

Extract from letter sent to parents September 2018 by J. Shackel

Fortnite *

The addictive nature of certain games and the fast moving pace of technology means that even though we did this survey six months ago, things have moved on already. Following the first SMART assembly last week it was clear that children as young as Year 1 are playing Fortnite, which has become one of the world's most popular games, with millions of players worldwide logging on to play the Battle Royale mode. Fears that young children are becoming addicted to the popular video game have emerged, with many parents concerned at the amount of time their children spend playing Fortnite, which has a PEGI rating of 12. PEGI is the European commission designed to give ratings out to games released within Europe. A 12 rating advises consumers that this particular game is suitable for players aged 12 and above, with the buyers discretion at younger ages being of their own advice. PEGI has said they gave Fortnite this rating because of the: "frequent scenes of mild violence. It is not suitable for persons under 12 years of age."

The difficulty in rating games that are predominantly online is that PEGI only takes into consideration the physical game content, and not the context in which it is played, meaning gamers could be exposed to swearing and abuse online against opponents.

Many schools have sent letters to parents asking them to ban Fortnite, however we feel that this is a matter for you to decide in your own homes. However, although we acknowledge that whilst playing games with violence is not a new thing, there are other elements of Fortnite that make it unsuitable, this includes communicating with other players and the level of violence and time spent playing the game encouraged. If we feel this game is being discussed inappropriately or having an impact on lessons or when children are at play, then we will ask children to refrain from talking about it.

What is the NSPCC's Advice for Parents of Fortnite Players?

The NSPCC has launched new advice for parents of young people playing the multiplayer action survival game Fortnite: Battle Royale.

It comes amid concerns over a function in Fortnite which automatically allows users to speak to other players through voice and text chat functions.

It means children can be contacted by anyone else who is playing the game.

Research from NSPCC revealed that that one in four children have been contacted online by someone they don't know.

The research is based on reviews by children and parents of the most popular apps, sites and games currently on the market, featured on the Net Aware app and website.

The NSPCC is offering parents the following advice:

- Talk to your child regularly about what they are doing online and how to stay safe. Let them know they can come to you or another trusted adult if they're feeling worried or upset by anything they have seen. You can use our conversation starters to support you when starting these conversations.

- *Explore your child's online activities together. Understand why they like using certain apps, games or websites and make sure they know what they can do to keep themselves safe.*
- *Agree your own rules as a family when using sites, apps and games. You can use our Family Agreement template to help you get started.*
- *Manage your technology and use the privacy and parental control settings available to keep your child safe.*