



*Every Child, Every Chance,
Every Day*

Thameside In-touch!

Edition 39: 23rd May 2025 Facebook: @ThamesidePrimary

Dear Parents and Carers,

This term has gone so quickly! It has been a short term with only a small number of weeks, but we have certainly packed it full!

Our wonderful Year 6 pupils completed their SATs tests this term and we are beyond proud of them all. They all showed fantastic resilience and determination and we are really glad that they enjoyed their bacon sandwiches on the last Thursday – it was certainly a sight to behold! A huge thank you to all of the staff, but particularly to Miss Clark and Mrs Russell for their support and kindness. The Year 6s have a great last term ahead, and as always, we are looking forward to making it very special for them.

Next term it is the turn of the Year 1s who will complete their Phonics Screening Check and Year 4, who will complete their Multiplication Check. We know that they will all make us proud – do keep practising over the half term break as every 5 minutes really does make a difference!

We have been delighted to welcome our parents and carers into school for a number of events this term – these have included our Phonics information session, our 'Mental Health Natters' second-hand clothes sale and also our Open Classrooms.



We really do appreciate all of your support and engagement and we love welcoming you into our school. Our governors also attended the open classrooms and were really impressed

with everything the children were learning and the positive feedback from those who were able to come along - we do really appreciate your kind and

supportive comments. We are very much looking forward to our summer events – dates are detailed at the end of the newsletter but more information will follow over the course of next term. **Please do also check the school website calendar as dates are added regularly.**

We are currently in the midst of planning staffing for next year and as normal, we will share your children's new teachers and the leadership structure of the school for the next academic year later next term.

I did want to finish the newsletter by sharing with you one lovely comment from our recent staff survey that just made me smile; it also captured what a special place our school is and the real ethos of 'Team Thameside.'

'I do not look at coming to school as work- I look on it as coming to my second home. I am more than happy working with amazing children and supportive, hardworking staff.'

Wishing you all a wonderful half term full of sunshine and precious family time. We look forward to seeing you back on Monday 2nd June!

Laura Youngman

Headteacher



Nursery and Reception places for September 2025!

**We still have a small number of spaces available for both
Nursery and Reception classes for next year!**

**If you know of other parents who would like a place at our
wonderful school for their children, make sure you let
them know that places are filling up!**

Lots of information can be found on our website!

In this edition:

- Cotman Close Park – In the news!
- PTA update
- Football Tournament!
- Gardening Club update!
- Class learning reviews!
- TTRockstars and Numbots update.
- Library corner - Thameside book challenges and new books!
- Diary dates

Cotman Close Park – in the news!

We were so incredibly privileged to have been asked to help design and formally open the new 'Thameside Whizzer Park'! We know that so many children have already enjoyed the incredible new facilities which is such an important part of our local community.

Well done to our Head Pupils, Sarika and Flint who formally cut the ribbon – do look out for the article which was in the Oxford Mail this week!





THAMESIDE PTA NEWSLETTER

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUMMER NEON DISCO
THURSDAY 5TH JUNE

NON-UNIFORM DAY
FRIDAY 20TH JUNE

SUMMER FAIR
SATURDAY 28TH JUNE

POP THEM IN YOUR DIARY

JOIN US

CAN YOU SPARE SOME
TIME TO HELP OUT? WE
ARE ALWAYS
LOOKING FOR
FRIENDLY, RELIABLE
VOLUNTEERS. IF YOU
WOULD LIKE TO LEND A
HAND PLEASE EMAIL
SARAH COLLINS

thamesidepta@gmail.com

MONEY RAISED SO FAR:

SO FAR THIS YEAR YOU HAVE HELPED US RAISE AN AMAZING

£2,845.78

WE HAVE SUPPLIED NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT OUTFITS FOR THE DANCE, COMPETITION MEDALS
AND A TROPHY FOR THE FOOTBALL COMPETITION AND WE WILL BE PROVIDING OUR YEAR 6 LEAVERS
WITH A PARTY AND PARTING GIFT

JOIN OUR EASY-FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

✓ It's free

🛒 Shop online as normal

🇬🇧 We earn donations at no extra cost to you!

easyfundraising.org.uk

Football Tournament!



