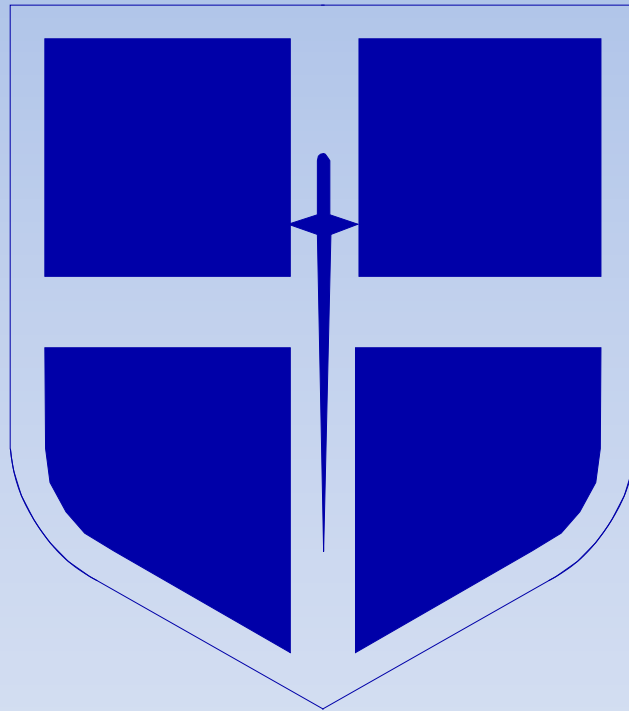


St Paul's Church of England Combined School



Growing in Strength, Wisdom and Faith



Gaming

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81% of under 18s regularly play online games and in moderation, gaming can be fun, sociable and interactive with opportunities for children and young people to learn and solve problems. Most will not experience any harm but there are known impacts of gaming addiction in children we need to be aware of:

Q Gaming addiction and financial concerns

Q Social relationships

Q Effects of gaming addiction on physical health

Q Effects of gaming addiction on education and personal growth

Q Gaming addiction effect on mental health

Q Tips to combat bad gaming habits in children

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Effects of gaming addiction on education and personal growth



One of the signs of gaming addiction is the **impact on other areas of life**. If school work is suffering – including boredom in lessons, difficulty concentrating or low motivation to complete homework – then their gaming habits should be assessed.

Exposure to violent, graphic or sexualised content –Ofcom found that increasing numbers of parents are concerned about the content of games children play. This includes **25% of parents of 3-4-year-old gamers** (compared to 10% in 2017).

Most major titles do come with **age guidance** but as with films or TV shows, many children access the content at a younger age. Fortnite, for example, is rated 12+, yet many primary school-age children play.

Games with violent, sexualised or highly realistic content (including augmented reality and virtual reality games) can also have an **emotional impact on children, especially the younger children**. It's a controversial area with conflicting research but research has linked violent video games to aggression in young people.

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Social relationships

If gaming is at the expense of connection with friends in real life, then this withdrawal can affect relationship skills in everyday situations.

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All of the following elements can indicate gaming addiction. These symptoms tend to be more pronounced when children or young people are not gaming – including if they are prevented from playing.

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Symptoms of possible gaming addiction

Anger or rage – If a parent interrupts a gaming session or broadband goes down, what is the reaction? If children or young people respond with anger or rage – including shouting, screaming or physical attacks, then this is something of concern.

Compulsivity – Is there a strong sense of urgency to get back to gaming? Do they find it difficult to pull themselves away? With children and young people, compulsive play can manifest in playing past switch-off times, late at night or secretly.

Isolation and loneliness – If children spend long periods of time playing games by themselves, this reduces interaction with relatives and friends in real life. Though many young gamers use online chat in multiplayer games, including to talk to friends in real life, this should be balanced with interactions in the same physical space.

Depression – In regular gamers, ongoing listlessness, sadness or lethargy can be signs of problem gaming. Depressive symptoms will be most apparent when they are not playing the game, i.e. in the withdrawal phase.

