

# Watlington Primary School

## Safeguarding update

Term 2: 2023/24

### WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD

If you are worried about a child's safety please do not hesitate to contact any of the Designated Safeguarding Leads straight away.

The following members of staff are Designated Safeguarding Leads for Watlington Primary School:

- Mr Gale (DSL)
- Mrs Sterjo
- Miss Sharman
- Mrs Doran

They can be contacted via the school office, or by telephone on 01491 612474.

You can also contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on:

0345 050 7666.

If a child is in immediate danger, call the Police immediately on 999.



Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome to our Safeguarding Update newsletter, which focuses on our 'Jigsaw' theme for the term and RSHE Policy; mental health and wellbeing and online safety in regard to Minecraft.

If you come across any useful safeguarding resources or information that you think the school community would benefit from seeing, please let us know via the school office.

Best wishes

Jonathan Gale  
Designated Safeguarding Lead

### Jigsaw Term 2: "Celebrating Difference"



We use 'Jigsaw' as a way of supporting the children's Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education. We aim to equip our pupils with the knowledge and skills to successfully and safely manage their lives now and in the future. Lessons happen across the school every week and are delivered in an age-appropriate manner.

This term's 'Puzzle Piece' is 'Celebrating Difference'. We are focusing on similarities and differences and diversity, such as disability, racism, power, friendships, and conflict. Children will learn to accept everyone's right to 'difference', and most year groups explore the concept of 'normality'. Anti-bullying, including cyber and homophobic bullying, is an important aspect of this Puzzle.

You will also be aware that we consulted last term on our Relationships, Sex and Health Education policy and curriculum. The feedback was very useful and this informed our new policy, which will be available on our school website from next week.

One of the changes we have made is to ensure parents and carers are given sufficient information about what we cover in Jigsaw lessons on a term-by-term basis, so that they can prepare themselves for any conversations their children may wish to have with them. As a result, we now have access to a parent portal, which allows parents and carers to view the standard lesson plans for their child's year group. Due to copyright reasons, we are unable to send out a blanket login code to parents, but we are able to set up individual parents with access, should they wish to view the materials. If you would like to have access to this, please email the school office (admin.2459@watlington.oxon.sch.uk) and we can arrange this for you.

## What is mental health?

Mental health encompasses social, physiological, and emotional wellbeing, involving the ability to function and cope with daily life. Contrary to popular belief, mental health is relevant to everyone, not just those with mental health problems. Mental health can fluctuate over time, similar to physical health.

The term 'mental health' is used to describe various conditions that cause changes in feelings or behaviours. Examples include anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, eating disorders, and psychosis. This list is not exhaustive.

It is worth noting that one in ten children will experience mental health issues, and more than 50% of these issues begin before the age of 14.

Children and young people undergo various behavioural changes as part of their growth process. While some changes are typical for young people, in certain cases, they may indicate the development of mental health conditions. Action for children has devised an easy way to help adults recognise common signs that can be useful in identifying concerns about a child or young person's mental health. They can be remembered using the acronym 'MASK'.

**M – Mood.** Look out for argumentative behaviour, aggression, negative emotions, self-criticism, and withdrawal in children and young people.

**A – Actions.** Changes in eating or sleeping patterns, signs of bullying, substance misuse, or self-harm (such as cutting, burning, or hair pulling) can indicate mental health issues.

**S – Social.** Losing touch with friends, changing friendship groups, appearing lonely or withdrawn, and losing interest in school or hobbies can be signs of mental health illnesses.

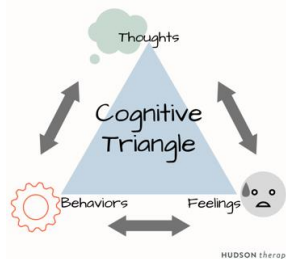
**K – Keep talking.** Children and young people may not readily express their feelings. Don't give up, keep asking how they are feeling, let them know you care, and that you'll be there for them.

## Tips for listening to a child

Discussing mental health can be challenging. Children and young people may worry about being labelled or stigmatised, upsetting others, or the potential consequences. Parents and carers may have concerns about saying the wrong thing, exacerbating the situation, or treatment options.

Creating a safe and loving environment is crucial for children with mental illness. Maintain a supportive and low-stress atmosphere at home. Structure can be helpful in reducing stress. Parents and carers can try making a contract with their child, ensuring they feel comfortable talking or finding alternative ways to communicate when they're struggling e.g., texting. This gives children a safe outlet to express their feelings.

A safe environment also entails open communication and dialogue. Encourage your child to understand their own mental health by regularly checking up on their wellbeing. Help them understand how to manage their emotions, identity feelings, and recognise their influence on behaviour. The 'Triangle of Feelings' can be useful in this regard. This allows young people to understand how we think, feel, and behave, and how each influences each other.



**PLEASE REMEMBER!** You are not alone. There are numerous resources available to assist you and your child. There are many links to resources, help lines and websites on our school website. [Click here](#) If you have concerns about your child, you can also reach out to your GP, school nurse, or the school's safeguarding team for support and guidance.

# 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 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 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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