



QUORN HALL
SCHOOL

Notes from our Headteacher

Well what a scorching end to a busy term! I have been so impressed with everything the pupils have managed to achieve this term both inside and out of the curriculum.

In terms of the curriculum we have had pupils sitting their GCSE and functional skills exams and gaining accreditation in Duke of Edinburgh, science and life skills. We have really utilised our grounds this term due to the better weather, and many pupils have taken part in outdoor learning and developed their forestry skills and knowledge of the

environment and how to be more sustainable.

We have had many trips this term – some with a curriculum focus and some with a social focus! Pupils have learnt about tropical birds, the war and coding, the local environment and local history. They have also budgeted and planned for tutor trips with a focus on developing their confidence in exploring new places, social skills and having fun! I am particularly impressed by those that braved Alton Towers and the 'Ninja Warrior' experience.

The highlight of the term for me was the Year 11/12 and Year 13 Leavers' meal which we had at a local hotel. The pupils were a pleasure to spend time with, and they conducted themselves with grace and decorum. It is always a little sad when we see pupils moving on, because we will miss them. However we have thoroughly enjoyed supporting them as they transition into their new school/college and work placements. Can I say a huge thank you to the staff, parents and carers for their continued support as we know how difficult endings and new beginnings can be.

Whilst I do hope all of you enjoy a well earned rest it will be very busy here at Quorn Hall. We have the Lower School being redeveloped and redecorated, a new wooden climbing structure being installed and a new art and textiles classroom to be finished over summer.

We look forward to welcoming pupils back after the summer break; end of year reports and new timetables have been sent out to all parents and carers to help pupils prepare for any changes. We will also be welcoming a number of new pupils. I would like to thank you in advance for supporting your child in the transition back to school, we know it isn't always easy.

I do hope you all have a lovely summer.



Antonia Jackson
Headteacher

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Ravens and Flamingos Trip to Bletchley Park Milton Keynes – June 2022

First week back after half term, Ravens and Flamingos drove down to Bletchley Park in Milton Keynes in the two school minibuses.

Heidi, Shelley and Ravens made a good start in the petrol minibus, and the electric minibus driven by Charlotte and supported by Kieran took those from Flamingos who could attend, as there was an English GCSE taking place that day for some of the pupils.

The journey was smooth and we were met by a member of staff who showed us where to charge the electric minibus and then led us to the centre of the site where we were free to make our own way round the exhibits.



There are many interesting buildings to look at which include the hall, the huts where the code breakers worked and cottages where some of the staff lived whilst doing this top secret work. There are also exhibitions of the machines including Enigma that were crucial in cracking the Nazi coded messages. There was also a film about D-Day and how the information provided from Bletchley Park meant that the Allies knew where to land on the coast of France, in a location the Germans were not expecting.



The grounds are beautiful themselves and we were able to have our packed lunches in the central grassed area on deckchairs similar to how they would have socialised in war time.



It was fascinating to find out about people such as Alan Turing who were key to breaking the codes in the 2nd World War and also how modern computing was actually born from the work done at Bletchley as well.

The pupils enjoyed the trip and realised that there is even more to learn about the work done here at Bletchley Park. In class some pupils have made Caesar Cipher wheels to code and decode their own messages since returning.

Hopefully we will be able to return next year with further pupils to see the wonderful site and enjoy the brilliant exhibits.

Science Summer Term 2022 - Katrina Cartwright

Kitchen Raised Beds and Sunflower Competition

We have had another busy term in Science! Each tutor group chose a raised bed to plant with fruit and vegetable seeds for our school kitchen garden. Everyone worked really hard as the beds had to be weeded, dug over and watered almost every day. Pupils are also taking part in the inaugural Quorn Hall School Sunflower competition. Each pupil has planted two sunflower seeds to see who can grow the tallest sunflower before we return in August. We are also receiving our first hive of honey bees and so pupils have also recycled our plastic milk bottles and made hanging baskets to grow

wildflowers in.





National Space Centre

The whole school also took part in National Space Week, the culmination of which was a visit from the National Space Centre with their Space Dome. Tutor groups were split into their key stages and received an hour's talk from a specialist presenter on

everything from why do we get day and night and the seasons, to the life cycle of a star.



