



Safeguarding Newsletter—Summer Term 2 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you all had a good half term holiday.

All staff at Belle Vue have a responsibility to safeguard children but just a reminder to you that we have the following designated staff in place with responsibility for safeguarding:

Mrs. C Davies—Designated Safeguarding lead
Mrs. S Richardson—Deputy Safeguarding lead
Mrs. A Perrett—Deputy Safeguarding Lead
Mrs. C Mulligan—Deputy Safeguarding lead

Governors responsible for safeguarding: Mrs. A Potter and Mrs S. Rose

If you have any concerns regarding the safeguarding of a child/children please contact the school immediately on 01384 389900 or email info@belle-vue.dudley.sch.uk.

If you suspect a child is in immediate danger please ring 999.

Online Safety

Ensuring children are safe online is crucial. Here are a few links to help parents/carers:

<https://families.google/familylink/>

YouTube

Are you aware that YouTube has a kids channel?

Children love searching on YouTube however, do you know the content they are searching? Also, some adverts are not suitable for children to watch.

YouTube Kids can be managed by parents/carers. An account can be set up which allows parents to add the age of their child. YouTube only allows content that is appropriate for the child's age. The site has facility for parents/carers to disable the 'search' facility. In addition, functions can be set ensuring children cannot 'like', subscribe or make a comment on a video.

https://www.youtube.com/intl/ALL_uk/kids/

TikTok

TikTok now has family pairing; simply link your account to your child's and you can restrict the content they are watching and reduce the amount of time they use the app. As parents/carers, you can also access and control the privacy options.

Minecraft Legends

Minecraft Legends was released last month and is available across a variety of platforms. It is rated as 7+ by PEGI with a further content descriptor of 'violence.' However, when rating games, PEGI do not take into consideration the communication features of a game. Minecraft Legends does include a chat facility, which adds further risks of seeing/hearing inappropriate language/content. This can be switched off.

What should I be aware of?

Multiplayer – children can interact with others (including strangers), you can switch this option off within settings or choose to play offline.

Additional purchases – be aware of in app purchases and the purchase of additional items to support (although not needed) game play. You can set up appropriate parental settings to restrict/prevent purchases.

Block and report players – if your child is playing with others, make sure they know how to block and report players within the game.

You can find out more on:

<https://www.esrb.org/blog/what-parents-need-to-know-about-minecraft-legends/>

First day calling procedures

If we have not heard from you by 9.30am, the office staff will contact you. If we are unable to contact you, we will start to call all the contact numbers that you have provided in order to gain an explanation for the absence. If we still have not been able to ascertain where your child is, then we may make a home visit. However, if we still have not been able to get a response, consideration will be given as to whether we alert the police to carry out a home welfare check. This procedure is to ensure that we know where your child is and that you are all safe.



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about MINECRAFT

AGE RATING

7+

Minecraft is a beloved classic of modern gaming. First released in 2011, this open-ended 'sandbox' game of building and exploration still has over 140 million players who happily return to play it at least once every month. Minecraft has also been utilised for much more than just entertainment: it's sometimes used in schools to teach children coding, and it's also employed as a tool for computer-aided design, which is another valuable skill. Encouraging creativity and problem solving, Minecraft has plenty to offer gamers of all ages, and it's available on almost all video game platforms.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

PUBLIC SERVERS

Joining a public network (called a server) lets your child potentially interact with strangers through text chat. Some servers focus on building, while others are dedicated to role-playing – encouraging direct player interaction. Anyone can join public servers and connecting to one is relatively simple. Public server IP addresses (and therefore someone's location) are easy to find with search engines.

GRIEFING

Some people in Minecraft delight in purposefully damaging or destroying another player's creation. This is called 'griefing' and is a form of bullying: it intentionally spoils someone else's experience in the game by deleting hours of their work and forcing them to start from scratch. Many public servers treat griefing as a severe offence and frequently ban offenders.

ADDICTIVENESS

Minecraft's gameplay is relatively simple, and the outcome (when a child has built something new, for instance) can be extremely gratifying. This can make the game highly addictive. It's easy to lose track of time while playing Minecraft, causing committed young players to forget about other activities like homework or enjoying family time.

SCARY ELEMENTS

The visual design and gameplay of Minecraft is purposefully child friendly, so there's nothing too untoward in the game. However, some of the 'baddies' that can be encountered might prove a little too scary for very young players. In the game, certain enemies come out at night and are accompanied by audio – such as zombie moans and skeleton bone rattles – that may unnerve young ones.

ADDITIONAL PURCHASES

After initially buying the game, players can make optional extra purchases for cosmetic items and other bonuses. Minecraft Realms is an optional online subscription (requiring regular payments) that lets users run a multiplayer server to play with their friends. Most games consoles also need an active subscription to enable online play – so online gaming can quickly become an expensive hobby.

Advice for Parents & Carers

RESEARCH CONTENT CREATORS

There are a lots of Minecraft content creators who release helpful videos about the game on YouTube and Twitch. Not all of these, however, are suitable for children. Watching these content creators' channels yourself first is a safe way to find appropriate Minecraft videos to share with your children. This also helps you learn more about the game itself, and how your child plays it.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT MODE

Selecting 'Creative' or 'Peaceful' mode allows children to play Minecraft without having to contend with enemies. It's also a great way for you to get used to playing the game with them, since the difficulty level is lower. This allows you to work together on a long-term project, creating something special without the threat of moaning zombies or creepers damaging your build.

HOST A PRIVATE SERVER

The easiest way to find a safe server for your child to play on is to make one yourself. Hosting a server prevents strangers from finding it, unless they've been given the necessary joining details. A private server also lets you control who's allowed to enter and – if necessary – to ban someone who shouldn't be there. This is the closest equivalent to parental controls in Minecraft.

ENCOURAGE BREAKS

It's easy for the hours to fly by while your child is playing Minecraft, so reminding them to take regular breaks is essential. This is a useful way for them to learn good time management, which they'll benefit from as they get older. It will also teach them to play their favourite games in moderation – limiting addictive behaviour and allowing them to manage their day better.

TALK ABOUT STRANGERS

At some point in their lives, almost everyone needs to have contact with a stranger online. Talking to your child about online safety, therefore, is essential – as is having a plan in place for dealing with any hostile or difficult strangers. Ensure that your child knows never to tell a stranger about themselves online, and that they should come to you straight away if they do encounter a problem.

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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