Thank you to those of you who joined us for our very first Thameside Football Tournament on Wednesday 21st May. It was a fantastic event which involved players from years 4-6. The children displayed some many of our Thameside values such as perseverance, resilience, collaboration and respect. The tournament was won by the Green Team, who were awarded a trophy; Estrela and Jenson were our 'Players of the Match'. A huge well done to all the children who took part! Thank you also to Mr Ponting, who helped to organise the event and refereed the matches and our wonderful PTA who sold refreshments.



Gardening Club



Gardening Club has been busy this term! We've been carefully looking after and repotting our seedlings, getting them ready to plant now that the warmer weather is here. We've also been planting pollinator-friendly plants around the school to support local wildlife. You may have noticed that some of the flower beds at the front of the school have been left looking a little more wild than usual—this is a deliberate decision to help support native pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

We're especially excited about our new raised beds, which were generously donated and set up by Ms. O'Neil's dad—thank you! We're very grateful for the continued support we receive from everyone who donates seeds, seedlings, and other gardening bits and bobs.

If you have any gardening-related items you no longer need, or if you'd like to take part in a plant swap, please let Mr. McDowell know!

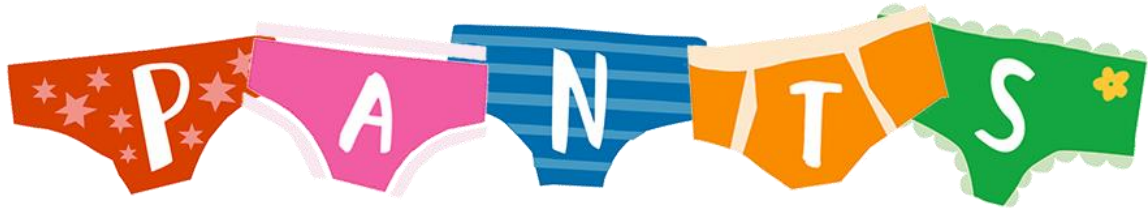
Safeguarding guidance

The NSPCC have updated some of their guidance on supporting children with mental health issues. Please follow the links to some very useful pages on their website.

Child Mental Health: click [here](#)

The Safeguarding Network: click [here](#)





All children have had a Pantosaurus reminder in the last few weeks and discussed the importance of feeling safe and trusted adults. It's a good talking point at home to ask children if they can name five trusted adults on their hands who could help them if they feel unsafe or been asked to keep a secret. This is an ongoing discussion and suitable for all age groups. It was incredible to hear all children shouting a big 'No' if someone asked to see their pants.

When's the right time to talk PANTS?

Every family is different, and when and where you have these conversations may depend on your child's age, or how grown up they are - it's all about whatever feels natural for you and them.

Some examples of times you can talk PANTS are:

After school – if they've had a lesson on personal relationships or Talk PANTS at school, ask them what they remember when they get home.

Bathtime – you could start a conversation when you're running your child's bath, or helping them get dressed.

Car journeys – this can be a great time to talk, and your child will have plenty of time to ask questions if they need.

Reading our new PANTS storybook together.

Singing – sing along to our PANTS song with Pantosaurus!

Swimming – a great time to say that what's covered by swimwear is private.

Walking – walking home from school, or a weekend walk to the shops can help you both feel more at ease as you stroll and chat.

Watching TV – if a TV show features a sensitive storyline, you can encourage them to talk about anything that upsets them.

Nursery and Reception have had great fun designing their own pants to continue the discussion of the power of pants.

Have a look on the NSPCC website for the link to the catchy song and other available resources for all year groups.

[Let's talk PANTS with Pantosaurus! | NSPCC](#)



Mental Health Week at Thameside

Last week was Mental Health Week and we were very excited to collaborate with local mental health charity 'Mental Health Natters'.

Lisa, from the organisation came to do an assembly for year 1 to 6 focussing on kindness and community. All the children have been busy spotting their friends being kind and celebrating this.

On Thursday 15th, we held the clothes swap to celebrate individuality and sharing clothes. We had so many donations and it was lovely seeing so many children and families leave with new clothes for free as well as raising funds for Mental Health Natters, who will return to school to offer further mental health activities for our children.

