



Weald of Kent
Grammar School

Online Safety Bulletin 2 - Term 3, February 2022

During the week beginning 7th February 2022 we will be joining schools and youth organisations across the UK in celebrating Safer Internet Day 2022 (8th February 2022). Safer Internet Day is a global campaign to promote the safe and responsible use of technology, which calls on young people, parents, carers, teachers, social workers, law enforcement, companies, policymakers and more, to join together in helping to create a better internet.



Using the internet safely and positively is a key message that we promote at Weald of Kent Grammar School, and celebrating Safer Internet Day is a great opportunity for us to re-emphasise the online safety messages we deliver throughout the year in lessons, form time and PSHCE. We would be delighted if you could join us in celebrating the day by continuing the conversation at home. To help you with this, you may be interested in downloading the free Safer Internet Day resources for parents and carers which are available at: saferinternet.org.uk/sid-parents. On the site you will find top tips, quizzes, and films which you can use at home with your child.

If you have any concerns or questions about keeping your child safe online, please do get in touch with a member of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) team or our Lead DSL, Mr Macsporrán, on kmacsporrán@wealdgs.org.

Useful resources for parents and carers

- Tips, advice and guides for parents and carers from the [UK Safer Internet Centre \(saferinternet.org.uk/parents\)](https://saferinternet.org.uk/parents)
- Advice for parents and carers from [Childnet \(childnet.com/parents-and-carers\)](https://childnet.com/parents-and-carers)
- Reviews and information about games, apps, TV shows and websites from [Common Sense Media \(commonsense.org\)](https://commonsense.org)
- Help on using parental controls and privacy settings from [Internet Matters \(internetmatters.org/controls\)](https://internetmatters.org/controls)
- Information and reporting of online grooming or sexual abuse from [CEOP \(ceop.police.uk\)](https://ceop.police.uk)

Starting a conversation at home

One of the most valuable things you can do to keep your child safe online is to talk to them regularly about what they are doing online. Establishing an on-going dialogue with your child can help you to understand what they are doing online, assess the risks, help them to navigate issues and stay safe. It is also a way of making sure they know how to report and where they can get help. Use the conversation starters below to help start the conversation.

- ✓ **Ask your children to tell you about the sites they like to visit and what they enjoy doing online.**
 - What games do you and your friends like to play online? Can you show me the websites you visit the most? Shall we play your favourite game online together?
- ✓ **Ask them about how they stay safe online.**
 - What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is OK and not OK to share?
- ✓ **Ask them if they know where to go for help.**
 - Where can they go to find the safety advice, privacy settings and how to report or block on the services they use?

Online Gaming (adapted from thinkuknow.co.uk)

Gaming is extremely popular with children and young people. It can be difficult to keep up with the latest games and how they work. In this bulletin we take a look at key safety concerns and how you can support happier, safer gaming for your child.

3 ways to make gaming safer for your child

- 1. Talk with your child about gaming.** Talk with your child to learn the games they like and the content and features of these. This will help you to understand more about how your child plays games and how appropriate different games are. You can use [NSPCC's online safety hub](#) to find out more information on safer gaming.
- 2. Learn together.** Use gaming resources to teach your child about safer gaming at all ages. You can find resources to help you [here](#).
- 3. Set boundaries and safety settings.** [Internet Matters](#) provides step-by-step [guides](#) for putting safety settings in place for each console or device. Spend time setting these up with your child and make sure they know how to block and report on the games they are playing. You should also talk with your child to create an agreement for gaming; think about how much time they can spend, which games they can access, if you will allow in-app purchases and what spaces they can play in.

How risky is in-game chat?

Gaming is often a social activity for children and talking with friends is part of their enjoyment. However, in-game chat can pose risks such as:

- **Chatting with people they do not know.** This can include adults that are seeking to make contact with children with the intention of [sexual grooming](#).
- **Inappropriate or unmoderated chat.** Whilst a lot of chat is moderated, chat is live and there is a risk of exposure to sexual language, swearing or bullying.
- **Requests to make chat private.** Once chat is moved off a monitored platform, no one is moderating it. This can be used to pressurise children into sharing personal information, photos, video or chat that they do not want to.
- **Offering gifts or trades.** This may be used by offenders to build trust and a relationship with a child, as part of grooming.

Learn more about in-game chat and what you can do to make it safer by reading the [parents and carers guide to in-game chat](#) guide.

How do I know what games are age appropriate for my child?

The article [what's appropriate for your child](#) will help you to understand more about the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) age rating system, which helps parents and carers to make informed decisions around games, giving age ratings and content descriptors.

Consider your child's individual needs, emotional maturity and experiences to support the decisions you make around gaming. For example, a game may be rated age appropriate but have content that you know your child will find frightening or will not understand.

Should I be worried about gifts and trades in gaming?

Items such as game currency, skins, loot boxes, tools and weapons are often used in games to help a player progress through the game or give increased status amongst other gamers. Often these require in-app purchases, which many children will not have access to, or require your permission for, so accepting trades or gifts may be tempting.

Whilst not always the case, trades or gifts within gaming can be used by child sex offenders to gain contact with a child. They may offer gifts asking nothing in return, this can be part of the grooming process and can help to build a close relationship with a young person. They may also try to use gifts as a way to persuade a child to do something such as going on a webcam, taking photos or videos of themselves, moving conversation to a different online platform or to an offline platform such as messaging over phone.