

Ridgmont Lower School ~ Safeguarding Newsletter



Ridgmont Lower
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Autumn is well under way!



Autumn 1 ~ 2026

Safeguarding is the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

**Safeguarding is everyone's
responsibility!**

School 'Keep Clear Signs'

Please remember not to park on the yellow zig-zags and do not use the car park as a thoroughfare. **PLEASE USE THE DESIGNATED PATHS AT ALL TIMES.**

Who to contact if you have a concern about a child.

Report any concerns if you suspect a child is being harmed or at risk of being harmed. Please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy.

If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999 immediately.

You can also contact the Integrated Front Door - Children's Services

☎ 0300 300 8585 (Mon-Thurs 0845-1720hrs & Fri 0845-1620hrs)

0300 300 8123 (Out of Hours)

✉ IFD@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

What's included?

- *The role of the Safeguarding Governor*
- *Is this appropriate for my child?*
- *Halloween Safety*
- *What parents need to know about Roblox*
- *What parents need to know about Fortnite*
- *Halloween Safety Tips*

Ridgmont's Safeguarding Team

The Designated
Safeguarding Lead
(DSL)

is

Allison Jakes
Headteacher

The Deputy
Designated
Safeguarding Lead
(DDSL)

is

Jane Stringall
Senior Teacher

What is the role of the Safeguarding Governor?

Our safeguarding Governor is **Mrs Christine Sweetnam**.

The Safeguarding Governor's responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the school is following safer recruitment procedures when recruiting any new staff members
- Reviewing all activity and policy relating to the physical and emotional well-being of all children
- Seeking improvement to ensure the school follows best practice in creating a productive and safe environment for all

Is this appropriate for my child?

As I'm sure you can imagine, your children love to share with us how they spend their time when they are not in school.

Often they talk about the friends and family they have spent time with and places they have visited. They also like to tell us about computer games they play and two that crop up regularly are Roblox and Fortnite.

We are always concerned when we hear children have accessed Fortnite as this is age restricted but it is often because they have older siblings.

With this in mind, please find included with this newsletter information leaflets on both of these games.

Alongside this you will also find advice on how to manage screen time. This has been a hot news topic this week!

Halloween Safety

Information on how to have a safe and happy Halloween is included in this newsletter.

Attendance Matters!!

Attendance facts:

- All schools must report their termly attendance percentages to the local authority.
- Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives a full-time education.
- Parents can be issued with a fixed penalty notice for failing to ensure their child attends school regularly – this includes taking a child out of school on holiday.
- The local authority has the power to prosecute parents in the magistrate's court for the offence of failing to ensure their child attends school regularly.
- If your child arrives after 9.15am we are required to mark them as having an **unauthorised absence for the whole morning** – arriving after 9.15am once in a week brings their attendance down to 90% for that week.

There is much evidence to show that good attendance plays a vital role in helping your child to achieve their potential. We also know that poor attendance can lead to other problems for children. Children who do not attend school regularly are more likely to:

- Fall behind in their school work
- Find it difficult to make and keep friends
- Be unhappy at school
- Misbehave so that others cannot see that they are finding the work difficult
- Learn poor attendance habits that follow through to middle and upper school and future employment

Poor punctuality can also disadvantage children in many ways:

- Being frequently late adds up to lost learning. For example, arriving 15 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 2 weeks of the year
- When children are late they find it harder to settle in to the routine of the day
- When children arrive late they often miss key messages and teaching which continues to have an effect on their learning for the rest of the lesson or day
- Poor punctuality disrupts the class and is embarrassing for the child
- Your child being late disturbs the learning of the whole class

Things to note:

- Understanding that holiday in term time will usually be unauthorised except in extreme circumstances, still means the absence is to be REQUESTED; please do not assume it is your right!
- Even if your child is not of compulsory school age, absence is still to be REQUESTED. If you have agreed for your child to attend school on given days, then their attendance is expected!