Class learning reviews

To find out more about what each year group is learning, please do check out our updated parent curriculum overviews on the class pages of our website!

[Thameside Primary School - Class Pages \(thamesideschool.co.uk\)](http://thamesideschool.co.uk)

Nursery

This term has gone by in a flash! We have been learning all about farm animals, pets and insects. We have also been enjoying weekly Forest school sessions lead by Miss Higgins, which have been fantastic! She has listened to the children's ideas and based each session around what they wanted to learn. We have been on bug hunts, listened to stories, made dens and mud pies, made natural paintings and even had a fire. It has also been really interesting for the children to observe how the forest changes in the different seasons. Nursery were also incredibly excited to visit the new 'Thameside Whizzer' park and get to cut the ribbon to open it. We then played on the equipment and planted our flower fireworks. Hopefully we will be able to see them start growing soon!



We have also been doing lots of our own planting in Nursery. We have started to grow some flowers as well as tomatoes, lettuces and strawberries. It has been great for the children to see how they are growing and to learn how to look after them.

Earlier this term we also held a party to celebrate VE day. We spent the afternoon with our friends in Reception; made bunting and listened to songs from WW2.

Finally, last week was very exciting when Mrs Chung brought in her pet tortoise Dave. He was a very big hit! We learnt how to look after Dave and the children loved feeding him watermelon, strawberries and lettuce. We have been reading 'the very hungry caterpillar' and hope after half term we may have some caterpillars of our own. We are so excited for the summer term!

Reception

This term Reception have been learning all about different animals and their habitats. We have looked at lots of different environments that the animals live in and how they have adapted to survive in these areas.



We have also spent lots of time learning about the animals that are endangered and why. Reception enjoyed creating their own posters to raise awareness for those animals that need protecting. We even wrote our own book following the book 'Dear Zoo'. The children all added their animals and a description of why we had to send them back!

Year 1

Year 1 have been working very hard this term. We have explored the story of Jack and the Beanstalk and have created our own versions, with different characters and endings. Our stories are absolutely brilliant and we have shown amazing stamina - some of our stories are over 3 pages long! We will share these with Reception on our 'Jack and the Beanstalk' afternoon on the last day of term. We have also been looking at how living things grow in Science and planted our own bean seeds that have grown very tall and are now ready to take home.

In Music we have been putting some of our favourite traditional tales to music and have learnt a Three Little Pigs rap, as well as learning a musical for the story 'The magic porridge pot'. We were lucky enough to have the chance to perform this to the whole school in assembly and everyone, the singers, the instrumentalists and the narrators did a fantastic job!

In Maths we have been learning about multiplication and division. This has meant learning how to count in 2s, 5s and 10s, as well as practising our sharing equally skills.

Year 2

This term in English, Year 2 have been exploring a beautiful wordless book called *The Last Zookeeper*. We've been working incredibly hard to add our own words and bring the stunning illustrations to life with imaginative storytelling. This project has given us the chance to revisit and build on previous learning, focusing on crafting longer, more detailed sentences packed with adjectives, interesting vocabulary, and even multiple clauses. The children have truly impressed me with their continued focus on spelling, presentation, and their growing ambition in both vocabulary and sentence complexity. I can't wait to read the final versions of their stories!

In Art, we've thoroughly enjoyed learning about the incredible Yayoi Kusama and her iconic polka dot artwork. We've had great fun experimenting with creative and exciting ways to make polka dots, and we've also tried our hand at collage techniques. We're especially excited to finish off the unit by creating our very own 3-D dotty pumpkins with our parents at open afternoon!

Year 3

Year 3 have enjoyed learning about rocks and fossils this term. We have explored different types of rocks and how they are formed, experimented with the hardness of rocks using a scratch test and have learned how fossils are formed. We also had an amazing time during a visit from staff and pupils from Radley College. We used special construction kits to build models of crystal structures and had the opportunity to handle fossils to make fossil rubbings. We even got to take home a small piece of quartz each! This really brought our learning to life.



