St. Giles CE Primary School
Starkholmes Road
Matlock
DE4 3DD

Email: enquiries@st-giles-matlock.derbyshire.sch.uk
Phone: 01629 56813

Senior teacher: Bethany Simpson

Monday 13th November

What parents and carers need to know about age ratings

Dear parents,

We hope that this letter finds you safe and well.

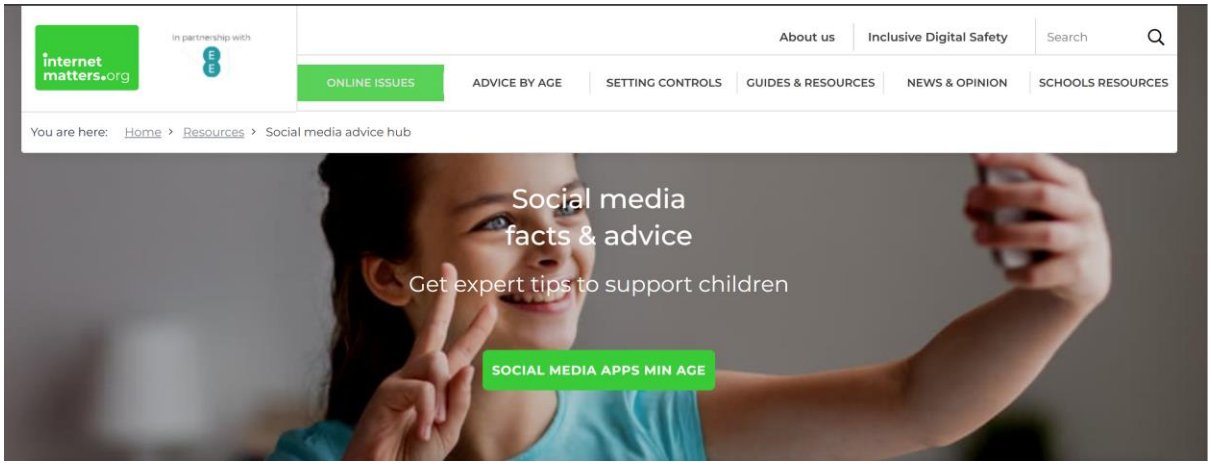
The staff in school would like to share some additional online safety guidance focused on the age ratings of games and apps.

Staff across school are aware that a number of children are using apps and games which have higher age ratings than the child's age. We hope that this useful reminder below will be a useful reminder about age ratings for popular apps.



The BBC have an excellent resource which you can access via this link:
www.bbc.com/ownit/take-control/understanding-age-ratings