Getting here on time every day really is important in helping your child to become a happy and successful learner. Every day really does count!

Ridgmont Lower School's Attendance vs National Figure for w/e 25.09.2026*

95.52% vs 95.68%

*most up to date data available

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about ROBLOX

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Roblox is an online platform where users can play and create games known as 'experiences' made by other users. Roblox has a large UK audience. ITV News has reported that millions of people in Britain use the platform regularly, with children forming a significant proportion of its users. The sheer scale of it makes it extremely difficult to moderate effectively, creating risks for unsupervised children, though a June 2026 update has improved things greatly.

A PLATFORM RATHER THAN A GAME

Roblox differs from traditional video games in that it hosts millions of user-created experiences rather than a fixed set of developer-produced content. Each experience is self-rated by its creator rather than independently age-rated in advance, as is the case with PEGI-rated games. With millions of user-created experiences, moderation is largely automated which means that inappropriate content may reach younger players and have a harmful effect.

RISK OF ADDICTION

Roblox encourages repeated and extended play. Many experiences are made of short tasks, rewards, and progression systems that can prompt users to keep playing for longer periods of time. Some games also use reminders, daily rewards, or timed events to encourage frequent logins. These designs can make it difficult to stop playing. Spending long periods online may affect sleep, schoolwork, or other activities if boundaries are not in place.

IN-GAME SPENDING

Roblox is free to play, but many experiences and cosmetics include optional purchases using Robux, the platform's virtual currency, to get advantages in games. This business model is common across online games, but reporting has highlighted cases where children have spent large amounts of money unintentionally or without understanding the real-world cost.

MATURE CONTENT

With much of Roblox's moderation automated through AI and creators self-certifying suitability, inappropriate content frequently appears on the platform. Some experiences may include content intended for older players. As of June 2026, Roblox defaults to only showing games from trusted developers to under 15s, following tests with older players to filter out riskier content. But these automated systems are not infallible, and younger players may encounter content you deem unsuitable.

COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER USERS

Roblox includes text and voice features that allow players to chat in shared game spaces. While the platform uses automated filters and moderation tools, media investigations have found that inappropriate and potentially harmful messages can still get through. There are risks that children could be targeted by groomers. In a June 2026 update, Roblox changed its default settings to prevent under 8s from chatting entirely, with gradual relaxation of restrictions between the ages of 9 and 15. The platform plans to use facial age-estimation technology to enforce these rules.

Advice for Parents & Educators

USE PARENTAL CONTROLS

Roblox's parental controls provide an important starting point. Linking a child's account to an adult account allows parents to apply spending controls, limit communication features, and review recent activity. Regular supervision, use of parental controls, and conversations with children about what they see online can help reduce the risk of exposure to inappropriate content.

CONSIDER LIMITING OR DISABLING CHAT

Although Roblox has introduced tighter age-based chat restrictions, some parents and educators may prefer to disable chat entirely to avoid the risk of stranger danger. This is the default for under 8s, but can be applied for any account up to the age of 16. Children can still play games while communicating with friends they know through other platforms, such as Discord.

PLAY TOGETHER WHERE POSSIBLE

Playing Roblox with a child can help adults understand the types of experiences available, how monetisation works, and how children interact online. This shared engagement can also make it easier for children to raise concerns if something feels wrong. Parents and educators should monitor all games played on Roblox due to its largely self-rating nature.

ENCOURAGE OPEN CONVERSATIONS

Many Roblox experiences are creative and age appropriate, and for many children, the platform is an important way to socialise with friends. Rather than banning it outright, parents and educators should talk openly with children about online safety, spending, and how to respond to inappropriate behaviour.

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is a technology journalist who has written for publications including Wired, TechRadar, The Telegraph, The Evening Standard, The Guardian and The New Statesman.



