The Bromley Pensnett
Primary School

9th February 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

This week we have been discussing e-safety. A big topic we have discussed is online gaming. This is hugely popular and has a wide range of uses and benefits. I am writing to you, as a number of children have talked about the games they are using, where they have shared personal details to strangers. Please find below some support to help you as you discuss this with your child at home.

Online games and apps can provide a fun and social form of entertainment, often encouraging teamwork and cooperation when played with others. There are many ways for users to play games online. This includes free games found on the internet, games or apps on mobile phones and handheld consoles, as well as downloadable and boxed games on PCs and consoles such as the PlayStation, Nintendo Wii or Xbox.

Internet safety advice is directly applicable to the gaming environment because of the risks that are present. It is essential that children are aware of these issues and are given the skills and knowledge to help manage and reduce these risks, with the help of those around them.

Top tips for online gaming:

1. It may seem daunting, but one of the best things parents and carers can do is to engage with the gaming environment and play a game or two against your children. Once they explain the rules to you, you may begin to understand what makes it is so attractive to young people!

2. Talk with your children about the types of game(s) they are playing and they like. Ask them to explain to you what it is about the game that they like. If you are worried about the suitability of the game, read up about **PEGI ratings** which offer age ratings for different games. The PEGI icons also explain the content that is to be expected in different games.

3. Some games may offer children the chance to chat with other players by voice and text. Ask them who they are playing with and find out if they are talking to other players. If chat is available, look at the type of language that is used by other players and remind your children never to share personal information with people they only know online. If your child ever encounters problems with other players, make sure they know how to use the **blocking and reporting tools.**

4. If you are worried about your child playing online games, look out for the many **parental controls options** that exist. Depending on the console, these controls can allow you to disable the internet browser, or the chat function in the game. They can also put in place time limits so you can monitor your child's gaming usage.

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5. It is always a good idea to speak to your child about boundaries when using the internet. We recommend a **family agreement** where you can outline how much screen time is permitted a day, as well as ensuring your child promises to tell you if anything worrying or upsetting while playing online games.

Things to know about gaming:

1. Just like offline games, these games and apps can have educational benefits, and be used, for example, to develop problem-solving and team working skills and understanding. Traditionally, games could be bought from shops, often in the form of a disc for use on a PC or console. Increasingly games are now downloaded online.

2. Games are played on many platforms, with those bought in shops often having an online component to them. Internet connectivity in a game adds a new opportunity for gamers as it allows players to find and play against, or with, other players from around the world (in a multi-player game).

3. Multi-player games allow someone to chat to and play against a player they may or may not know, perhaps who is in another country. This has many advantages, but can also present issues, such as when young people are playing against others who are in a different time zone to them, it can put pressure on them to stay up late. Furthermore, these people can be strangers and when chatting and playing with them, it is important not to reveal personal information and to talk only about the game.

If after your discussion at home there is any further support or advice you need you can also look for support from these websites:

www.childnet.com/

https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers

https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/

If there is anything that you would like further help from then please do get in contact with myself or one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (Mrs Holden or Mrs Palmer).

Yours sincerely,

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Head teacher

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