Cunningham Hill Junior School

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Concerns about Fortnite

Dear Parents,

Recently, I have spotted a recent video which, although from America, has raised concerns about the game **'Fortnite'**. This game is incredibly popular with children at our school and it is well worth watching the video link below and checking with your child about who they are chatting with. A recent sting operation arrested 24 people using games like Fortnite to lure children into terrible situations through 'blending in' and 'grooming' the children.

Video link: https://www.today.com/video/predators-using-fortnite-to-lure-in-kids-what-parents-should-know-1328582211759?v=railb&

As always, please also ensure that your child understands the importance of reporting any future unwanted friend or chat requests to you to ensure their safety. A reminder too that, the **age restriction for Fortnite is 12** - and some of our children, as young as 7, are playing what is a very violent game. There are often settings that allow children to play these games more safely so, if you are allowing your child to play, I highly suggest you search the game for settings and lock it down as much as possible.

We would advise you to check if your child is using Fortnite, ask you to be vigilant and encourage your child to stay away from in-game chatting. We advise you to have a conversation with your child about the game and talking to strangers, and suggest that they do not use headsets for in-game chatting.

The school is also concerned with the amount of time that is being spent playing this and other computer games, with many children say they are spending up to four hours every evening playing. Studies have shown that this is becoming a cause of mental health issues in young people. In fact, the World Health Organisation has recently identified 'gaming disorder' as a mental health condition. It talks of addiction like symptoms and a deterioration in behaviour and self-esteem in young people. It has also been identified, as a growing concern in local secondary schools where the children, predominantly boys, are being judged on their computer game playing habits, which is then having severe knock-on effects to their mental well-being.

Useful sources of information

Childnet - has a fabulous guide for parents about online games.
http://www.childnet.com/resources/online-gaming-an-introduction-for-parents
Thinkuknow - is great for adults and children and has a range of practical articles and advice.
https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/
Top tips for having a conversation with children about cyberbullying:
http://www.childnet.com/blog/6-tips-for-having-a-conversation-with-your-child-about-cyberbullying
Childnet - a great website for information on being safe on the internet, highlighting the importance of having conversations with your child about staying safe on the internet, whether playing online games, or researching.

Any questions or concerns about the game - or any others online - please feel free to contact me through the office.

Kind regards

Mr Tavender
Deputy Headteacher