Year 4

In Year 4 this term, the children have really enjoyed getting outside and enjoying the sunny weather. They have been practising their netball skills and have mastered; chest pass, bounce pass and shoulder pass. The children have also enjoyed being artists inspired by the work of William Morris. They have drawn plants from around the school practising shading and observational drawing.



Year 5

Year 5 have a fantastic half term. We have been looking at trade in geography and investigating where our clothes and where our food comes from. We have been using the atlases to locate countries around the world

and using this information to spot patterns and trends. In art, we have been looking at Chinese art, including the origins and common images used in the artwork. The children have produced some fantastic artwork of the four plants commonly used in Chinese art using watercolours. In English, the children have been reading 'The Red Tree' and have been having important conversations about well-being. I am so proud of all the work they have produced this half term. During our maths sessions, the children have really worked hard to understand all things angles. It was great to see them persevere and tackle new learning. Keep up the good work! Year 5 have worked so hard and should definitely be proud of themselves too. Have a good break Year 5!

Year 6

Year 6 absolutely smashed it - well done for the resilient and responsible approach to SATs! It has been another intense term, and it is not over yet as the Year 6s have lots of writing to do for the assessments in June. But, now there will be more time for the children to embark on some fun and exciting learning activities! As well as SATs, we have been able to travel around the world in dance - this unit may not have had the full backing of the class at the start, but they have totally thrown themselves into it and even requested additional dance tutorials from other dance genres.



To kick-start the last week of the term, Year 6 participated in the Junior Citizenship program in Oxford - they were put into different scenarios and given the necessary information to make emergency phone calls and make safe choices. Most children would be good in a crisis, some just made lots of noise when they were scared in a dark alleyway! A well-deserved break coming up, ready for the last part of Year 6s Thameside journey.



Acorn Room

In the Acorn room this term we've been spending lots of fun times expressing ourselves through mark making; we're all becoming a lot stronger and



confident with expressing ourselves with our ideas. We all continue to grow and become stronger with our communication aids and communicating the activities

we want next. Our favourite story has been "The very hungry caterpillar" and we've especially loved the beautiful butterfly at the end of the story. Books and stories are at the heart of our day, and we love spending our time with staff and a story.



TTRockstars and Times Tables at home! Numbots at home!

Across the whole school, children have been working hard to challenge themselves with their times tables and number facts.

In Year 4, the focus has been on building speed and—most importantly—accuracy, in preparation for the MTC (Multiplication Tables Check) in June.

We're very impressed with the progress the entire class has made. Remember to keep practising using *Sound Check* and to test yourself on any times tables you're less confident with!

In Key Stage 1, both Year 1 and 2 have been showing brilliant effort in learning their key number facts. We've been particularly impressed by how motivated the children are to complete their *Numbots* heat maps by tackling the different challenges. These activities help build speed and accuracy with essential number facts, such as bonds within 5, 10, and 20, and various addition and subtraction facts.

Make sure that you keep playing over half term – will we have another Rock Hero?

If you are looking for more Maths games to play at home, there are some suggested links below:

- [Learn to Count with fun Counting Games for KS1 Children](#)
- [25 Fun Maths Games For Kids To Do At Home](#)
- [Maths at Home | NRICH](#)
- [Free KS2 Maths teaching resources | Page 1 of 8 | Oak National Academy](#)

Learning at home resources

Please do check out our website which is continuing to grow! We have included lots of new information about our curriculum and resources to help support you at home on the following pages:

[Thameside Primary School - Keeping Safe \(thamesideschool.co.uk\)](http://thamesideschool.co.uk)

[Thameside Primary School - Families and Learning at home \(thamesideschool.co.uk\)](http://thamesideschool.co.uk)



