



Safeguarding Newsletter for Families

February 2022

**Keeping
children safe
is everyone's
responsibility**



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Please find [Poppy Playtime Online Safety Review](#)

attached to this newsletter.

Online safety experts have been alerted to a video game, being described by some users as an “**introduction to horror.**” Videos, versions of the game, and associated material are becoming increasingly popular on YouTube, Roblox, and other platforms used by young children.

Poppy Playtime features frightening images and themes that are paired with child-friendly items. This may be especially upsetting to children who have not yet developed the resilience / understanding to deal with such disturbing content.



Our school continues to participate in a national scheme called ‘Operation Encompass’, which is a joint partnership between Lincolnshire Police and schools. One of the principles of Operation Encompass is that all incidents of domestic abuse are shared with schools, not just those where an offence can be identified.

This system has been established to help schools provide in-school support to children who have been present at, exposed to or involved in any domestic abuse incident. We know that children can be significantly harmed, physically and/or emotionally, during these situations, and that it also negatively affects their learning and behaviour. Therefore, as part of the Operation Encompass procedure, and to help mitigate the resulting negative impact, the school receives an email from the police the morning after a child has been witness to, or involved in, any reported domestic abuse incident.

We are then able to use this information to provide the right support to any child and their family as and when it is needed.

SOMETHING TO SHARE

The children will know all about our new Something to Share promotion. All classes have this poster displayed, reminding children what they can do if they have a worry of any kind. The Something to Share boxes have proved very successful so far and supported a number of children.

Please remind your children to share their worries in the way they feel most comfortable. There are Something to Share boxes in each classroom plus three communal ones; one outside the main school office, one outside Mrs Stratton's office and one by Mrs Cowles' office.



Focus On...What is PEGI?

- useful advice for Parents and Carers

Online gaming can often be overlooked when it comes to Online Safety and yet, it is one of the most popular discussion topics when talking to children and young people about the online world. Don't know your *Minecraft's* from your *Fortnite's* or whether a game is suitable for your child? The following information provides an overview of the PEGI system and some useful tips when it comes to online games.

Understanding that risks such as grooming, cyberbullying and inappropriate content all apply to the online gaming environment is extremely important. Historical messages such as *stranger danger*, *knowing who you are talking to* or being able to block someone are all important messages, but what about the content itself? Within the UK, we use a system called PEGI (Pan European Game Information) as a game content rating system. In a similar structure to that used for movies, PEGI uses 5 distinct age categories ranging from 3



through to 18. In addition, PEGI also uses 'content descriptors' which give information about what content the game contains across 7 categories such as whether the game contains violence, bad language, fear, sex, gambling, drugs and discrimination.

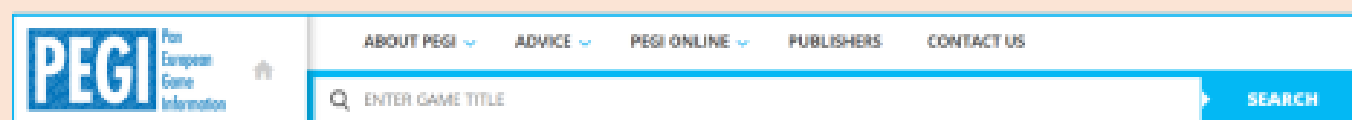


PEGI Content Descriptors (in order of incidence (l-r))

Despite what some children may have us believe (!), the age ratings given to individual games do not relate to skill levels required or the difficulty of the game but, to its suitability for a given age. Some example age ratings for popular games include those shown in the illustration below:



Whilst these are examples of a number of popular titles, the PEGI website includes a useful feature that allows users to enter the name of a game to find out further information including its PEGI rating, content descriptors and what the game involves – see: <https://pegi.info>



Importantly, the majority of games often involve online interaction with other players and it is therefore extremely important that children understand that online rules about appropriate behaviour and keeping personal information private apply to games too.

A common concern raised when delivering Parental Awareness sessions is the amount of time children and young people spend playing games. Games are designed to be engaging and immersive so setting ground rules for time limits and your expectations beforehand is very useful. Additionally, popular gaming consoles such as Xbox and PlayStation have very useful features within their settings that can help in this regard, along with options to set age ratings, purchasing and other permissions. Alternatively, others such as the Nintendo Switch have downloadable apps to support parents with safety settings (<http://bit.ly/switch-pegi>).



Whilst there are risks associated with the online world, young people often point out that as adults, we must be careful not to forget the positives. Online games can help with developing important skills such as collaboration, perseverance, creativity, teamwork and building resilience. However, the single most important thing parents and carers can do to help their children stay safe online is to have a conversation. Equally, getting involved helps our understanding so trying out some of the games our children play can build confidence to address potential issues (and can be fun too!).



What parents & carers need to know about ...