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See full reference list on our website

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about FORTNITE

AGE RESTRICTION
PEGI 12

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

With over 650 million registered users, Fortnite remains one of the most played and discussed online games globally. Known for its vibrant graphics, fast-paced gameplay, and cultural crossovers with everything from music artists to superhero franchises, the game continues to capture the attention of young people. This guide outlines the risks trusted adults need to know about, including game updates, and offers practical safety tips to help address them.

ALWAYS ONLINE

There's no single-player, offline mode in Fortnite; it can only be played online. Internet access can sometimes be an issue when you're out and about, both in terms of connectivity and using up data. You may find that dedicated, young Fortnite players are often less enthusiastic about family time or trips away – such as days out and holidays – than you might expect.

IN-GAME COSTS

Fortnite is free to download and play, but it does offer various additional purchases – limited-time cosmetic 'skins', music tracks, LEGO items, and battle passes. Children can feel pressured to spend money on V-Bucks – the in-game currency – to avoid missing out, particularly as exclusive items rotate frequently. Some items may not return to the store for years, while Battle Pass rewards are often "gone when they're gone".

VIRTUAL VIOLENCE

There's no avoiding that Fortnite is about shooting other players to eliminate them from the contest. That said, there's no blood or gore. The violence is rendered in a cartoonish style, and there are frequent comical touches to lighten the mood, such as mini-games and emotes. Guns and other weapons often look and behave realistically, so discretion is advised. Past seasons have introduced characters and references from mature franchises like The Witcher and Halo.

CROSSPLAY AND PARTY CHAT

Fortnite is popular with many gamers of various ages. Crossplay allows friends to play with each other, regardless of whether they're on an Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo Switch or PC, while the Party Chat feature allows them to talk to each other during the game. This can put youngsters at risk of exposure to strangers, inappropriate language, and cyberbullying.

FREQUENT UPDATES

Seasonal releases introduce new map changes, gameplay mechanics, and cosmetics. Ongoing updates can increase screen time and potential for obsession as children try to unlock rewards before the season ends. These regular renewals help to hold players' interest, but also give young gamers plenty of reasons to keep coming back. Seasons often change thematically.

POP CULTURE REFERENCES

Part of Fortnite's appeal is its ongoing crossovers with other popular franchises, ranging from films and TV shows like Power Rangers and Avatar: The Last Airbender, to comic book characters including Batman. Other collaborations with series, artists, and influencers may expose children to music, language, or ideas that are more suitable for older audiences.

Advice for Parents & Educators

DISCUSS SAFE SOCIAL INTERACTION

Talk with children about who they're playing with online. Coordinate play time with the child's friends for socialisation and safety in numbers. Encourage them to avoid private voice chats with strangers and remind them not to share personal information. Use real-life examples to explain potential risks, and remind them that if they see something concerning, they should tell a trusted adult.

SET SPENDING LIMITS

Fortnite's rotating store is a not-so-subtle mechanism for coaxing players into buying sought-after items before they disappear for weeks or months. This could lead to surprise transactions on bank cards if children are tempted into an impulse purchase. Parents could consider getting a prepaid card for the child or ensuring that purchases require adult authorisation. This can be done through parental settings on a console or account settings in the Epic Games app on PC.

ENJOY FORTNITE TOGETHER

Fortnite also offers split-screen gameplay, meaning that two people can play simultaneously on the same console or computer. This can be a good option for siblings or for when a child's friends visit, but it also offers an opportunity for parents to do something fun with their child, while making sure they're playing the game safely. Who knows? You might even teach them a thing or two!

BE WARY OF SCAMS

The immense popularity of Fortnite with younger audiences – that are generally more trusting – means there's no shortage of scammers looking to fraudulently obtain passwords and other personal data through techniques like phishing. As the developers point out on many of Fortnite's loading screens, they never ask for a player's account password outside of the game. Make sure any young player knows this.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is an experienced freelance writer and has been working in the gaming and tech industry for seven years. A regular visitor to the App Store to try out new tools, he's also a parent and therefore understands the importance of online safety. He's also a tech and fitness writer and has been published at sites including IGN, TechRadar, and plenty more.



