CROSSPLAY IS AVAILABLE

One of the wonderful things about Fortnite is that it can be played cross-platform. This means that no matter what platform a person plays on (PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One etc) they can play with friends who own the game on a different platform. To do this, an Epic Games account must first be created online (which is free) and then linked with your platform account. Doing this removes the age-old boundary of not being able to play together because you don't have the same console and opens up a whole new world of playing online with friends.



## IS FORTNITE VIOLENT?

Fortnite has been rated by the ESRB (Entertainment Software Ratings Board) as 'Teen', as it contains cartoon violence and the weapons and acts depicted in the game are some way removed from their real life inspirations. Characters don't draw blood when shot and instead of dying, they are simply beamed up off the map. Naturally, players younger than the recommended age limit will want to play the game and that should be at the discretion of parents and carers.



## Top Tips For Parents



### BUYING V-BUCKS

As mentioned, Fortnite does contain in-game purchases and microtransactions in the form of V-Bucks which can be bought with real money. If you do decide to let your young one spend money in the game, be sure to delete your card information afterwards as it can be very easy to purchase more items at the press of a few buttons. It's important to set a limit on any purchases (as mentioned they are absolutely not necessary to play the game) and a suggestion would be capping the spending at around £50 - this is the normal retail price of a game.



### GAMING WITH STRANGERS

Fortnite Battle Royale is an online game, and as such, there is a chance that young children could come into contact with strangers who are randomly placed into their groups in a game. It's difficult to predict what another person might say or do in a game, so it's a good idea for friends playing together, to be grouped together. The only real countermeasure to interacting with strangers offered by Fortnite is to turn off all mic communications, which can be done in the game's settings. Using outside chat apps, like Skype or Discord while playing, is a great way to make sure you know who you're talking to and that nobody else is listening in.



### LIMIT TIME, BUT BE FLEXIBLE

A game of Fortnite can last up to 20 minutes, so be flexible when it's time to put it away. The approach of 'one more game' as opposed to '10 more minutes' will stop any complaints that a match is still ongoing. Better still, play with your child and take it in turns; that way you're helping control the time played and can keep an eye on what they're experiencing.



### TALK TO OTHER PARENTS / CARERS

If you're concerned about play time or spending money in the game, talk to other parents and carers of your child's friends. If you approach as a collective, it will be easier to know when their friends are online and you don't have to worry about who they're playing with. It can also help curb expectations on spending money on battle passes and skins if you stick together.



### CAN DEVELOP SOME IMPORTANT SKILLS

It's often overlooked just how good gaming can be for young people. Fortnite encourages team play, quick and complex problem solving and communications; that's not to mention the lightning fast reflexes gamers can develop. While taking breaks to do other activities is of course important, there are benefits to screen time which might not be immediately obvious.



### PLAY THE GAME YOURSELF

There's no substitute for sitting down and playing the game yourself to learn all about it. Fortnite is available for free on almost anything you can imagine, even your smartphone, so there's never been a better time to get involved and see what all the fuss is about. You never know, you might even be able to impress your children when you show them your impressive Victory Royale tally!

## Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGBible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



<https://www.theguardian.com/games/2018/mar/07/fortnite-battle-royale-parents-guide-video-game-multiplayer-shooter>, <https://www.psyhguides.com/behavioral-disorders/video-game-addiction/>, <https://www.polygon.com/2018/3/23/17146644/cross-platform-crossplay-ps4-xbox-pc-switch-ios-mobile-available-fortnite-compatible-subsidiarizing720874>, <https://www.ew.com/guides/34444-fortnite/>