AMONG US

PEGI
7

Among Us is one of the most popular games of 2020. A space-themed 'social deduction game' where 4-10 players take on the guise of Crewmates, who must complete various tasks around their spaceship, while randomly selected Imposters must try their hardest to sabotage the others' efforts. The Imposters have to remain undetected through rounds of voting to win. While Among Us is a largely safe game, it's still prudent to be aware of any potential risks young ones might encounter when playing.

Inappropriate chat

While Among Us can be enjoyed locally via Wi-Fi, it is commonly played online. Between rounds, players come together to discuss who they think the Imposter is with a text chat, and it's here where children will come into contact with others. There is a profanity filter on the game as standard, but it can very easily be disabled and (like any unmoderated chat groups) children can be exposed to inappropriate, sexual or explicit language.

In-game purchases

Among Us is currently available on both PC (via the gaming service Steam) and mobile devices. On the PC, the game costs a flat amount of £3.99 and has some in-game purchases, whereas the mobile version is free to play but contains adverts and in-game purchases. You can pay to remove the ads or purchase in-game cosmetic items. While these amounts are relatively low, there's still the possibility that young ones could accidentally spend lots of money on the game without realising it, as the process is complete in a couple of taps if a card is connected to your store account.

Risk of hacking

Among Us has been the target of hacking activity. Indeed, only recently the game's developer, InnerSloth, tweeted advice that users play private games or with people they trust, in response to hacking issues. As yet, there has been no breach in player accounts. However, if a big enough hack were to take place and player details were accessed, it could lead criminals to having access to credit card data and other personal credentials.

Use of external apps

Many players use external apps like Discord to voice chat with each other while they're playing. The problem with this is that it is unregulated by the game. Usually on Discord, players will only talk to other people they know in private chats, but a stranger could add a child on an external app, pretending to be interested in playing Among Us with them, when in reality they could be attempting to bully, groom or extort.

Mild violence

The art style of Among Us is cartoony but does contain some very mild violence. Imposters must kill off Crewmates one by one and can do this in a number of different ways. Some younger children might find this uncomfortable and could get scared or become upset when an Imposter is chasing them, or if they are the Imposter and are forced to kill. An age rating of PEGI 7 should help guide you in deciding if the game is appropriate or not.



Safety tips

Play with your children

Playing with your kids is one of the best ways to understand the game, and what makes it so popular. Among Us is free on mobile and is incredibly easy to pick up and play. It's also a great way to bond with your young ones - unless of course you're the Imposter or vote them out of the spaceship! You can do this by picking 'Local' on the main menu then 'Create Game'.

Use private lobbies

ENTER LOBBY

Among Us uses private lobbies to let players keep track of who they're gaming with. Using a uniquely generated code that can be given to friends prior to a game starting, it gives parents peace of mind knowing who their kids are playing with. To get a game code, simply select 'Host', choose the game settings, press 'Confirm', then send the six-digit code at the bottom of the screen to friends to invite them.

Deactivate credit cards

Having your credit card automatically paired with any online accounts that can be accessed by children is asking for trouble. A solution could be setting them up with their own account with no credit card attached. They can still ask you when they want to make a purchase, but it's totally up to you as and when that transaction happens.

Use an alias

By default, your name on Among Us will be set to whatever name your device recognises you as. If this is your child's real name, you'll want to ensure they change it before hopping into a game. This is really easily done by clicking 'Online' on the main menu, then simply typing in a new name at the top of the screen.

Talk about the risks

It's a good idea to talk to your child about the risks associated with online gaming, especially when there are chat options and an ability to communicate with others. Try to maintain an open dialogue with your child: talk about their experiences of the game and who they're playing with. This will help you to stay on top of how they're feeling and ensure they know they can come to you if ever they feel upset or uncomfortable about anything they've experienced.

Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for five years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work - but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



Sources: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.innersloth.spacemafia>

Our Safeguarding Team

Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Catherine Stratton



Deputy Safeguarding Leads:

Alice Cowles



Designated Wider safeguarding Team:

Family Support worker:

Theresa Miller



Safeguarding Governor:

Linda Hawbrook



Contact Number for the Safeguarding Team in school

(01522) 702669

Our Updated Safeguarding Policy September 2021

Please scan the QR code or click the link to find our most recent policy.

[Link](#)

<https://www.saxilby.lincs.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LCC-School-Child-Protection-Safeguarding-Policy-v16-September-2021-FIN....pdf>



The Importance of Attendance for Safeguarding

Attendance monitoring is a key part of our safeguarding processes in school. We take non-attendance and lateness seriously. School will maintain records of where children are and reasons for non-attendance or late arrival. We are a duty to investigate non-attendance - see [section 175 Education Act 2002](#),

Please keep the school informed of any changes to your contact details