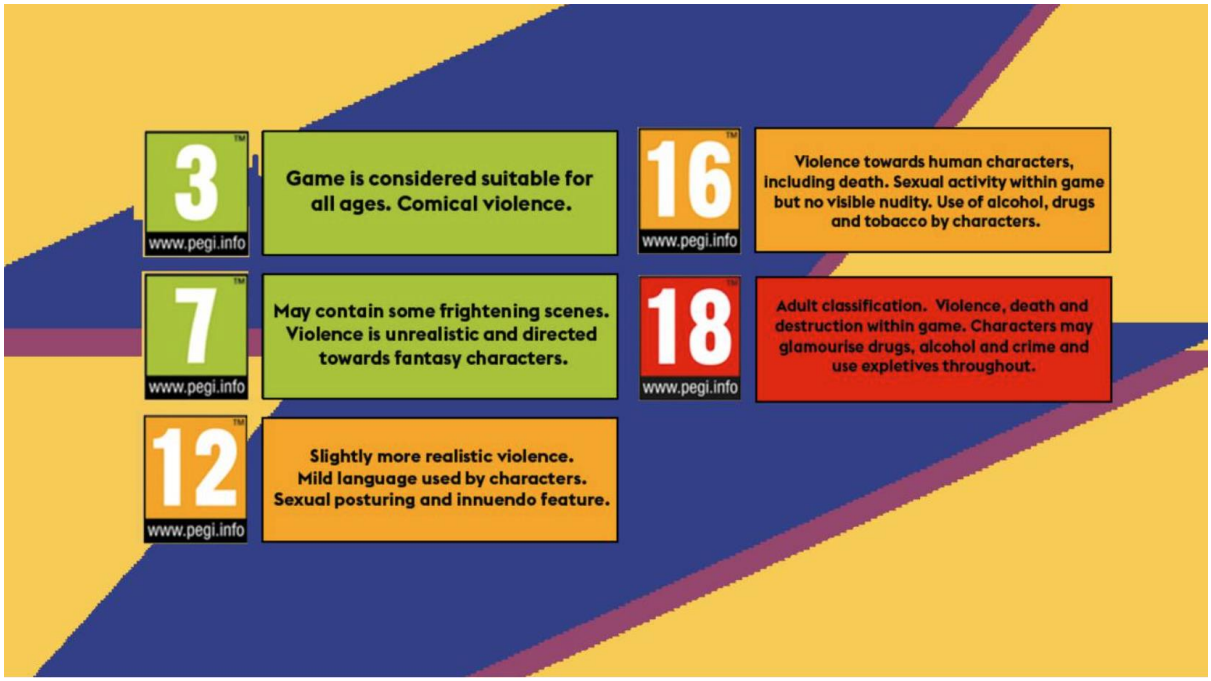
Advice about the use of social media



Internet Matters also provide some excellent advice and support around the safe use of social media. You can access the site via this link: www.internetmatters.org/resources/social-media-advice-hub/

Advice about online gaming

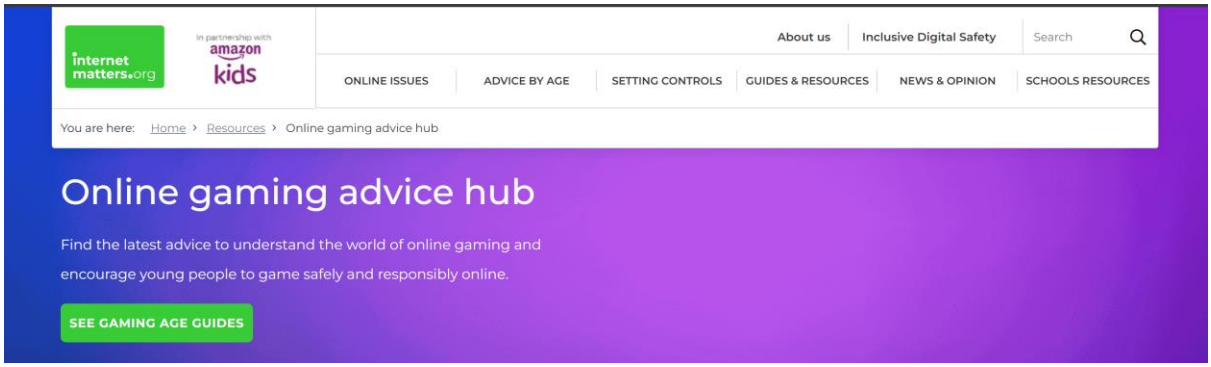
All games (whether downloaded from an app store or physically purchased) have an age rating too. The five age categories are PEGI 3, PEGI 7, PEGI 12, PEGI 16, AND PEGI 18 and are set out below:



A game's age rating should be used by adults to make an informed choice as to whether or not a game is suitable for children.

We have attached a guide (from the National Online Safety centre) which takes a look at how to tackle a range of potential risks such as inappropriate content, peer pressure and online spending.

Extra information about online games



Internet Matters have an excellent site with *game specific advice*. You can access the site via this link: www.internetmatters.org/resources/online-gaming-advice/

We hope that the above information is a useful reminder. As always: if you have any concerns regarding safely online then please contact school via phone or via e-mail:

- enquiries@st-giles-matlock.derbyshire.sch.uk
- safeguarding@st-giles-matlock.derbyshire.sch.uk

Please remember that all of our previous advice is available on our school website (Parents/Online Safety): www.stgilesceprimarymatlock.co.uk/online-safety/

Staff in school will always support incidents around online safety, including those that arise outside of school.