#WakeUpWednesday

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Top Tips for... MANAGING SCREEN TIME

According to the latest stats, people aged between 8 and 17 spend four hours on digital devices during an average day. Obviously, a new year is ideal for fresh starts and renewed efforts – so lots of families are trying to cut down their combined screen time right now, creating more moments to connect with each other and relying less on gadgets to have fun. Our top tips on reducing screen time are for everyone, so you can get your whole family involved in turning over a new leaf this year!

Buy Milk

GET OUT AND ABOUT

If the weather's decent, spend some time in the garden or go for a walk. Even a stroll to the local shop would do: the main thing is getting some fresh air and a break from your screen.

TRY A TIMED TRIAL

When you're taking a screen break to do a different activity or a chore, turn it into a game by setting yourself a timer. Can you complete your task before the alarm goes off?

GO DIGITAL DETOX

Challenge yourself and your family to take time off from screens, finding other things to do. You could start off with half a day, then build up to a full day or even an entire weekend.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Let your family see you successfully managing your own screen time. You'll be showing them the way, and it might stop some of those grumbles when you do want to go online.

AGREE TECH-FREE ZONES

Nominate some spots at home where devices aren't allowed. Anywhere your family gathers together, like at the table or in the living room, could become a 'no phone zone'.

HOLD A SCREEN TIME AMNESTY

As a family, agree specific windows when it's OK to use devices. This should help everyone to balance time on phones or gaming with enjoying quality moments together.

BE MINDFUL OF TIME

Stay aware of how long you've been on your device for. Controlling how much time you spend in potentially stressful areas of the internet – like social media platforms – can also boost your wellbeing.

'PARK' PHONES OVERNIGHT

Set up an overnight charging station for everyone's devices – preferably away from bedrooms. That means less temptation for late-night scrolling.

SWITCH ON DND

Research shows that micro-distractions like message alerts and push notifications can chip away at our concentration levels. Put devices on 'do not disturb' until you're less busy.

TAKE A FAMILY TECH BREAK

Set aside certain times when the whole family puts their gadgets away and enjoys an activity together: playing a board game, going for a walk or just having a chat.

SOCIALISE WITHOUT SCREENS

When you're with friends, try not to automatically involve phones, TVs or other tech. Having company can be loads more fun if your attention isn't being split.

WIND DOWN PROPERLY

Try staying off phones, consoles, tablets and so on just before you go to sleep. Reading or just getting comfy in bed for a while can give you a much more restful night.

Meet Our Expert

Minds Ahead design and deliver the UK's only specialist postgraduate mental health qualifications. They also provide training and support to education organisations and local authorities – empowering school leaders and staff with the knowledge and tools to shape their settings into inclusive communities where the mental health of pupils and personnel is prioritised.



DEVICE BOX

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National Online Safety

#WakeUpWednesday

@natonlinesafety

/NationalOnlineSafety

@nationalonlinesafety

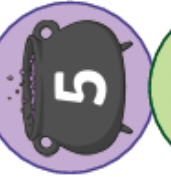
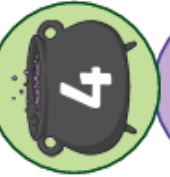
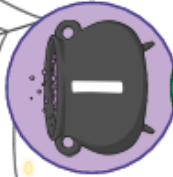
@national_online_safety

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Halloween

Safety Tips

Younger children should always walk with an adult. Older children should always walk in a group.



Only go to houses where you can see a light on.

Use torches, glow sticks or reflective tape to make it easier to be seen in the dark.

Only go to houses where you know the people who live there.

Pay attention when walking past driveways to make sure cars aren't pulling in or out.

Be aware of flames e.g. lit candles, and keep at a safe distance.

Costumes and shoes should fit properly to avoid trips or falls.



Costume accessories, such as swords, shouldn't be sharp. They should be soft and flexible.



Do not eat any sweets / treats until your adult says you can.



Cross at a safe place along the road.



Walk, don't run.



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