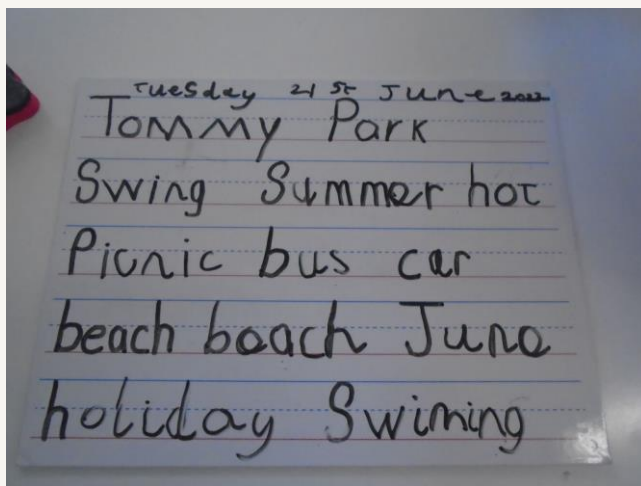
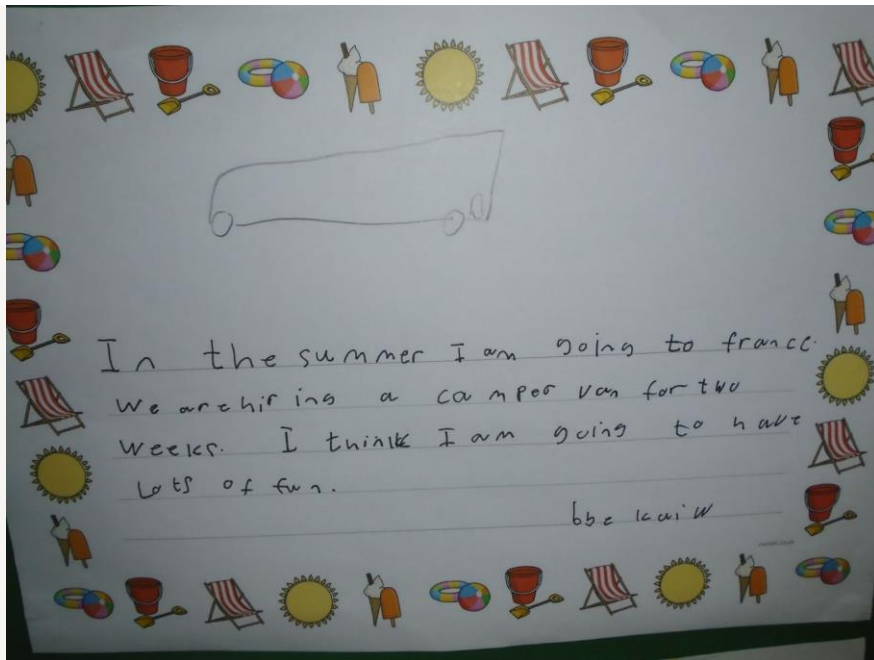
Trip to Tropical Birdland

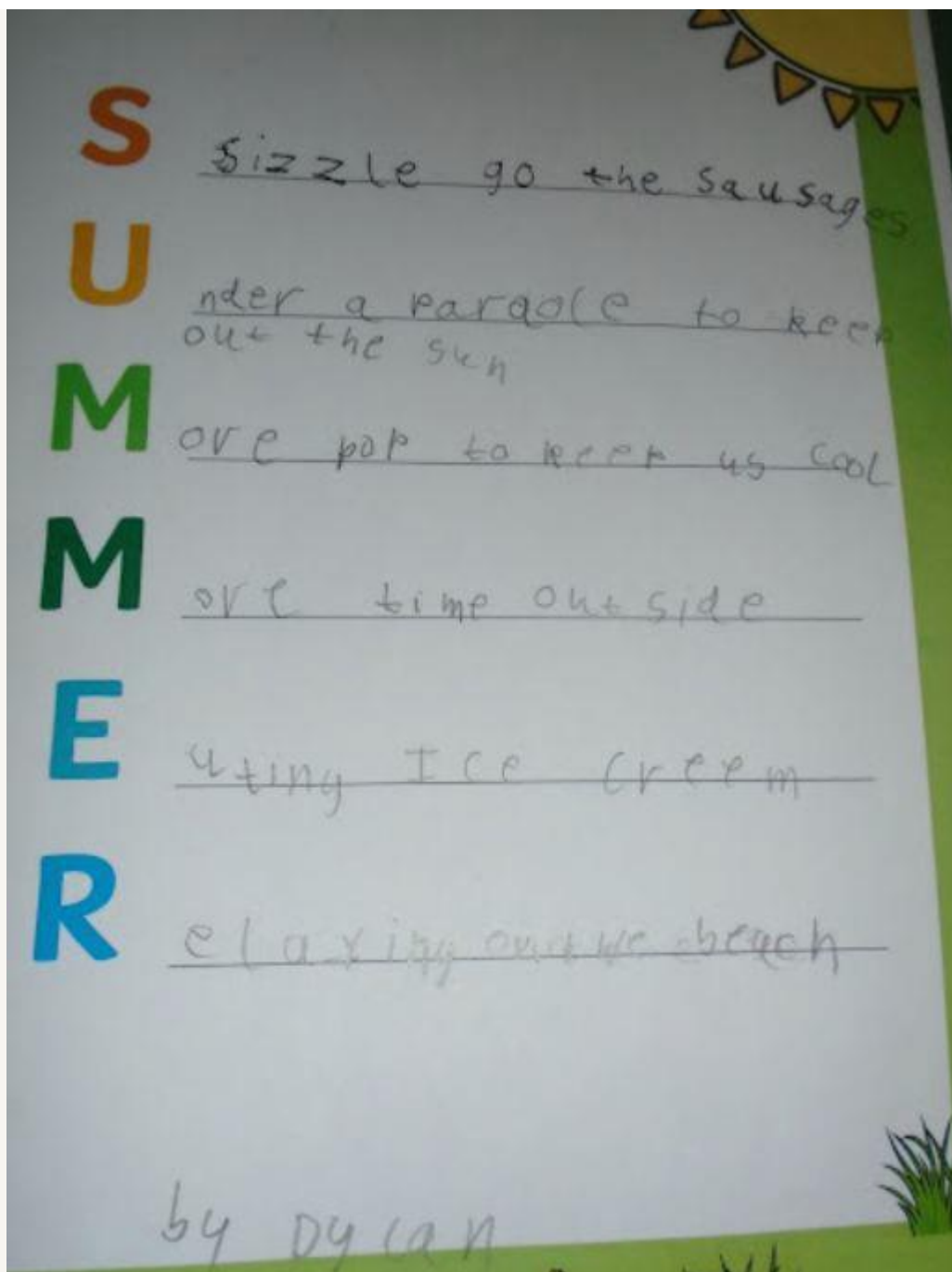
The whole school also visited Tropical Birdland, learning about a wide range of topics from conservation, how to look after endangered species to how different animals adapt to their environment. The whole school thoroughly enjoyed engaging with the birds, especially when they came to say 'hello!'