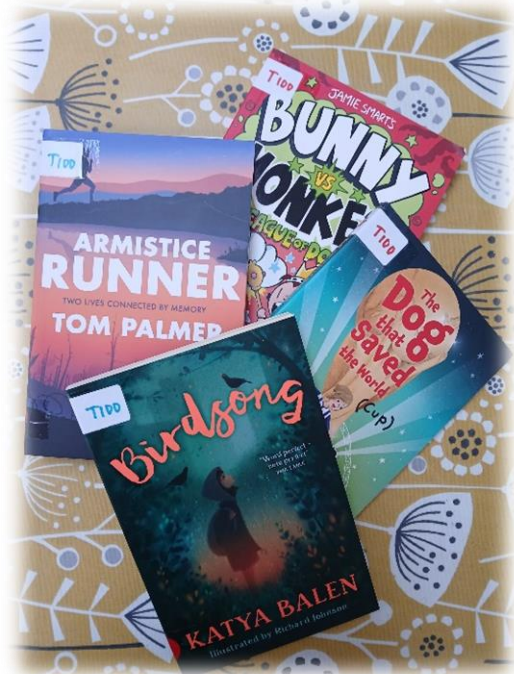
UPDATE ON OUR THAMESIDE 100 READING CHALLENGES!

EXCITING NEWS!

We have been very fortunate to secure a £400 grant from local charity, Christ's Hospital. This has enabled us to buy all the remaining books on our Thameside 100 Reading Challenge list, which is very exciting! Ms Daniell is busy labelling them all up and we will be having a special library drop-in after school on Wednesday 4th June to launch the full collection.

We're aware that not everyone's a keen reader at first and some find longer books more challenging. We have lots of Barrington Stoke books in school which are particularly designed to make reading more accessible. They have dyslexic-friendly fonts and cream-coloured pages.

There is a whole shelf in our Hive area for these special books, as well as good collection of graphic



novels. These are fantastic for children who love comic-style books and fast action!

There are some Barrington Stoke books and graphic novels in our T100 challenge:

Birdsong by Katya Balen - Y6+. Beautiful story about a young girl coming to terms with life after a devastating car crash.

Armistice Runner by Tom Palmer - Y5+. Powerful story about Lily, a keen runner, with flashbacks to her great-great-grandfather's diaries from the First World War.

The Dog that Saved the World (Cup) by Phile Earle - Y3+. Touching story about Pickles the dog and his owner, Elsie, who love football more than anything. Tackles tricky subjects like job loss and moving house. Ultimately, a great message about sticking to your dreams, even when things are tough.

Bunny vs Monkey and the League of Doom! by Jamie Smart - Y2+. Hilarious series about Bunny and Monkey's adventures. Originally started as a comic strip in the 'Phoenix' magazine. Very colourful and very funny!

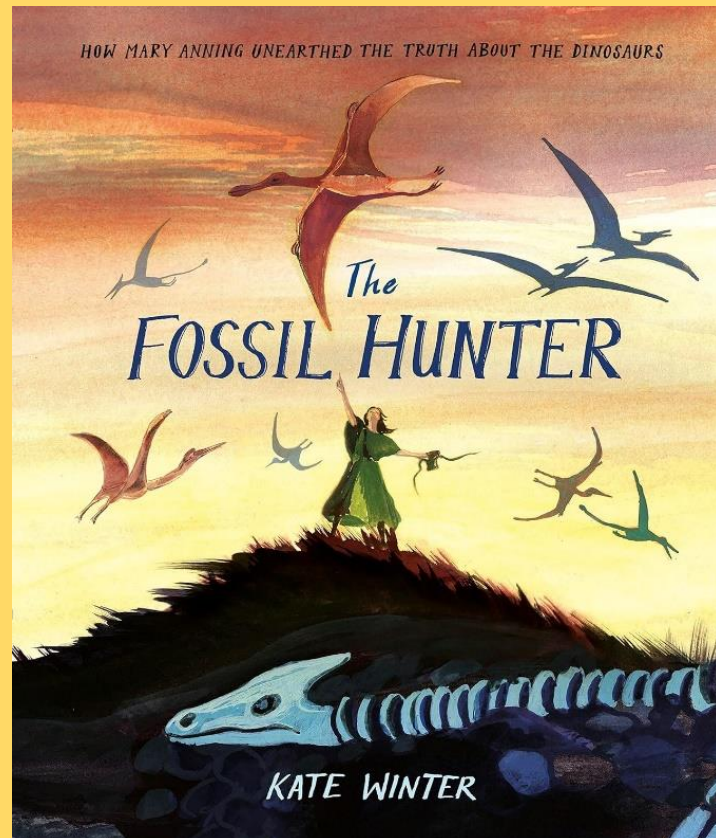


[Thameside Primary School - Thameside 100 Reading Challenges!](#)

Book recommendation from Mrs Youngman!

