Digital Safety Newsletter Autumn 2018

Welcome to our Autumn digital safety newsletter. In this newsletter I will be looking at Fortnight, the game which is incredibly popular at the moment, but comes with some warnings.

What is Fortnite?

Fortnite is a 'PvP' or Player verses Player computer game where players compete against each other in a virtual world to kill opponents to become the 'last man standing'.

Fortnite Battle Royale

The most popular version of the game is Fortnite-Battle Royal. This version is free to play and currently has more than 130 million registered users worldwide. Up to 30 million players can be playing the game at any one time.

Digital Safety Concerns

The NSPCC has recently issued safety concerns about the game following a series of incidents which we would like to bring to your attention.

- The game is rated at PEGI 12 and is not suitable for children under 12 years of age
- The game is described by the NSPCC as 'dangerously addictive' and has led to behaviour issues both at home and at school. School absences are known to be higher on the launch day of the next 'season' of the game.
- Fortnite allows for communication between players. In a joint O2/NSPCC survey, 1 in 4 players had been contacted by someone they didn't know. The voice chat facility can be switched off, but not the text based messages. This has led to a growing number of incidents of serious bullying and sexual grooming. Grooming is reported as often starting with messages such as 'You're great at his game, lets make a team.' etc.

What can I do?

NSPCC Recommends

- Turn off the voice chat facility found in the settings menu
  - Open the settings menu (the 3 lines on the right-hand-side of the screen), then choose the 'cog icon
  - Select the 'audio' tab
  - You should be able to turn off 'voice chat' by tapping the arrows next to it
- Monitor and limit online game time. Disable in-app purchases. Information on how to do this can be found on the website www.askaboutgames.com Ideas for managing your child's screen time can be found on the internetmatters website.
- Only play the game under the supervision of adults/when adults are in the room
- Make sure children know what to do if they encounter anything that makes them feel uncomfortable

Reporting inappropriate behaviour on Fortnite

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.

We value your child's safety and hope you will continue to support us in making everyone aware of digital safety. An online version with active links can be found on our school website.

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