

Safe At Summerhill

At Summerhill School we are committed to Safeguarding our children and young people as well as promoting positive well-being for all.

This Safeguarding newsletter, aims to help staff, parents and students alike to be aware of the safeguarding and mental health issues, giving you useful links and resources to use if you have concerns. If you have concerns or ideas for future topics please do not hesitate to contact us on the main school number 01384 816165 or via email on studentssupport@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk

How to talk to your child about Mental Health

Giving our children and young people opportunities to open up is one of the biggest things we can do as parents and carers to support their wellbeing. It can be easy to forget the simple power of sharing what we're going through and feeling heard. But even though you can't fix everything when your child is struggling, you can make them feel seen and understood – and this in itself can make them feel more able to cope. Talking about how they are, how their day has been and what's on their mind as part of everyday family life shows your child that you're interested in them and want to listen. It also supports them to practise thinking and talking about their feelings, helping them to get to know themselves and what they need. But talking isn't always easy. You might feel like you don't know where to start, when a 'good time' is, or how your young person will react. Or, you might be worried about making things worse or saying the wrong thing. If this is the case, try to remember that your child doesn't need you to always get it right - they just need to know you're there. Here, you can find lots of ideas, conversation starters and advice for making talking easier [How to talk to your child about mental health](#)

Keeping children safe in sport

The NSPCC's Keeping Your Child Safe in Sport Week urges parents to recognise how negative behaviour at sporting events and activities can impact children. More than one in four parents (28%) who attend their child's sports club or activity said they have seen or experienced inappropriate behaviour, a new NSPCC survey has revealed. This includes shouting insults, intimidating or threatening behaviour or fights between parents, guardians, carers or children. The YouGov poll, commissioned by the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU), also found that 68% of these parents said they or their children or both had felt uncomfortable because of it, and almost one in five parents said no action had been taken to stop it. If you would like to read more on this article please follow this link - [NSPCC](#)

Smoking & vaping crackdown

A consultation has been launched by Rishi Sunak as he pledges to make "smoke-free generation" It comes just days after the prime minister pledged to raise the legal age for buying cigarettes in England by one year every year. Plans to crack down on teen vaping and create a "smoke-free generation" are due to be laid out in a government consultation published today. Among the proposals that will be consulted on include making it an offence for anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 to be sold tobacco products and restricting the flavours and appearance of vapes to make them less attractive to children. Restricting sales of disposable vapes and possibly increasing their price will also be considered, as will the introduction of new powers for councils to hand out on-the-spot fines to those who are selling vapes to under-18s. It is estimated that five million disposable vapes are discarded every week in the UK. Please follow this link to read more on this story [Smoke free generation](#)



Mrs Sprouting
Designated
Safeguarding
Lead



Mr Randle
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead



Ms Gordon
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead



Mr Quirke
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead



Mr Cresswell
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

AMONG US

A multiplayer 'social deduction' game set in outer space, Among Us enjoyed a surge in popularity in 2020, and has since maintained a dedicated fan-base (globally, around 60 million regular players each month) thanks to its unique nature, simple premise and ease of access across numerous platforms. The game's on-screen action revolves around danger, disguise and deception – and there are certain parallels to be drawn with some of the real-life risks that parents and carers of young Among Us players need to be aware of.



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

SENSITIVE PREMISE

In Among Us, up to three players are secretly assigned to be alien imposters, tasked with murdering their colleagues while the survivors try to unmask them. While the concept's not for removed from traditional games like Wink Murder or TV shows such as The Traitors, some parents may feel uncomfortable about their child playing a video game in which deception and killing are prioritised.

VIRTUAL VIOLENCE

The on-screen death of characters may be fundamental to the gameplay of Among Us, but the majority of the animations depicting this are deliberately cartoonish and only appear very briefly. However, it is worth bearing in mind that the game has a PEGI age rating of 7 – meaning that certain elements (however heavily stylised they may be) could still upset some younger players.

CHAT BETWEEN PLAYERS

With up to 15 people participating in each game online, a large part of Among Us' appeal is speculating with fellow players who the imposters might be and making accusations. This dialogue through the in-game text chat can occasionally become heated – and could, of course, involve your child being put into contact with people (including adults) who they don't know in real life.

GOING OFF PLATFORM

While Among Us provides basic ways to communicate, many gamers prefer to use external services such as Discord: a popular app which offers voice and video chat functions. These undeniably make cooperation easier, but also create a potential route for children to hear inappropriate language – or for strangers to message them privately in an environment which isn't regulated by the game itself.

IN-GAME PURCHASES

Among Us is free to download on mobile devices, and costs less than £5 to obtain on console and PC. A related longer-term pitfall, though, is that the game also includes options to pay for upgrades such as removing ads on the mobile version or adding cosmetic touches to characters (such as different costumes). It's certainly possible that a child could spend a significant sum without realising it.

Advice for Parents & Carers

CONSIDER SOFTER ALTERNATIVES

Although Among Us is hugely popular with young gamers, it's possible that some children might find the murder themes unsettling. If so, plenty of similar social deduction games are available (in both digital and traditional board game formats) which downplay the potentially grislier elements: some centre around undercover spies, for instance, and there's even a Marvel superhero-themed variant.

CHAT ABOUT CHATTING

You might feel it's prudent to talk to your child about the risks associated with voice chat while gaming, explaining in particular that strangers online aren't always who they claim to be. Keeping the conversation relaxed will reinforce your child's confidence that they can always come to you with any online concerns – not just about Among Us, but any potential future issues as well.

DISCUSS DISCORD

In general, Discord is an excellent app for keeping online communities together because of its use of dedicated individual servers, which allow comprehensive control over who can join – and who can't. Once you're familiar with the platform, you could set up a secure server for your child and their friends to communicate during games of Among Us, with no access for people they don't know.

AMONG US, AMONG FRIENDS

When your child and their friends get together, they can enjoy a private game of Among Us by choosing a 'local' lobby – that is, only people connected to the same WiFi (your home network, for example) can enter. This prevents any random online users – who may be total strangers – from joining and removes the need for voice chat, as the players are all physically in the same location.

STOP SURPRISE SPENDING

If you're concerned about the possibility of your child racking up an unexpected bill on Among Us' microtransactions, you could consider using a prepaid card with a set limit. Likewise, you could specify in the game's options that adult authorisation is required for every purchase – or you could make sure that no payment methods are enabled on the device that your child plays the game on.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is Editor in Chief of gaming and esports site GGRecon and has worked in the gaming media for around four years. A regular visitor to the App Store to try out new tools, he's also a parent who understands the value of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his articles have been published on influential sites including IGN and TechRadar.



#WakeUpWednesday