From the Online Safety Team: Online Safety at Villa Real School

Internet Safety Day Edition - 6th February 2024

As part of Internet Safety Day we are sharing some useful resources for parents.

My child keeps asking to play a game, or download an app that I don't know about, what can I do?

The easiest way to address this is to research the game or app before you download it. It's important to know what the age rating is, what kind of content it involves, whether you can connect with other users or players in any way, and if it allows in-app or in-game purchases. Once you have this knowledge, you can decide whether it's suitable for your child.

Three useful websites to help are:

- Ask About Games - https://www.askaboutgames.com/
- Family Gaming Database - https://www.familygamingdatabase.com/
- Common Sense Media - https://www.commonsensemedia.org/
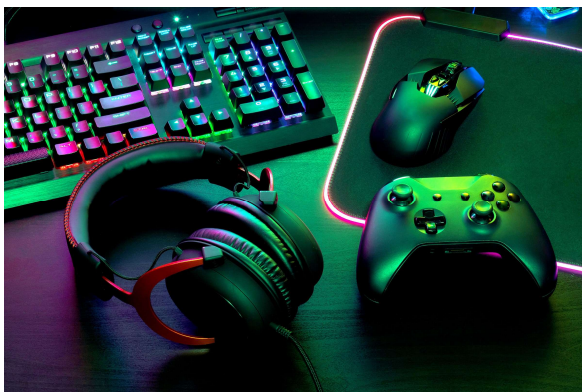
I'm not sure if the content my child is watching is a good influence on them, what can I do?

Children begin to be influenced by the content they watch as soon as they're old enough to go online. They develop strong preferences for their favourite characters, videos, and games from an early age and these preferences can also be influenced by the content that their friends like, and talk about, too.

Watch

The best way to understand the content that your children enjoy is to watch it yourself. It might not be to your own personal tastes, but this will allow you to see what is being said and how this may affect your child.

Talk
If you're worried about it in any way, it's important to talk to your children and let them know what it is that you're concerned about. For example, if you think it's affecting their behaviour or mood.

Report
If you see anything inappropriate online, that might go against the platform's community guidelines, then it's important to report it (and anyone who is sharing that content too), using the reporting and blocking tools provided on that platform.

For advice contact Andrew Moore,
ICT Network Manager
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https://www.villarealschool.co.uk/online-safety

https://swgfl.org.uk/audience/parents/

Villa Real School
together we achieve

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Discussing online bullying with your child

CYBER-BULLYING IS NOT OKAY

It's important to have regular conversations with your child about the online world, including issues like cyberbullying. This will help you to understand if they have ever experienced or witnessed online bullying for themselves, and give you an opportunity to support them and reassure them that you are always there to help.

Some questions which you could ask your child are:

- How can you be kind online?
- What would you do if someone was being unkind online?
- What do you think cyberbullying is?
- How is it different to physical bullying?

If your child has experienced cyberbullying:

- **Let them talk**
  Give them the space to share what they want to in their way and listen. Try to avoid the temptation to interrupt because you know what's going on, prompt if necessary but let them do most of the talking.
- **Don't be shocked by what they tell you**
  If there's one sure way to put a child off seeking help, it's making them feel embarrassed or ashamed about why they're asking for help. Times change and some of the things young people do today may make us cringe sometimes, but the inherent behaviour is the same as it was when we were their age.

- **Don't deny access to technology**
  When we speak to young people about barriers to getting help they often share that they are worried that their device may be taken away from them. Reassure them that this won't happen if they speak up about something that has been worrying them online.
- **Encourage them not to retaliate**
  Although this can seem like the most tempting thing to do in a situation like this it's very important that you do not retaliate to the cyberbullying. Most of the time the bully is looking for a reaction when they're teasing or calling someone nasty names. Your child may wish to reply and ask the person to stop sending messages however this is not necessary and action can be taken without replying.
- **Save the evidence**
  It's important to keep the cyberbullying messages that a child has received, whether through taking screenshots or saving the messages on the device. Saving the messages allows you to have evidence when reporting the cyberbullying.
- **Talk to their school**
  Schools play a vital role in the resolution of abusive online behaviours. They have a plethora of effective tools such as the Enable anti-bullying toolkit (http://enable.eun.org/). They have anti-bullying and behavioural policies in place in order to provide a duty of care to all who attend. As such, they will want to know about any incidences that could potentially affect a child's wellbeing. Take the evidence of bullying and any additional details about the context of the situation and length of time it has been going on for. It is helpful to discuss this with your child and you may want to speak to the school together.
- **Talk to the police**
  If you think that your child is in immediate danger don't hesitate to call the police. Equally, if there is a direct threat of violence or harm within any conversation then you may also wish to contact your local police for support. As parents, any incident involving children will be extremely emotive. There has been a lot of stories about online abuse in the media and the majority of bullying issues can be resolved satisfactorily with support from your child's school.

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