



February 2022 Newsletter

Gong Hei Fat Choy! How wonderful that Chinese New Year lands at the beginning of February - what a great way to start the month. Although the shortest month of the year, as always, we have lots of exciting things planned. Please keep an eye out for any emails and on our Facebook page for further information. Covid 19 is still prevalent in the community and has caused a number of absences in school both amongst staff and pupils. We would like to thank everyone for their continued vigilance and ask that this continues even though some restrictions have been relaxed. In school, we will continue with a number of measures to try and prevent any cases from spreading. We hope that this week we have turned a corner and from now on the numbers of cases will start to decrease.

Mrs Lizzie Jackson

Staffing

The Amble First team are very sad to announce that Wednesday 16th February will be Mrs Sarah Forsey's last day in school. Mrs Forsey has worked at Amble First since 2014 and has decided that now is the time to relocate to Shropshire to be closer to her family. Mrs Forsey is a greatly valued member of the team in her role as both a class teacher and also as our SENDCo. She will be sorely missed and we would like to express our thanks and appreciation for everything that she has done for the school and our children. We know that you will join us in wishing her all the best for the future and we hope that she will be very happy in her next school. We are pleased to say that Mrs Caroline Metcalfe has agreed to join us full time after half term and she will continue to work in Year 4.

Parents' evening

Parents' evening appointments will be available during the **week beginning 14th February**. These will be phone call appointments again this term. Please look out for a letter coming soon that will detail the days and time slots available.



Year 4 Residential Visit

There will be a meeting for parents on **Tuesday 1st March** to talk more about the trip to Dukeshouse Wood.

This will be an opportunity for staff to share with you the programme of activities, kit lists and any other information you may need. At the moment, we intend for the meeting to take place in school. If you are unable to attend, we will arrange to share the information with you by email and you will be able to contact school with any questions you may have.

Breakfast and after-school wrap around care

If you wish to book your child in for breakfast club or the after-school wrap around care, please can you ensure that this is done on Eduspot by the end of the school day on **Friday** of the week before. This will enable us to plan staffing and food needed for each session.



Queen's Jubilee Bank Holiday

As part of the celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in the summer, an extra bank holiday has been allocated. As this falls during the summer half term break, schools have been asked to select an additional date. The date we have chosen is **Friday 1st July**. This is the same date as other schools in the Coquet Partnership. School will be closed that day.



World Book Day 2022

This year we will be celebrating World Book Day on **Thursday 3rd March**. Children are welcome to come to school in fancy dress. Look out for your book vouchers which will enable children to get one of the WBD books for free or they can use them as a discount towards a book of their choice.



White Rose Maths

White Rose Maths is a scheme that we use across the whole school to deliver the Maths curriculum. Recently, they have created an app called 1 Minute Maths. This is aimed at EYFS and KS1 but can be used by anyone who wants to develop their confidence with number in just 1-minute chunks. See <https://whiterosemaths.com/resources/1-minute-maths> for more details.



Attendance

It is a fact of life that children are sometimes too ill to come to school. Unfortunately, over the past few weeks a number of children have contracted Covid, which means that they have been required to self-isolate for a given number of days. We understand that this cannot be avoided. However, following two years of disrupted education, it is imperative that children attend school as often as possible. We therefore ask that families carefully consider absences from school that can be avoided. As you can see below, just a small number of days can quickly add up. If you are in any doubt, the NHS website gives a very useful guide to help you decide whether your child should/should not be in school. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Our school target for attendance is **96%**.

Attendance for end of January 2022

Rec - 90.7%

Year 1 - 92.9%

Year 2 - 94.3%

Year 3 - 93.5%

Year 4 - 96.1%

Key dates Spring Term

Tuesday 1st February - Chinese New Year - non-uniform day

Week beginning 14th Feb - parents' evening meetings

Friday 18th February - break up for half term

Monday 28th February - children return to school

Tuesday 1st March - Year 4 residential meeting

Thursday 3rd March - Y4 Bikeability

Thursday 3rd March - World Book Day

Wed 16th-Fri 18th March - Year 4 Residential

Friday 18th March - Red Nose Day

Friday 25th March - Teacher training day - school closed

Friday 8th April - last day of term



E-safety

Over recent weeks, an increasing number of issues have been brought to our attention involving some of the games that children are playing online or on games consoles. Some of these include; rough play on the yard, use of bad language and online name-calling. Whilst it is at the discretion of parents and carers which games children play, we would ask that you carefully consider the suitability of some of these games and ensure that children have the maturity to handle the content. Below we have included a helpful guide to Fortnite, which we understand is one of the more popular games that some of our children like to play. If you are ever worried about something that you see or experience online, please go to the Amble First School website and use the CEOP button to make a report. You can also report any concerns to school on the School360 page or by contacting us directly.



There's a very good chance you've heard of Fortnite, but what exactly is it? And why is it so popular amongst young people? Fortnite is an online multiplayer "battle royale" game developed by Epic Games, and is playable on Playstation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, PC and mobiles. It gained popularity in late 2017 and has since become the biggest game in the world, thanks to its rapid and engaging gameplay. As with most games, Fortnite itself is a highly enjoyable and safe experience, but it pays to be vigilant, as the safety is not water tight.