Summer in Cygnet & Penguin Class

Cygnet and Penguin classes have enjoyed the hot summer weather and used the opportunity to practice our handwriting skills and create summer poems and written pieces of work about what we will be doing this summer.





We have also had fun cooling down using our water play station and playing outdoor water games.





PE Summer Term

Lower School

Lower School including Penguins, Cygnets and Toucans have enjoyed their swimming scheme of work and have experienced attending two different leisure centres in Beaumont Leys and Whitwick/Coalville. They have learnt vital life skills including water safety, basic fundamentals of swimming and team games within the pool environment.

Upper School

Upper School have enjoyed a broad PE curriculum and engaged in striking and fielding sports such as cricket and rounders, whilst also engaging in Athletics events on the school site. The theme of PE lessons has been around participation in sport, the importance of sport on physical, social, and mental wellbeing, and enjoyment. A new School records board has been produced which has engaged pupils in participating against each other's event score.

Duke of Edinburgh

Flamingos have been supporting Lower School in the volunteering section of their Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award. Flamingos have been supporting Cygnets and Penguins with their reading and writing work every Tuesday morning. The Flamingos group have also supported Cygnets and Penguins in their free time, participating in board games and go-karting.

Ravens have been completing their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award volunteering section. Ravens have also been participating in litter picking at various sites including Barrow Boating and Beacon Hill Country Park.



Toucan Class



This term, the Toucan class have shown exemplary attitude, behaviour, hard work and motivation and so were *very* deserving of a once in a lifetime reward trip!

The group chose to go to Alton Towers theme park and all the pupils had the most fantastic time; it was filled with thrills and excitement! At the park, they were a credit to the school.



Freddie and Logan wrote the itinerary for us before we left so we kicked off the day with the biggest drop in the country – Oblivion!

To quote Logan, '*we thought we had died*' and Lee didn't speak for a good 15 minutes from shock!

After, we headed over to the fiery Wickerman, followed by the twists and turns of Spinball Whizzer. We then stopped off for a lovely lunch break in the sun to refuel for the busy afternoon ahead.

Via the transparent sky ride which allowed us to look at the beautiful views of Alton, we headed over to the ups and downs (and even upside down) of Galactica and Nemesis. Logan had never been on a theme park ride before but he managed to conquer his fear of rides and really enjoyed being a superman on Galactica!

We then headed down to the fastest rollercoaster in the park, Rita, which travels 0-60 miles per hour in two seconds and reaches 100mph overall! Kaydn then led the way through the dark spooky forest to Thirteen. This ride shocked the masses as it had an unforgiving and unexpected drop! Boden's screams were heard from school!

Finally, we braced ourselves and finished the day with 14 loops on the Smiler. Freddie had never been on the Smiler before but he faced his fears and completed it with a huge smile on his face. We recovered from the whiplash and had a final twirl and whirl on the Spin Jam. Cole said "*it was the best trip of his life*" and was so proud of himself for trying roller coasters for the first time!



We all can't wait to see what the next adventure will be in September!

PSHE

In the Toucan's PSHE lessons, we have been discussing our personalities and what makes us who we are.

The class made some interesting comments around how our emotions can make us who we are and also how we respond to these emotions.

The class outlined several emotions you can feel, inspired by watching the film Inside Out last term, including sadness, joy, anger, disgust and fear.

The class discussed how personality can change depending on who you are with and how you are feeling. They also talked about how your appearance can influence your personality and how your personality can influence your appearance. Some pupils said they don't try and be someone different to who they are, whereas others try to look a certain way to reflect how they want to behave.

The pupils in the class are also learning how to tie their shoelaces so the class designed a pair of shoes to represent their inner and outer personalities. One shoe represented their inner personality, which is how they feel inside about themselves, whereas the other shoe represents their outer personality and how they present themselves to others. The pupils reflected on this and were able to design two different shoes, which they will then make and learn to tie shoelaces on!