We will continue to work with our children by teaching them how to stay safe when online.

Thank you for your continued support.

Ben O'Connell

Headteacher

Bethany Simpson

Senior Teacher

At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and educators with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. Please visit nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, ghints and tips for adults.

Part of our Online Mental Health & Wellbeing Series

NOS Online Mental Health & Wellbeing

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www.nationalonlinesafety.com

What you need to know about... AGE RATINGS



What are they?

'Age Ratings'

A game's age rating can be used by adults to make an informed choice as to whether or not a game is suitable for their child. The PEGI (Pan European Game Information) system rates games and, instead of indicating the level of ability required to physically play a game, it indicates the suitability of content for that age group. 3, 7, 12, 16 and 18 are the labels that can be awarded to games and a variety of content descriptors such as violence, bad language and fear are used to further clarify why the label was assigned.



Know the Risks

Inappropriate content

The biggest and most obvious risk of not following the age rating system is that children may view or hear age-inappropriate content. Many games now include scenes of a violent or graphic nature which could be upsetting or considered too intense for younger players.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure has a large role to play in age ratings being overlooked. Children don't want to be the ones left behind and can put their parents under pressure to allow them to play a game beyond the recommended suitability, especially when all of their friends are playing it already.

Level of 'Kudos'

Playing a game with a label that is higher than their age can be viewed by some children as a challenge and to gain a good reputation amongst friends. Kudos is attributed to the child playing the age inappropriate game resulting in more children wanting to follow suit.

Free Platforms

In order for a game to be released on popular platforms, such as PlayStation and Xbox, game developers must pay for a PEGI rating. However, smaller development teams are sometimes reluctant to pay these fees and games are often released on other platforms, such as Steam, without any age restrictions.

Spot the Signs

Being vague

Be aware of children being vague around the content of what they want to play. If they are unwilling to supply you with information about what the game is about, this can be an indicator that you wouldn't allow them to purchase it if you knew.

Unofficial sites

There are plenty of indie games that can be bought using online stores that don't necessarily have age restrictions. If you notice your child using sites such as GOG or itch.io rather than official channels such as the Google Play Store, they might be accessing games that aren't officially rated but still aren't age appropriate.

Unfamiliar terminology

Your child might start using phrases or terminology that is new to them or mimicking actions that they have learnt from a game without realising their inappropriateness.

Wanting to be secluded

Be aware if suddenly your child wants the move the device that they play their games on into a more secluded area of the house away from adults. It is a good idea for your child to play online games in shared area where you can see the screen.

Be aware of spending

Setting up accounts with online stores require bank account details. Keeping an eye on your bank balance means that you will be able to tell if there has been a new purchase and can provide you with an opportunity to ask about what new game they've purchased.

Safety Tips

Do your research

If you've noticed a new game that your child has downloaded then use quality resources to make sure that your knowledge is up to date. Online websites, such as National Online Safety, can provide you with the information you need.

Review parental controls

Review your parental controls on the stores where you buy games from. Most sites allow parents to set passwords to block games with certain age restrictions from being downloaded.

Encourage open dialogue

Encourage open dialogue with your child. You don't want to be in position where they won't talk to you if something has made them feel uncomfortable in a game because they are worried they will get in trouble for playing the game in the first place.

Discuss ratings

Talk to your child about why the game has been awarded a certain label. Debate the positives and negatives of playing a game and decide on some ground rules together.

Our Expert



Heather Cardwell

Heather Cardwell is a practising Online Safety Lead and senior school leader who is passionate about safeguarding online and educating children around online risks. She has over 10+ years as a Computing Lead and has successfully developed and implemented a whole school approach to online safety in schools, delivering online safety training to both school staff and parents and helping to roll-out a bespoke online safety policy across her local network of education settings.

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