I wanted to take a moment to share a beautiful book that I discovered recently; this book tells the incredible story of Mary Anning. It is full of incredible facts and the most gorgeous illustrations and fold out pages. This book is for anyone who is a fan of fossils and dinosaurs!

It has recently won a book award and I can absolutely see why!

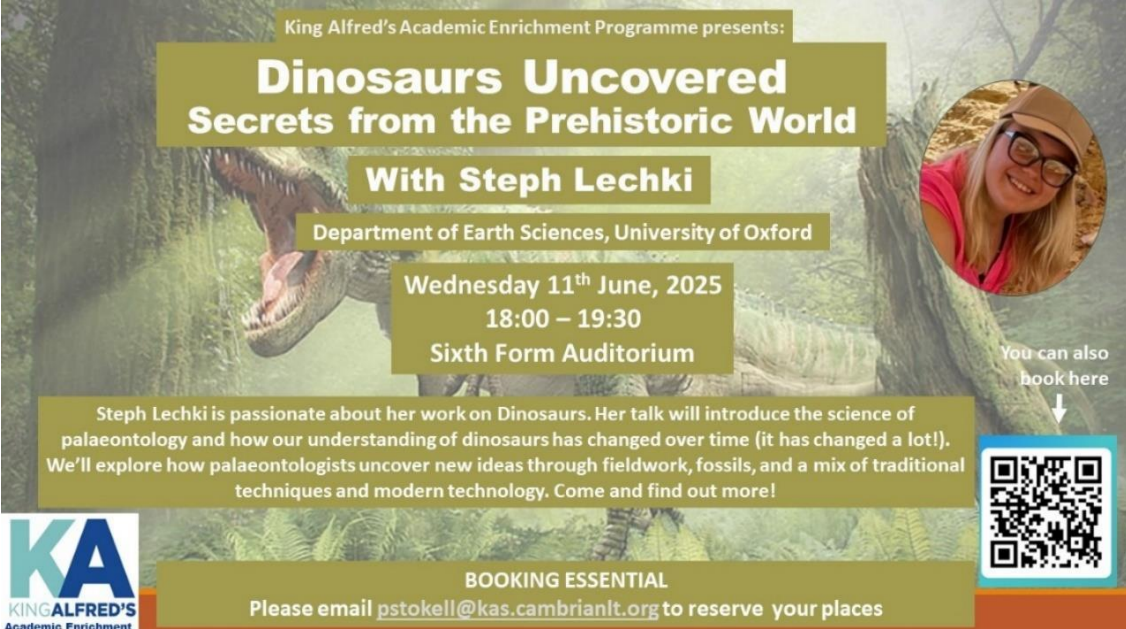


Key Diary dates for next term

[Thameside Primary School - Term Dates \(thamesideschool.co.uk\)](http://thamesideschool.co.uk)

We will add new dates to the online calendar on our website as well – so please do check regularly as well as our newsletters.

- Year 5 swimming
- PTA discos – Thursday 5th June
- Sports Day Years 1-6 – Tuesday 24th June (times to follow) – wet weather back up: Tuesday 1st July.
- PTA Summer Fayre – Saturday 28th June
- Year 6 productions – Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th July (times to follow)
- Swaps Day (new classes) – Thursday 10th July
- Reception graduation – Monday 14th July (times to follow)
- Nursery graduation – Tuesday 15th July (times to follow)
- Year 6 leaver's party after school – Wednesday 16th July (times to follow)
- Star of the term assembly – Thursday 17th July 9.00am
- Year 6 leaver's assembly – Friday 18th July am (time to follow)



King Alfred's Academic Enrichment Programme presents:

Dinosaurs Uncovered Secrets from the Prehistoric World


With Steph Lechki

Department of Earth Sciences, University of Oxford

Wednesday 11th June, 2025
18:00 – 19:30
Sixth Form Auditorium

You can also book here

Steph Lechki is passionate about her work on Dinosaurs. Her talk will introduce the science of palaeontology and how our understanding of dinosaurs has changed over time (it has changed a lot!). We'll explore how palaeontologists uncover new ideas through fieldwork, fossils, and a mix of traditional techniques and modern technology. Come and find out more!