Learning for Life

In Learning for Life this term, we have been exploring lots of different topics but something the children wanted to learn more about was how to make healthy snacks, such as smoothies.

Prior to making the smoothies, the group decided what fruit they liked and which new fruit they would like to try.

On Friday 20th May, Toucan class came up to the cooking room and learned firstly how to be safe in the room and where all the equipment was kept.

They learned how to wash fruit appropriately, cut fruit with knives and how to use a blender to create their smoothie.

Cole, Kaydn and Lee tried lots of new fruits, such as passion fruit, mango and blueberries – which they all seemed to really enjoy!

Cole started with a strawberry and apple smoothie as he knew he would like it but then next tried a banana, mango, strawberry, raspberry and apple smoothie!

They all went out of their comfort zone to try something new and we are really proud of them for trying new things and successfully washing up all the equipment!



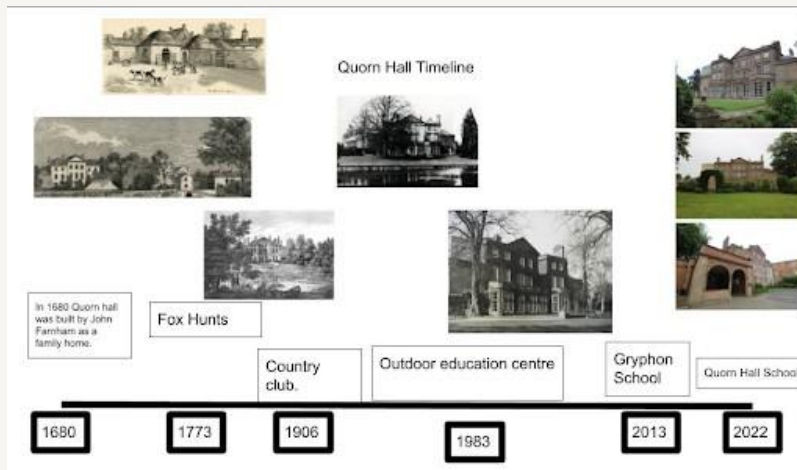
Raven Class

This term the Ravens class have had the joy of experiencing multiple trips. We explored code breaking at Bletchley Park and some of us had birds sitting on our heads at Tropical Birdland! Along with our Duke of Edinburgh walks and litter picking, we've had a very active few weeks.

The class has been doing very well looking at portraiture within their Art lessons and are building skills exploring different recipes in the Food Tech room. Overall it's been a lot of fun and we can't wait for September.

Humanities

Emus have been researching Quorn Hall and its many uses since it was built in the 17th Century. The pupils enjoyed finding out about the families that used it as their home before it became a country club, training base for navy personnel, education centre and now a school. The pupils have learned skills in checking sources and scanning articles for the important information. They also found images of the building throughout the years and looked for familiar features to see if the image was relevant even though it looked very different.



Ravens, Nightingales and Magpies chose a History topic that interested them to complete research and share their findings with peers. These topics included how causes of crime have changed, how the punishment of convicts has changed, how entertainment has changed and how the treatment of disease has changed over several centuries. The pupils learned new skills to consider their use of search engines to ask questions that will give them relevant sources, check that the sources are reliable and present their information in a way that would be understood by their peers.

Example of pupil work: "There's so many reasons why people may commit a crime, maybe they need money, maybe they are seeking revenge, maybe they see crime happening every day of the week. Some of these causes have always existed, such as greed, poverty and economic distress. Other causes of crime have changed

since 1500. What has been the main causes of crime over time? Laws have been a thing for so so long and some laws are fair but some aren't but they are just to protect the people of the world, however laws do change over time like acts of union or so many more. Some of them changed for good reasons and people have to obey to them. The motives of crime consisted of religion, greed, depression, politics, unemployment, and so many more. Crimes can be planned or they may be committed on the spur of the moment."

Flamingos have been researching the environmental and humanitarian impact of consumerism. They have researched popular consumer products, the manufacturing process and the working conditions of the people involved in the production of the goods. They compared these workers' rights with the rights of employees in the UK and wrote short essays to describe the differences. The pupils thought critically about their role as consumers and held discussions about the impact their habits had on the environment and people in other societies.

Example of pupil work : "In Bangladesh the working conditions are a lot more different to the UK's even though it's three times more expensive to live in the UK than Bangladesh (UK £2624.18; Bangladesh £1046.32). The difference in hourly rate is off the charts. The minimum wage is £8.20 in the UK but in Bangladesh it's £7.84 taka or £0.07. The legal age to work in the UK is 16 but in Bangladesh you can work when you're 13 but because the Labour Laws in Bangladesh aren't enforced you could possibly see someone as young as five working to support the family."

English Summer Term

During the summer term the pupils at Quorn Hall school have been working hard in their English lessons.

A huge well done to those pupils in the Flamingo class who are taking their GCSEs in this subject. Charlie, Mitchell, Braydon worked really hard on preparing for their English Literature exams. So well done.

The Ravens class have been working on the Shakespeare play Macbeth and have been reading parts in class. They have particularly enjoyed some of the more gruesome moments in the play!