What parents need to know about FORTNITE BATTLE ROYALE



BATTLE ROYALE

Battle Royale games have become very popular over the last couple of years, and most tend to follow a very similar setup. Taking Fortnite as an example, 100 players drop into a map, loot buildings for weapons and armour and attempt to beat all the other players to be crowned victor at the end. If you've ever seen the Hunger Games movies, you'll have an idea of what this entails. Each game can take up to 20 minutes (assuming you last to the end) and can be restarted relatively quickly once 100 free players have been found.



IS FORTNITE ADDICTIVE?

Fortnite is at the forefront of gaming addiction discussions because it is so popular with young people. But whether it actually contributes to gaming addiction is up for debate. WHO (World Health Organisation) have classified gaming as a legitimate addiction, but this is not solely a concern with Fortnite. Signs of addiction can include irritability when not playing, lying about the amount of time played and a preoccupation with thoughts of the next gaming session. Realistically, it must be down to parents and carers to recognise these symptoms and act accordingly if they think they are developing.



FREE TO PLAY... OR IS IT?

While Fortnite is technically free to play (in that you can download and play it without paying) it does come with the caveat that spending money on things like skins and emotes in-game is heavily pushed to players. The currency used in-game is called 'V-Bucks' and can be bought with real money through the game's online store. It's worth remembering that these purchases are absolutely not necessary, are cosmetic only and that V-Bucks can be earned in-game with enough play time.



SEASONAL UPDATES

Every 10 weeks or so Fortnite is updated with a new season. This essentially adds new things like skins and emotes to the game, while also sometimes changing up the game map in interesting ways. These seasons are free to everybody and don't require additional money to play, though battle passes for each season can be bought with V-Bucks. A battle pass will typically allow a player to earn experience faster and gain fun in-game items by completing a host of daily challenges.



CROSSPLAY IS AVAILABLE

One of the wonderful things about Fortnite is that it can be played cross-platform. This means that no matter what platform a person plays on (PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One etc) they can play with friends who own the game on a different platform. To do this, an Epic Games account must first be created online (which is free) and then linked with your platform account. Doing this removes the age-old boundary of not being able to play together because you don't have the same console and opens up a whole new world of playing online with friends.



IS FORTNITE VIOLENT?

Fortnite has been rated by the ESRB (Entertainment Software Ratings Board) as teen, as it contains cartoony violence and the weapons and acts depicted in the game are some way removed from their real life inspirations. Characters don't draw blood when shot and instead of dying, they are simply beamed up off the map. Naturally, players younger than the recommended age limit will want to play the game and that should be at the discretion of parents and carers.



Top Tips For Parents



BUYING V-BUCKS

As mentioned, Fortnite does contain in-game purchases and microtransactions in the form of V-Bucks which can be bought with real money. If you do decide to let your young one spend money in the game, be sure to delete your card information afterwards as it can be very easy to purchase more items at the press of a few buttons. It's important to set a limit on any purchases (as mentioned they are absolutely not necessary to play the game) and a suggestion would be capping the spending at around £50 - this is the normal retail price of a game.



GAMING WITH STRANGERS

Fortnite Battle Royale is an online game, and as such, there is a chance that young children could come into contact with strangers who are randomly placed into their groups in a game. It's difficult to predict what another person might say or do in a game, so it's a good idea for friends playing together, to be grouped together. The only real countermeasure to interacting with strangers offered by Fortnite is to turn off all mic communications, which can be done in the game's settings. Using outside chat apps, like Skype or Discord while playing, is a great way to make sure you know who you're talking to and that nobody else is listening in.



LIMIT TIME, BUT BE FLEXIBLE

A game of Fortnite can last up to 20 minutes, so be flexible when it's time to put it away. The approach of 'one more game' as opposed to '10 more minutes' will stop any complaints that a match is still ongoing. Better still, play with your child and take it in turns; that way you're helping control the time played and can keep an eye on what they're experiencing.



TALK TO OTHER PARENTS / CARERS

If you're concerned about play time or spending money in the game, talk to other parents and carers of your child's friends. If you approach as a collective, it will be easier to know when their friends are online and you don't have to worry about who they're playing with. It can also help curb expectations on spending money on battle passes and skins if you stick together.



CAN DEVELOP SOME IMPORTANT SKILLS

It's often overlooked just how good gaming can be for young people. Fortnite encourages team play, quick and complex problem solving and communication; that's not to mention the lightning fast reflexes gamers can develop. While taking breaks to do other activities is of course important, there are benefits to screen time which might not be immediately obvious.



PLAY THE GAME YOURSELF

There's no substitute for sitting down and playing the game yourself to learn all about it. Fortnite is available for free on almost anything you can imagine, even your smartphone, so there's never been a better time to get involved and see what all the fuss is about. You never know, you might even be able to impress your children when you show them your impressive Victory Royale tally!

Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



<https://www.theguardian.com/games/2018/mar/07/fortnite-battle-royale-parents-guide-video-game-multiplayer-shooter>, <https://www.psychguides.com/behavioral-disorders/video-game-addiction/>, <https://www.polygon.com/2018/3/23/17146848/cross-platform-crossplay-ps4-xbox-pc-switch-ios-mobile-enable-friends-compatible-matchmaking#70IE7d>, <https://www.esrb.org/ratings/34948/Fortnite/>