

11th February 2025



Coordinated by the UK Safer Internet Centre

saferinternetday.org.uk

Dear Parents / Carers,

Children's use of the internet is becoming more mobile and interactive offering young people more opportunities to interact and meet new people, so it's never been more important to make sure you are helping your child stay safe in the digital world.

We are aware through classroom discussions that many of our children access online gaming and social media, where they are able to access chat rooms and speak to strangers. Many of the games and social media platforms have age restrictions and these take into account the type of content and access children have to chatrooms. Please be aware of age ratings and the content your children are viewing.

Recently we have seen an increase in primary age children playing or watching games of a horror genre. Horror video games come in a such a variety that the genre can hard to define. The overlapping element is that these games are designed to scare or unsettle the player through gameplay, atmosphere, story, music, setting and 'jump scares'. The most common sub-genres are survival horror, action horror, psychological horror, jump-scare horror and reverse horror.

These games originate from a range of developers, including smaller indie studios which release download-only titles (that is, they aren't physically sold in shops) and therefore often are not subject to age ratings.

Some examples that we are aware children are currently playing are:

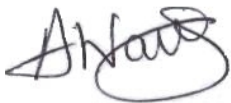
- Garten of Banban
- Poppy Playtime
- Five Nights at Freddy's
- Resident Evil
- Some Roblox content allows for horror genre

There are multiple risks that may come from children and young people being exposed to frightening content before they are prepared, such as:

- **Viewing disturbing content** - Much of the online horror content could be considered disturbing or unsettling, especially for younger children. Even if something is meant to be age-appropriate, it could be inspired by content that is not, which could encourage underage viewing.
- **Added anxiety and stress** - Children and young people are still growing and learning. They may not be at a level of emotional maturity that would be able to process frightening content, even if they view it intentionally. They may also struggle to differentiate between fact and fiction.
- **Intrusive or unsettling thoughts** - Everyone has the 'thing that goes bump in the night.' If children decide to look up anything online, some of these characters (e.g. Vecna from Stranger Things, Slenderman) could cause nightmares and could interrupt family sleep patterns.
- **Developing new fears** - The manipulation of everyday places (e.g. playgrounds, forests) or occurrences (e.g. flickering lights, creaking pipes) into haunting grounds for horror characters threatens the sense of security a child feels. They may suddenly be terrified of something that had never been a worry before.

Further information can be found at <https://www.marstonmoreteyneschool.org/gaming/> or <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>

Kind Regards



Amanda Watts

Headteacher & Designated Safeguarding Lead

I am a Domestic Abuse Responder, you can talk to me about Domestic Abuse