The Emus class have been studying Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. They have learnt about the plot and characters. We have all had a good laugh at the character of Bottom who gets his head turned into a donkey. To end the unit of work the pupils collected sticks from the woods and turned these into magic wands to create their own fairy characters.



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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about MINECRAFT

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.

AGE RATING
7+

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 pleasure (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 unfavourable in the game. However, some of the 'monsters' 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 unsettle 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 lot 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 menacing 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 – avoiding 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

Chloe Giffen (@MrsLimeover) 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 Lurveful Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books.



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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about CROSS-PLATFORM SHARING OF INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Creepy characters like Slender Man or Huggy Wuggy. Dangerous online challenges. Songs or videos that aren't suitable for youngsters. When things like these begin trending online, it can be difficult to prevent children accidentally stumbling across them – especially if they use a range of platforms, like online games, social media, streaming sites or messaging apps. A trend can originate in one online space and rapidly spread to other platforms or via chat apps. The frightening Huggy Wuggy character, for instance, first emerged as part of a game on Steam; now there are parody songs on TikTok, videos on YouTube and more than 45,000 results for #huggywuggy on Instagram.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

UNSUITABLE VIDEOS AND IMAGES

Anyone can upload footage to a video-sharing platform, which has resulted in clips that appear age-appropriate but actually aren't so innocent. The audience for Peppa Pig, for instance, is very young – but there have been reports of Peppa cartoons with extreme violence spliced into them. Likewise, footage of the razor-toothed game character Huggy Wuggy has been inserted into numerous child-friendly videos (even on YouTube Kids), scaring many young viewers.

INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

On a similar theme, there is always the possibility that user-uploaded video content could include language which really isn't suitable for children. The cover-croon industry may look child-friendly, but if your child is wearing headphones, then you'll remain unaware of what is being said; some videos have featured songs containing explicit language or characters graphically describing violence.

COPIES OF LIVE STREAMS

Social media and messaging apps can inadvertently spread extremely harmful content very quickly. Footage of violent attacks (such as the recent Buffalo supermarket shootings) can often be viewed on multiple platforms as people seek to share the video. Moderators try to react swiftly to remove upsetting content, but the rate at which it goes viral makes it difficult to prevent the spread completely.

ACCIDENTAL EXPOSURE

Even if your child doesn't have access to social media platforms or video-streaming platforms (where the majority of issues arise), they might still use messaging apps to communicate with family and friends. There is always going to be a risk, therefore, of them seeing something which isn't child-friendly either shared by one of their peers or sent accidentally by a relative.

Advice for Parents & Carers

USE SAFETY FEATURES

Enable safety settings like Google SafeSearch and the optional restrictions on video-sharing platforms like YouTube. Whenever possible, stick to YouTube Kids for young children, as the software will help to filter out unsuitable content. Remember that filters aren't always enough to block all inappropriate material – especially when child-friendly videos have been edited maliciously.

LESS IS BEST

Manage the number of online platforms your child has access to, based on their age and maturity. Just because their friends use a certain game or app, it doesn't mean your child must have it too. Follow the age guidelines for games and apps, and check regularly that privacy settings are in place.

KEEP IT COMMUNAL

Encourage your child to stay in a communal family space when they're watching videos or playing online games on their devices – without headphones, if possible. This will make it far easier for you to keep one eye (and ear) on what they're seeing and hearing while they're online.

AVOID FAN-MADE CONTENT

If your child watches cartoons and shows on YouTube, spend time with them making a playlist of videos that you're comfortable with them watching. Always source videos from official channels, as opposed to fan-made content; you can never be completely confident about material that another user has created or uploaded.

REACT CALMLY

If you hear or see anything unsuitable on your child's device, calmly ask them to turn off the game or video in question. Explain that they haven't done anything wrong, but that you didn't like what you saw or heard and you would much rather they watched or played something else instead.

SUPPORT AND REASSURE

Remind your child regularly that anyone can post anything online – and that not everything online is real. If your child is sent something that scares or worries them, ask them to show you. Watch it alone (to avoid unnerving them further), then praise them for coming to you and talk about what upset them. Recommend a break from their device to do something which helps them feel calm and happy.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant at @CyberAware, who has developed anti-bullying and cyber-safety workshops and policies for schools in Australia and the UK. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government, comparing the internet use and sexting behaviours of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.





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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about TWITCH

Twitch is a livestreaming service which tends to focus on gaming. Users can publicly broadcast their gameplay and commentary online for other users to watch. It's a community-driven platform where viewers can support their favourite streamers' channels through PayPal donations, 'bits' and more. Each streamer or group creates their own community for fans to interact with each other. Twitch has more than 15 million daily active users and includes non-gaming topics such as music, cooking and art. Anyone can create a channel to livestream or watch videos.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

UNCENSORED STREAMS

Uncensored content obviously carries a greater risk of inappropriate language and behaviour (streamers' cars, however, set their broadcast as unavailable for children). Twitch has strict rules for streamers to follow, but requires viewers to report any streams which breach these guidelines. Each livestream is accompanied by a text chat which it is the streamer's responsibility to moderate.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

As well as streamers talking directly to their audience, Twitch enables viewers to use text chat to speak to the person they're watching. It's a social platform which also allows viewers to interact with each other via text while they are watching livestreams - including exchanging private messages. This raises the possibility of a child being approached and messaged online by total strangers.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Most people are already aware that some video games feature adult content such as violence, sexual content, profanity and so on. Twitch also proved certain games from being streamed on the platform, but most are still allowed. It is relatively simple, then, for a child to find livestreams of games that aren't suitable for them - including horror games.

