St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Safeguarding Newsletter

March 2023

The Safeguarding team. If you have any concerns about a child's welfare or safety, please speak to a member of the schools safeguarding team

| Miss Queenan | Miss Jennings | Mrs Seaman | Mrs Cawsey |

Dear Parents,

Online safety is something we take very seriously at St Joseph's. Children are spending more and more time online and it is important that we teach them the skills and knowledge to navigate the online world safely. We are seeing a growing number of children using social media sites and being exposed to inappropriate and unsafe content on these sites. We would like to remind parents that most social media sites have an age restriction of 13+.

Our spotlight on feature today focuses on some of the risks to children being online, particularly if unsupervised. Our ivengers have been busy preparing assemblies and teaching the children about the importance of online safety.

If you would like any further information about specific apps, please get in touch.

Mrs Seaman

Headteacher

Spotlight on: Online risks

Oversharing

Children and young people can sometimes feel pressure to overshare online. Remind them that they shouldn't share private things, such as:

• personal information, like names, phone numbers, links to other social media accounts or their school

• live or frequent locations

 • other people's personal information

 • links to join private group chats

• photos of themselves, photos of their body

Sharing their location

Many apps and games give you the option to share your location. You should help children think about how and when they're sharing it. Some of the ways they may be likely to share location include:

• tagging photos with the geo-location

 • checking into venues

• sharing journeys

• location settings on your child's device

• sharing images or videos that contain street names etc.

If shared publicly, their location could be seen by someone they don't know. People could find out where they live or go to school, allowing an accurate picture of their daily routine to be built up.

Talking to people they don't know

Some social networking such as Omegle and Kidschat.net promote connecting you to chat with people you don't know. This puts young people at risk of grooming or online forms of abuse, along with the risk of moving the conversation to other platforms or meeting up offline. You should be aware of this across all social media

Sending or receiving inappropriate content

Young people can feel pressured into sharing content that could be harmful to themselves or others. This could be in the form of sexting or sharing nudes, or it might be sharing memes and images of others without their consent – which can be a form of cyberbullying.

DMs (direct messages) can be used to share very quickly and they have no control over how the image is shared further. Some social platforms have features such as disappearing messages – where an image or text will only show for a certain amount of time for the recipient before deleting. This might make users feel they can share more, but the recipient can still screenshot and forward the content to others

Unrealistic sense of body image or reality

With so many influencers and users sharing photos, children can feel under pressure to conform to the 'ideal' body and lifestyle. It's important to talk about positive body image and help children see that what others post is a curated version of their life, and to question what they see online.

Obsessive focus on likes and comments

Children may be very focused on how many likes or comments their posts get, which can leave them feeling that they aren't good enough, or not as popular as someone else. Try to help them remember that likes aren't everything. Instagram has an option to turn off likes on posts – that may help to ease the pressure.

Age restrictions of Social Media Apps

Please be mindful that social media apps are **not appropriate for pupils under the age of 13**.

Below are the age restrictions for the most popular apps:

What's App—16 years +

Instagram—13 years +

Facebook—13 years +

Snapchat—13 years +

TikTok—13 Years +

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about
ROBLOX

PEGI RATING
7+

Roblox is one of the most popular video games on the market. By 2020, the game's makers were claiming that more than half of children in the USA play it. As a 'sandbox' title, Roblox offers a huge amount of creative freedom: it lets players create their own gaming experiences with the Roblox Studio to build custom levels and games, which can then be shared with other players online. Roblox fosters creative thinking and enjoys a robust online community of fans.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS
Roblox encourages players to communicate online (including a group chat facility). This could expose children to risks such as scammers, online predators, harassment, griefers and more. The in-game chat has some filters, but isn't perfect: players can still send harmful messages to others – such as general hostility – while predators can reach out to children directly.

PUBLIC SERVERS
Roblox has private or VIP servers which allow people to play exclusively with their friends, but this costs money. Most Roblox players will instead be on public servers that anyone can join. Servers can host games which focus on all kinds of aspects, including direct player interaction. Some games and servers, therefore, will put children more at risk of contact from strangers than others.

ONLINE DATERS
These are also called 'ODers' and are quite common in Roblox. An ODer is an individual who joins a game with the intention of finding someone to date online – and eventually meet in person. Such online dating is against the Roblox community guidelines, but this usually doesn't deter ODers. Some player-built Roblox game worlds have even been designed with online dating specifically in mind.

IN-APP PURCHASES
Roblox is actually free to download and play, but bear in mind that there *are* some hidden costs. Players are encouraged to make purchases in the game, for example, using real money. People can also buy extra Robux (the in-game currency) to spend on cosmetic items in the game, and some private or VIP servers also have a cost.

Advice for Parents & Carers

SET PARENTAL CONTROLS
Roblox comes with several parental control options, which are explained well on the game's official website. It's essential to enter the correct date of birth for your child, as that allows Roblox to automatically apply the appropriate chat filters. The game also allows parents and carers to set monthly spending restrictions and monitor their child's account.

DISABLE PRIVATE MESSAGING
Roblox's private messaging function raises the risk of children being contacted by people they may not want to speak with – potentially leading to bullying, harassment, toxicity and scam attempts. The game allows you to disable messages from anyone who hasn't been added as a friend on your child's account.

PRIVATE SERVERS
If your child has some genuine friends to play Roblox online with, paying for a private or VIP server decreases the risk of contact from strangers. Even then, however, some players could invite other people – who might not necessarily be child friendly – into the private server. If your child is a Roblox fan, it's important to talk with them regularly about who they are playing the game with.

MONITOR SPENDING
If they don't understand they're using real money, it's easy for children to accidentally spend a sizeable amount in the game. Using parental controls to place limits on their spending will help avoid any nasty financial surprises. Ensuring that you have two-factor authentication on your payment accounts also makes it harder for your child to spend money inadvertently.

DEALING WITH STRANGERS
At some point in their development, your child will need to learn how to deal with strangers online. Show them how to block and report any users who are upsetting them or asking uncomfortable questions. Talking to them about what's OK to discuss – and what they should *never* tell a stranger online – will help them understand how to communicate with other people online safely.

Meet Our Expert
Clare Godwin (a.k.a. Lunawolf) has worked as an editor and journalist in the gaming industry since 2015, providing websites with event coverage, reviews and gaming guides. She is the owner of Lunawolf Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books.

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