

# 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](mailto:studentssupport@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk)

## Anti-Bullying Week – Make a Noise

This week is Anti-Bullying week and this year the theme is Make a Noise. Too often, we are silent when we see bullying take place, silent about the hurt bullying causes, and silent when we hear bullying dismissed as 'just banter'.

It doesn't have to be this way. Of course, we won't like everyone, and we don't always agree, but we can choose respect and unity. Let's have discussions about what bullying means to us, how banter can turn into something more hurtful and what we can do to stop bullying. From the playgroup to Parliament, and from our phones to our homes make a noise about bullying. Here is a parent pack all about Anti-Bullying week with lots of advice relating to all things about bullying. [Parent Pack - Anti Bullying Week](#)

## Operation Spectre

This week, West Midlands Police are focusing on our Anti Knife Crime Campaign – Operation Sceptre. This is in addition to the ongoing workshops that they deliver in schools over the academic year. Please see this attached video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hr64u8mgu1c>

Ronan Kanda was 16 when he was stabbed, seconds from home, by teenagers who thought he was someone else. He suffered devastating injuries and died on the street where he lived, in Wolverhampton. Ronan's family are bravely helping WMP to raise awareness of the dangers of carrying a knife. They firmly believe if someone had reported the boys who stabbed Ronan, he would still be alive today. If you've got concerns about someone carrying a knife, call West Midlands Police on 101 or report anonymously to Fearless on 0800 555 111. For more information and resources about knife crime, visit our website: <https://lifeorknife.west-midlands.police.uk/> Report crime, get prevention advice, and see the latest news on our website <https://www.west-midlands.police.uk/> You can get in touch with us via Live Chat at [west-midlands.police.uk](https://www.west-midlands.police.uk/), via 101, or anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

## Microtransactions

Microtransactions figure in the business model of many game and app developers, allowing them to bring in ongoing revenue as users continue to pay for extra features and content; even software that's initially free to download can be monetised in this way. It's a system which has featured in many of younger gamers' perennial favourite franchises, from Fortnite to FIFA. As well as encouraging regular spending, however, microtransactions – especially the increasingly common use of loot boxes – have also been scrutinised for what many argue is a resemblance to gambling, with the potential to foster addictive behaviours. Our #WakeUpWednesday guide tells parents and carers what they need to know about microtransactions.



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# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about MICROTRANSACTIONS

Microtransactions (often abbreviated as "MTX") are digital purchases made within an app or game to unlock extra features or additional content such as new levels. A popular sub-set of these are loot boxes, which contain a selection (usually random) of virtual items: from character skins to game-changing equipment like better weapons. Microtransactions (and loot boxes in particular) are now widespread in apps and games, but concerns persist that they normalise gambling and can foster addictive behaviours – especially among younger players.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### GATEWAY TO GAMBLING?

Microtransactions have been criticised for promoting gambling-adjacent behaviour in children. Research has also suggested that exposure to the loot box system could affect the likelihood of a young person suffering gambling harms later in life: children who purchased or used loot boxes in the last 12 months were found to be more likely to have gambled during the same period, as well.

### ADDICTIVE NATURE

Microtransactions (and loot boxes especially) could lead to young people displaying compulsive behaviours. Loot boxes are designed to be addictive, and the sought-after prizes they contain are dispensed at random. This means that young gamers might not get what they want straight away, causing them to spend more money as well as additional time gaming.

### PAYING TO WIN

In many popular games (the FIFA series being a notable example), microtransactions make it far easier to succeed – which is a concern because children can often find it difficult to keep track of their spending. Once a child starts making in-game purchases, they may continue buying to keep up with their friends and other players – sometimes without recognising the mounting real-world cost.

## EXCLUSIVE CONTENT

### DATA COLLECTION

To allow a young person to complete microtransactions, many app and game developers collect personal data such as their name, address, email, geolocation information, photos, payment details and so on. Even if this data remains secure (which is by no means guaranteed), there's always the chance that it will be used – and possibly sold on to third parties – for marketing purposes.

### AFFECTING DAILY ROUTINE

Online games tend to revolve around repeated loops of activity that can affect purchasing decisions and potentially influence children's spending patterns. This could lead to your child not only handing over more money but also adjusting their daily routine to match the game's schedule – potentially impacting more important elements of their day, such as homework and family time.

### SATELLITE SPENDING

If you've linked a payment method like a debit card or a PayPal account to your child's game or app, it's wise to keep a close eye on their microtransactions to ensure they aren't racking up a large bill. Letting a child have access to your card (if they're still too young to have their own) or other means of payment could also lead to them spending beyond the apps and games they normally use.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### DO YOUR RESEARCH

It's important to have a serviceable idea of whether the games your child plays use the loot box system (even if it goes by a different name) or include the option of buying items, equipment and so forth. If so, it's crucial to help your child understand that this costs actual money, and that they shouldn't feel pressured into making any purchases.

### CHAT ABOUT 'CHANCE'

It may help to explain to your child that many microtransactions involve an element of chance: they could pay money and still not get what they want in return. Emphasise that – while not usually costing much individually – these in-app and in-game purchases can soon add up. Talk to your child about how spending their money in a game or app means they have less to use in the real world.

### (GIFT) CARDS ON THE TABLE

Investing in an in-game currency gift card can be a useful way of helping your child get to grips with budgeting. If you buy, say, a £10 V-bucks Fortnite gift card, monitor how long it takes them to spend it. When they come to you asking for more, you could make it the starting point for a conversation about how quickly that money went and how they could earn their next gift card.

### STOP SPENDING AT SOURCE

You might decide that the wisest strategy is to remove the potential for spending money on microtransactions. If so, most games, apps and devices have options in their settings to help you manage what your child can spend – or to disable that function altogether, preventing them from buying additional items for their games or boosted functionality for certain apps.

### WATCH FOR THE SIGNS

If you're worried that your child's passion for a particular game or app may tempt them into habitual spending on microtransactions, it's important to remember the indicators of addictive behaviour. Irritability, a lack of concentration and prioritising recreational screen time ahead of homework or mealtimes could all be signs that you need to have a conversation about a more balanced routine.

## Meet Our Expert

Cathy Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid *The Inquirer*, Cathy is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



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