KA
KINGALFRED'S
Academic Enrichment

BOOKING ESSENTIAL
Please email pstokell@kas.cambrianlt.org to reserve your places



NON-UNIFORM DAY

Friday 20th June

Organised by Thameside PTA



Come dressed in your own clothes
and support our Summer Fair!

Please donate any of the following:



Unopened
gifts



Boxes or bars
of chocolate



Bottles
of wine



Clean, gently
used teddies
and toys

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about MINECRAFT



Still the best-selling game of all time, Minecraft is a bastion of creativity and community, with hundreds of millions of players building and crafting in its almost endless world. The popularity of Minecraft among gamers of all ages means it's important to remain informed about the game, including how to play it safely and whether it's suitable for the children in your care. That's why we've created this guide explaining the risks associated with Minecraft and how to ensure a purely enjoyable gaming experience.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

SCARY ELEMENTS

While Minecraft can be seen as a kind of 'digital LEGO', certain game modes include creatures accompanied by eerie sound effects. These can be a bit too frightening for some younger players, potentially leading to distressing in-game combat and other encounters – although the combat is quite basic and free from any real depiction of violence.

GRIEFING

Some players in Minecraft take pleasure in deliberately damaging or destroying another person's creations. This behaviour, known as 'griefing' is a form of bullying – it intentionally ruins someone else's experience by erasing hours of their work and forcing them to start over. Many public servers regard griefing as a serious offence and often ban those who engage in it.

ADDICTIVENESS

Minecraft's focus on creativity means that, as with any creative endeavour, it can be easy to get carried away. If your child is finding it difficult to manage their time because they're drawn in by Minecraft's gameplay loop of resource gathering and building elaborate projects, it could have a knock-on effect on their social interactions and schoolwork.

PUBLIC SERVERS AND COMMUNICATIONS

With public servers being so easily accessible in Minecraft, it's highly likely that children will end up chatting with strangers through the in-game text chat. Some servers even place an emphasis on social interaction, actively encouraging communication between players. While there's nothing inherently wrong with this, it does carry certain risks. In addition to the concerns around speaking with strangers online, players who host their own servers may have their IP addresses exposed, posing a further security concern.

ADDITIONAL PURCHASES

Minecraft is available as a free trial on a variety of devices; however, the full game requires a one-off purchase. After that, players have the option to buy additional cosmetic upgrades or subscribe to Minecraft Realms. Realms is an entirely optional subscription service that allows users to run their own private server to play with friends. Without proper supervision, younger players may end up making unintended or excessive purchases.

Advice for Parents & Educators

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 far lower. This allows you to work together on a long-term project, creating something special without the threat of enemies and creatures attacking you or damaging your building.

HOST A PRIVATE SERVER

The easiest way to find a safe server for children to play on is to make one yourself. Hosting a server prevents strangers from finding it, unless they've been given its address and password. A private server also lets you control who's allowed to enter and – if necessary – ban anyone who shouldn't be there. This is the closest equivalent to parental controls in Minecraft. Hosting a private server, however, will cost a monthly fee.

TALK ABOUT STRANGERS

At some point in their lives, almost everyone will make contact with a stranger online. Talking to children about online safety, therefore, is essential – as is having a plan for dealing with any hostile or difficult people. It's important that a 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.

RESEARCH CONTENT CREATORS

Much of Minecraft's early stages can be an exercise in frustration for players who don't know where to start. Thankfully, there's a wealth of material online and in video format to help you learn the basics. Just be mindful that some of this content may not be appropriate for children, so you should consider watching it yourself first.

PLAY MINECRAFT WITH YOUR CHILD

As a creative building tool, Minecraft makes it great fun for children to team up and construct vast buildings accompanied by imaginative landscapes, much like working with LEGO or model kits. Playing in a game mode that includes enemies can encourage critical thinking and teamwork; however, you should consider which game mode is appropriate for the child in your care.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is Gaming Editor at the Daily Star, and has worked in games media for more than 6 years. A long-time gaming enthusiast, he is also a parent and therefore a keen advocate of online safety for children of all ages.



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