WEBCAM SHARING

It's common for streamers to use their live webcam footage. This allows better interaction with their viewers, but also adds risk: the stream might include sponsored content or product placement that isn't child-friendly. Using a webcam in livestreams increases the chance of malicious viewers finding out where the streamer lives and practising tactics with visual reactions to their hurtful behaviour.

HIDDEN COSTS

Twitch is free to use because it's supported by advertisers. Removing the ads requires a subscription to Twitch Turbo or the Twitch Prime package (free for anyone with an Amazon Prime account), which blocks the ads and offers additional goodies such as bonus games. Streamers earn most of their income by being used for direct donations or gifts of the virtual currency Twitch Bits.

PRIVATE CHAT ROOMS

Twitch encourages streamers to create their own communities which extend beyond its platform. Many create a public Discord group, for example, for viewers to join and communicate with each other. Discord is a completely separate entity to Twitch and offers a higher risk of predators, grooming and cyberbullying if your child gets involved in the voice or video chat with strangers.

Advice for Parents & Carers

EXPLORE IT YOURSELF

Twitch doesn't have any parental controls, but it is possible to block troublesome users if it becomes necessary. The best solution is to watch some Twitch channels by yourself or with your child as and when they are suitable. Watching some streams by yourself is also a good route to understanding the sort of content that your child would be consuming regularly on Twitch.

WATCH WHAT THEY WATCH

Twitch does have a lot of child-friendly content; some streamers use a 'family friendly' tag to highlight material that's suitable for children. However, anyone can use this tag - including users who (accidentally or otherwise) stream games with less appropriate adult themes. The best way to counter this is to view different streams and follow suitable channels for your child to watch.

LEARN HOW TO BLOCK

'Security and Privacy' in Twitch's settings lets your child block messages from specific users. Teaching your child how this works will help them avoid online abuse. If they're streaming, knowing how to block people in the chat also helps to prevent cyberbullying or harassment. Evading online interaction is impossible, of course, so talk to them in advance about boundaries and safe online communication.

LIMIT PAYMENT OPTIONS

Reduce the chance of accidental purchases by ensuring your bank card isn't saved on Twitch or the Amazon account that Twitch Prime could be linked to. Restricting access to your payment account is also wise if your child watches Twitch on the device you use to make purchases. Explain to your child that they don't need to subscribe to channels to watch them and that donating or gifting 'bits' is optional.

Meet Our Expert

Chris Davies (aka Lunawar) has worked as an editor and journalist in the gaming industry since 2011, providing websites with event coverage, reviews and gaming guides. She is the owner of Lunawar Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books.

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about VIRTUAL REALITY

Virtual reality (VR for short) has existed for decades, but it's only in the last 10 years that the technology has really become publicly available. With VR's rapid rise as a gaming and educational medium, there are plenty of unknowns regarding its use - for adults and children alike. Is it safe? How long should someone use VR for? How expensive is it? What's clear is that VR is becoming ever more ubiquitous in everyday life: from companies using it for training to at-home fitness. Knowing what the technology is capable of is more useful than ever.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

PREMATURE EXPOSURE

13+

While VR has already found its way into schools worldwide - allowing teachers to take their class on digital field trips - most manufacturers advise an age restriction of 13. This is because it's based on the idea that children's brains, eyes and bodies are still developing. With the technology still in its infancy, not enough research has been conducted as to how VR affects children in the longer term.

EYE STRAIN

One of the main worries about VR is that wearing a VR headset for long periods of time can cause eye strain. This is because the lenses inside each headset have been specifically designed to trick the human eye into focusing on infinity. Just as they would in the real world, so the eyes would be able to relax. Even so, longer VR sessions should be limited to adults only.

PHYSICAL ACCIDENTS

When used correctly, VR isn't dangerous as there are safety features built in. A common concern is that if you wear a headset, you could bump into real-world objects while playing - so creating a clear, open play area is essential. Headsets also come with 'guardian' or digital barrier systems that can be set up beforehand, indicating where walls and furniture are located so nobody trips over and hurts themselves.

SOCIAL VR

VR is more immersive than normal gaming and makes players feel very present in the moment. There are additional online safety fears, therefore, relating to trading and abusive comments as players engage with each other in social VR spaces. Personal information shouldn't be given out and privacy and safety controls (who can see your real name, for example) need to be activated where possible.

MOTION SICKNESS

Children who are prone to travel sickness might encounter what's known as 'simulator sickness'. This is nausea caused by the eyes seeing images which tell the brain that the person is moving, while the rest of the body knows it is stationary. Most apps now feature to reduce this discomfort, while some games simply don't feature locomotion to make for a more comfortable experience.

