**ST MARY’S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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!! WARNING!!

Dear Parent/ Carer,

It has come to our attention that children in KS2 and KS1 are playing Fortnite. Although Fortnite has taken some precautions to enable user safety, when an account is created, it is not always clear how further security enhancements can be made.

Recently, Fortnite has been in the press for its stranger danger fears and locally, last week, a school in Bodmin reported to police that at least 5 of their pupils had been groomed via Fortnite.

At St Mary’s, we believe that Internet Safety is vitally important with the ever-changing technology and greater capabilities to access the internet from anywhere, on multiple devices.

Therefore, we have created this short guide for parents to further inform your understanding of Fortnite and additional security measures that you may want to enable, if you are allowing your child to play this game.

**What is Fortnite?**

Fortnite is an online video game where players compete to be the last person standing in a post-apocalyptic world. The most popular version is Fortnite: Battle Royale, which sees up to 100 players pitted against each other to stay alive on an island. Players can build and demolish structures, and collect weapons, supplies and armour to help them along the way. Players shoot each other using a range of lethal weapons, but the brightly-coloured, cartoon-style graphics and lack of bloodshed mean it doesn’t feel too gory or graphic.

Users play against people from different ages, from across the world, and **can talk and interact with each other as they play through the in-game chat feature.**

**What is Fortnite’s minimum age?**

Fortnite has a PEGI rating of 12. PEGI have said this is due to the: ‘frequent scenes of mild violence. It is not suitable for persons under 12 years of age.’

**The PEGI rating only takes into account the content in the game and not the contact element where players maybe exposed to swearing and offensive language from strangers- either through audio or on-screen text chat.**

**How does it work?**

In order to play Fortnite you have to create an account. To create this account you need to provide an email address (which you have to verify) and display/ username. However, you are not asked your age in order to create an account.

As fortnite is an online game, children will play against players of different ages from across the world. **At present, you cannot turn the in-game chats off or choose who you play against.**

**What do parents need to watch out for?**

* Chatting to strangers
* Giving abuse to, or receiving abuse from, other people
* Sharing personal information
* In-game purchases
* Animated violence

**What safety options are available to parents?**

**Use the parental controls on the gaming device**

Most devices allow you to **set time limits** on game play, **set age limits** for content, and **restrict in-app purchases**.

Visit the website ‘ask about games’ for links to detailed instructions on the device your child uses – the site covers Playstation 3, Playstation 4, Xbox 360, Xbox One, Apple and Android phones, and Nintendo Switch.

Ask About Games [*www.askaboutgames.com/advice/parental-controls*](http://www.askaboutgames.com/advice/parental-controls)

The battles in Fortnite last around 20 minutes. When trying to limit your child’s screen time, make the most of this natural stopping point. Set a limit in terms of matches rather than hours and minutes, or set time limits in 20-minute increments.

**Turn off the voice chat feature**

Speak to your child to make sure they know this feature exists, and encourage them to use the options below if they encounter someone who is offensive or inappropriate.

**You can disable the voice chat function in the game if you:**

- Open the setting menu (the 3 lines on the right-hand side of the screen), then choose the ‘cog’ icon

- Select ‘audio’ tab

- You should be able to turn off ‘voice chat’ by tapping the arrows next to it

- You can also ‘mute’ individual players in the game by:

- Pausing the game

- Hovering over the player you wish to mute

- Selecting the mute button ( a loudspeaker icon)

**What else can I do?**

You or your child can report players who make them uncomfortable using the in-game feedback tool (located in the main menu). You can also use the ‘support’ section of the Epic Games site (the makers of Fortnite). You’re asked to select the platform you play the game on, the game mode you’re playing, and then you can select ‘report player’. You can provide more detail such as the player’s name, and attach a screenshot.

**Most importantly, please be aware of what games/media your children are accessing and ensure you and your children are aware of exactly who they are communicating with.**

**If you know your child is using Fortnite, please have an open and honest conversation with them. It’s important to involve yourself in your child’s online life.**

**At St Mary’s, we do not recommend the use of this game with it’s PEGI rating of 12+.**

Many thanks

Mr King

Online Safety Lead