

PGHS Online Safety Newsletter

LIFE SKILLS CURRICULUM

With students being online more than ever this academic year, the importance of online safety is as always, a priority in schools.

At PGHS Online safety is covered in Life Skills, as well as other areas of the curriculum, in particular computing lessons.

We are currently following the statutory content for the new RSE and health education topics. Please find them listed below. Over KS3 and KS4 students will learn:

- About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to seek help.
- Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, and that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts.
- About online risks, including that material shared with another person has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online.
- Not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which they receive.
- What to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online.
- The impact of viewing harmful content.
- That specifically sexually explicit material, e.g. pornography, presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners.

- That sharing and viewing indecent images of children is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties, including jail.
- How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online.
- The similarities and differences between the online world and the physical world, including the impact of unhealthy or obsessive comparison with others online, over-reliance on online relationships, the risks related to online gambling, how information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online.
- How to identify harmful behaviours online, including bullying, abuse or harassment, and how to report, or find support, if they have been affected by those behaviours.

At KS3 this academic year students in Year 7 have had an introduction to internet safety in their computing lessons and will be looking at cyberbullying and protecting their identity online in the spring term. Year 8 have explored the effect of social media on relationships, online dangers and safety, online stress and the FOMO, consumer rights and in the spring term how do you spend your time, Internet gaming addiction and are you addicted to your mobile phone and sharing images online. Year 9 will be focusing on gambling and online fraud and social media and body image.

All KS3 students recently celebrated internet safety week with a designated lesson on unreliable internet content and how to stay safe online.

All Life skills lessons will now be redesigned using the new recently produced Collins resources. Here is one of the lessons on internet gaming addiction.

UNIT 17: YOU AND YOUR LEISURE

17.2 Internet gaming addiction

More and more young people are becoming addicted to internet gaming.

There are two forms of internet gaming addiction, depending on whether the games involve single players or multiple players.

Single players may get addicted to trying to outperform other players of the game.

In games involving multiple players, individuals may create characters who either cooperate against an enemy or compete against each other. Players can come to believe in their on-screen characters to such an extent that they begin to feel that they are real. Taking part in the game becomes more important to them than anything else.

The signs of addiction to internet games

Emotional and mental signs:

- tiredness
- lack of interest in what family and friends are doing
- preoccupation with thoughts about the current game
- irritability if asked to stop gaming
- depression
- lying about how much time is spent gaming
- lack of interest in schoolwork.

Physical signs:

- poor eating habits – can't be bothered with meals
- migraines brought on by long periods of intense concentration, or eye strain from looking at the screen for too long
- a stiff neck
- painful thumb from continuous use of the controller, which is sometimes called 'Nintendoitis'
- repetitive strain injury to nerves in the hand, known as carpal tunnel syndrome
- poor personal hygiene – can't stop to have a shower or be bothered to change clothes.

In addition, a person may get into financial trouble by overspending on the latest games and through 'in-app' purchases. In 2018, *Fortnite: Battle Royale* was free to download, but at the height of the craze was making \$50 million in a single day through 'in-app' purchases, one of which, for £7.99, enabled the gamers to make their characters do dances like 'The Wiggles'.

DISCUSS

- Should the sale of games that are age-related be more strictly controlled? The game *Grand Theft Auto* is rated as 18+ but is played by children who are much younger. How could its sale be controlled?
- Should games that contain violence, nudity and foul language have to carry a written warning?
- Should shops be forced to keep games out of sight in the way they do with cigarettes?

Personal wellbeing and mental health

Addicted to gaming

In 2018, a 15-year-old boy became the first person diagnosed with internet gaming addiction. He was off school for a year after he lost the confidence to leave home because he was so addicted to gaming.

He spent eight weeks in hospital because he was unable to function properly. 'Every moment he's awake, he wants to be on a game,' said his mother. 'There is no outside world. It has become all-consuming.'

The World Health Organisation has classified addiction to internet gaming as a mental health disorder.

Why are games so addictive?

When you play violent video games and your character is shot at, your survival instinct takes over and tells you to fight back. Your body reacts as it would in a real-life situation. Your heartbeat races, your adrenaline spikes and stress hormones flood your body. But it is only your on-screen character who is at risk, so you can fight back and the enjoyment you get from doing so is so great it can become addictive.

Here are some opinions on why video games are bad for you.

- 'Children who spend too much time playing video games do not get enough exercise.'
- 'Violent video games make children immune to violence.'
- 'Violence in video games increases the risk of a person behaving violently.'
- 'Violent video games can give children nightmares.'
- 'Playing video games can be addictive.'

Here are some opinions on why video games are not bad for you.

- 'If you play three hours of *Call of Duty*, you may feel a little pumped, but you are not going to go out and mug somebody.'
- 'The evidence that violent video games lead to real-life violence is inconclusive.'
- 'Violent video games often involve some problem-solving. They stimulate the brain and increase intelligence.'
- 'People who play action-based video games are quicker at making real-life decisions.'
- 'Playing video games increases a person's dexterity.'

DISCUSS

Do you think the violence in computer games affects the people who play them? Do the players become immune to violence?

Ask Erica

Dear Erica
I think my brother is addicted to gaming. How can I convince him to spend less time playing internet games?

Tania

DISCUSS

Discuss what Tania could say to her brother.

WRITE

Now write Erica's reply to Tania.

KS4 students were directed to the website https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/14_plus/Need-advice/dealing-with-pressure-online/

This focuses on dealing with online pressure including staying safe, saying no and where to access support through CEOPS. They completed a short forms quiz to show their understanding. They also took part in internet safety week where they focused on the role of influencers.

To keep parents informed of the content being covered in Life skills, at the beginning of every half term the lesson topics and websites plus sources of support are available for parents should they wish to continue the conversation further at home.

This started in January 2021. During lockdown there was also a weekly update on students work in all years, some of this being internet safety. This was a great opportunity to showcase some of the students work too. They were a regular feature in the newsletter. Look out for the next one at the end of March 2021.

If you would like any further information you can access the scheme of work on the curriculum pages of the school website or alternatively please email me at r.cahill@penworthamgirls.lancs.sch.uk.