VIOLENT CONTENT

Among the growing range of VR games and apps, not all of them are appropriate for young players. Violent content can be far more visceral and disturbing in VR, so it's important to consider the age and maturity of your child before giving them access to this type of gameplay. As the majority of VR content is digital, online store access is easy - so careful curation is advised.

Advice for Parents & Carers

START OFF SLOWLY

Just like regular video games, if your child wants to try VR the best way to reduce risks is moderation. Keep their VR sessions to short stints - and for young adults new to the technology, build up their usage time gradually to let them get acquainted with it. If they feel any discomfort, remove the headset and try again at a later point.

NO SURPRISES

It's easy to get lost in the moment in VR - and possibly forget where you might be standing in the real world. A minimum 2m x 2m play area is recommended, with no plant pots or other delicate objects within reach of falling arms. Take pets into account, too: don't let the cat or dog walk into the room, for example, because a VR player won't see them and could certainly trip. A child is far more likely to get over-enthusiastic in VR, posing a risk to themselves and anything in their path.

KEEP A WATCHING BRIEF

It may seem that a VR player is in their own world, but all VR headsets allow external viewing via a linked monitor or mobile phone. This is the best way to ensure whatever a child is playing is appropriate. More VR supervision tools are on the way, such as securing specific apps behind unlock patterns or sending an approval notification to the parent if their child wants to purchase a game.

ANTI-NAUSEA OPTIONS

It's wise to get used to VR while comfortably seated and progress to standing or 'room-scale' VR (where players physically walk around an area) later. Look at the in-app options first: switching between seated and standing adjusts the player's height, while a vignette or 'tunnel' darkens the peripheral vision to reduce nausea. Teleportation mode and Snap Turning are also important options for enhancing comfort.

RESEARCH CONTENT

There will be information online about most games and apps, explaining what type of experience they provide. They'll list age ratings indicating how violent the gameplay might be; so, you'll know the intensity of the experience, and how much access the game requires to personal information or features like the built-in microphone.

Meet Our Expert

Peter Quarm is the editor of XR (extended reality) and Web3 specialist site [gamed.com](http://www.gamed.com) and has been writing about VR, augmented reality and the immersive tech industry for more than seven years. He's served as a panel speaker and a judge at awards events and game hackathons.

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about THE METAVERSE

AGE RATING
Varies per metaverse platform

'Metaverse' is a relatively new term to many, however the concept has been around for some time. Videogames, for example, use many aspects of the metaverse; avatars, digital currency, mini-games, and open communication. A metaverse can also take many forms; Fortnite can be seen as a metaverse, as is Roblox. Put simply, a metaverse is an online environment where people interact, play games and express themselves. Away from traditional videogames, there are newer and more 'dedicated' metaverses such as Decentraland, The Sandbox and Somnium Space which are akin to Second Life.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

UNSAFE AREAS
Many metaverse platforms feature little to no moderation. This is due to the decentralised nature of the metaverse - as there is no one company overseeing the platform, users can create and build with freedom. This can be a minefield for younger users as adult material or sensitive topics can feature on a parcel of land seen by everyone.

VOICE COMMUNICATION
The freedom found within creation is also found in communication. Most metaverses use proximity VoIP communication (Voice Over Internet Protocol) and users can approach any other user to start a conversation. It is necessary for avatars to be quite close to another in order to talk and once they are, anything can be said. While a chat box can be moderated, voice chat cannot.

ANONYMITY
As with almost every other form of online interactions, anonymity features heavily within the metaverse. The concept for the metaverse is to live any type of life digitally. This could mean that 'bad actors' (users with malicious intent) can take advantage of others with ease. Reporting and monitoring these users is becoming easier on the more popular platforms, but others struggle to police these situations.

VIRTUAL REALITY
Not all metaverse platforms are VR enabled, in fact less than 10% feature VR interactivity. However, it's always worth monitoring the amount of time younger users spend in virtual reality. A VR metaverse differs greatly to VR gaming in user interaction. Approaching each other in a VR metaverse attempts to represent 'reality' and can result in a greater impact if experiences are negative.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT
Whether in virtual reality or not, interactions and experiences in the metaverse can often carry more weight because they mimic 'real life' experiences. Due to the freedom in avatar creation, younger users may open themselves up to bullying, prejudice or an unrealistic idea of reality. For instance, female-orientated avatars may find themselves targeted by bullies or inappropriate users.

Advice for Parents & Carers

TRY IT OUT FIRST
This may sound like an obvious tip, but by entering the metaverse and exploring on your own, you'll be able to see what your child might. You can explore the busier areas and even the quiet sections to see what users are building or advertising. You'll also learn first-hand how users communicate with each other. Many metaverse platforms will feature an entry area which showcases the busiest areas. Check them all out and see what's happening.

LEARN ABOUT NFTS, WALLETS AND CRYPTO
With the metaverse comes Web3 technologies such as NFTs, cryptocurrency and wallets in which to store them. If you have a crypto wallet, do not connect it to your child's metaverse. One simple click could result in loss of cryptocurrency, if you are unsure what these technologies are, try to research them as these terms will appear in the metaverse.