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Effects of gaming addiction on physical health



Excessive gaming repeatedly over long periods can potentially cause physical strain on gamers.

Repetitive strain injury (RSI)

Children and young people who play games for extended periods can be affected by RSI. Stiffness, aches, pain and numbness are signs to watch out for. For example, 'nintendinitis' refers to thumb, wrist and hand problems associated with playing on gaming consoles. Eye strain is also common if you look at screens for long periods without taking breaks. Screen glare can also affect vision.

Headaches and migraines

Headaches may be related to physical causes such as eye strain, bad posture or dehydration. Or they may be related to mental health issues – including anxiety and depression. Young gamers who get regular headaches should get checked out by a doctor.

Lack of physical activity

Playing sedentary games for long periods can mean that people miss out on exercise. [The World Health Organisation](#) recommends that children and young people, aged 5 to 17, do at least 60 minutes of activity per day.

Poor nutrition or self-care

When gaming addiction takes over, children and young people may skip meals, rely on junk food, resist taking toilet breaks or have poor hygiene.

Poor quality sleep

Playing stimulating games for many hours at a time, particularly late at night, will make it harder to get to sleep.

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Tips to combat bad gaming habits in children

- It is understandable to believe that if you can get your child's gaming under control, then everything will return to normal. However, **every addiction is best understood as a symptom rather than the problem.** For this reason, telling your child to reduce their gaming, punishing them for breaking rules or restricting their access to devices, probably won't solve their difficulties permanently.
- The key to real change is this – what is so seemingly distressing or unsatisfactory about your child's life when s/he is not gaming? To overcome gaming addiction, your son or daughter will need help to discover the answers to this question, as well as learning how to cope in healthier ways.
- Of course, it is an important step for your child to acknowledge the consequences of harmful gaming, including how health, relationships and education are affected – but this is only the start. Lasting recovery from gaming disorder comes through **awareness and emotional resilience.** Your child needs to know how to recognise and handle emotional distress including when they crave game play.

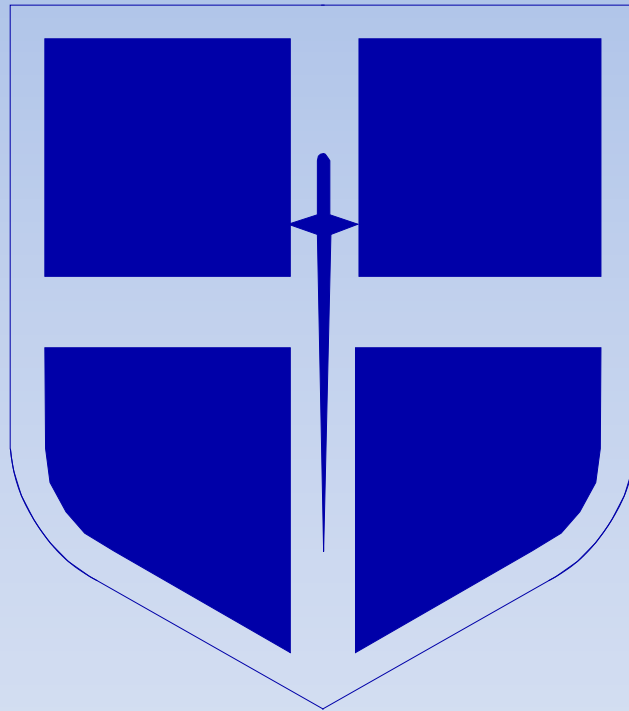
For more information on supporting your child with gaming, read the following publication online:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Internet-Matters-online-safety-Age-Guide-6-10s.pdf>

For advice on other internet issues, visit the Internet Matters website:

https://www.internetmatters.org/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwyZmEBhCpARIsALizmnLGe1ktgKZi4BWSme9Ux1qVSpjzQ1SBm9c7pR1TbUlo_syPAOvq9TYaArHBEALw_wcB

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