CREATE AN AVATAR TOGETHER
If you decide on allowing your child into the metaverse, set up their initial avatar together. This way you can ensure the avatar is age-appropriate and keeps their identity private. You can also advise on aspects which may result in attracting bullies or unwanted attention. It will also allow you to see which avatar items cost money, and talk to your child about in-game spending.

START WITH THE FAMILIAR
There are already metaverse experiences with children in mind; explain to your child what a metaverse is and have them recognise similarities between those and games like Roblox, Fortnite and Minecraft. Unfortunately, there is no 'child safe' metaverse option as yet, though Epic Games and LEGO are currently developing a family safe metaverse.

Meet Our Expert
Daniel Upcombe is a father to two girls, aged 14 and 12. Before Dan began his Web3 metaverse journey, he worked as a videogame journalist and author for a decade, reviewing games, talking to creators and writing about videogame trends. Dan has also written fifteen guide books about Fortnite, Minecraft, Roblox, Apex Legends and Valorant for HarperCollins and Bantam Books.

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about ESPORTS

British Esports describes 'esports' as "competitive gaming, human-v-human, usually with a spectator element to it". In recent years, the esports industry has grown significantly – and is expected to reach an overall worth of \$1.2 billion, with around 30 million monthly viewers, by the end of 2022. This rapid evolution has presented even more opportunities – but, of course, opportunities usually come with a risk. Here, we've highlighted some of the potential hazards within the esports arena and suggested ways to help young people stay safe so they can make the most of this exciting space.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

MICROTRANSACTIONS

Microtransactions are in-game purchases that unlock new features or give players special abilities, characters or content. These can cost anything from 85p to £99 (and sometimes more!). The topic of microtransactions in gaming is heavily scrutinised – with companies pay-to-win features and loot boxes all being a source of contention for gamers and governing bodies in recent years.

MENTAL HEALTH

Studies show that esports competitors face the same level of mental health issues as athletes from traditional sports, along with some specific additional demands. Like mainstream professional sport, esports is an incredibly tough industry – requiring countless hours of practice. Competing at the highest level can lead to pressures such as handling setbacks, stressful situations and facing criticism.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT & BEHAVIOUR

Only 22% of gamers globally are aged between 10 and 20 – meaning the majority are adults, who might not always act or talk in a way that's appropriate for children. Like traditional sport, esports has many athletes and 'personalities' to look up to. However, it's important that your child stays aware of how influenced they are by the people they follow, and whether the athlete is age appropriate.

TROLLS & TOXICITY

An internet troll is someone who tries to offend people and cause trouble by posting derogatory comments. Toxicity, as in the real world, refers to negative behaviours like harassment, verbal abuse and inappropriate conduct, which all impact on wellbeing. Trolls and toxicity are an issue within esports, perhaps due to its pressurised, extremely competitive and high-stakes nature.

POSSIBLE EXPLOITATION

The revenue in esports is potentially vast. Organisations often look to professional and content creators to help grow their brand, in exchange for the organisation's backing, a salary, and marketing and sponsorship benefits. However, the industry is still in its infancy – and so is its regulation. In some countries, esports isn't regulated at all, so things can get tricky if players don't know what they're doing or who they're working with.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS

The common perception of esports involves a sedentary lifestyle, an unhealthy diet and very little physical activity – which has obvious health implications. It's certainly true that players sit at their desk for hours, looking into bright screens and not getting regular exercise. Some professional esports players have nutritionists, personal trainers and dieticians specifically to protect their health.

Advice for Parents & Carers

ENCOURAGE BALANCE

Dedicating oneself intensely to any activity – including esports – can be harmful, both mentally and physically. Make sure your child's gaming routine is balanced with exercise, regular breaks, healthy food and plenty of water. If your child spends long hours gaming, using a chair with the proper supports and taking the time to practise good posture will help protect their lower back, neck and wrists.

GET EXPERT HELP

If your child does start on the road to becoming a professional, get in touch with an esports-specific agency who are experienced in industry terminology and loopholes. Do due diligence on any team or organisation offering your child a contract: a key point is how long your child would be contracted to them – the esports industry changes quickly, so there might be better and more secure offers out there.

UNDERSTAND GAMING

Chat to your child about the games they play; ask to watch or even take part to get an idea of how appropriate they are. This will give you an awareness of the phrases esports players and content creators use, helping you understand young gamers' slang. If you find some of the games unsuitable, ask to your child about why. You can also explore age-specific settings on apps like YouTube and Twitch.

BLOCK TOXIC USERS

Monitoring in-game chats, or disabling them altogether (either through the console or in the game itself), is a comprehensive way to avoid negative experiences and reduce the risk of toxic messaging. Your child also has options to block messages from particular players and only interact with their friends; this can also help to prevent them from encountering the blocked users in future games.

Meet Our Expert

Nathan David is an experienced gamer, teacher and athlete. He is Course Leader for the BTEC Esports programme at Salisbury Sixth Form College. Nathan has more than 10 years' experience working in schools and colleges, and holds a Masters degree in Sport Psychology.





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