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Headteacher

Mrs Kate Searle

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Dear Parents/Carers

RE Video gaming and Keeping Children Safe

At Cheapside we are committed to keeping our children safe and to promoting the safe, responsible use of technology. As such, we feel it is our responsibility to remind parents of the PEGI system as we have some concerns about the appropriateness of games that some of our children appear to be playing at home. In particular, our concerns are related to the content and language that our children are being exposed to when playing these games and how this is being played out at school.

1) Ratings denote the content and appropriateness of games

Since 2003 games have been age rated under the Pan-European Game Information (PEGI) system which operates in the UK and over 30 other countries of Europe, in addition, where a game showed realistic scenes of gross violence or sexual activity the game had to be legally classified and received one or other of the BBFC classification certificates given for videos/DVDs



The PEGI system has been effectively incorporated into UK law and video games will be age rated at one or other of the following age levels; which you will find on video game sleeves. Ratings do not denote the

difficulty or the enjoyment level of a game, but that that it contains content suitable for a certain age group and above

The PEGI age ratings will enable parents and carers to make an informed choice when buying a game for their children or allowing them to play a game.



It is important to note that the age ratings 12, 16 and 18 age ratings are mandatory and that it is **illegal** for a retailer to supply any game with any of these ratings to anyone below the specified age. The age ratings 3 and 7 are advisory only. **An 18 Rated game** is applied when the level of violence reaches a stage where it becomes gross violence and/or includes elements of specific types of violence. In general terms it is where the level of violence is so visually strong that it would make the reasonable viewer react with a sense of revulsion. This rating is also applied where the level of sexual activity is explicit. Any game that glamorises the use of real life drugs will also probably fall into this category.

2) Content Indicators

In addition to age ratings, video games will include indicators of the type of content and activities that the game includes in it. The descriptors are fairly self-explanatory but should be read in conjunction with the age rating given for a video game.



A violence descriptor with an 18 rated game will indicate a more extreme level of violence than a violence descriptor with a 12 rated game. This includes the type of language used and many 18 rated games included violent language and the use of swear words. Similarly, a sex/nudity descriptor with a 12 rated game will probably indicate sexual innuendo but a sex/nudity descriptor with an 18 rated game will indicate sexual content of a more explicit nature.

3) Parental responsibility

We feel it is important to point out to parents the risks of underage use of such video games, so **you** can make an **informed** decision as to whether to allow your child to be subjected to such images and content.

- The PEGI ratings system helps you make informed decisions about which video games to choose for your family.
- **A PEGI rating gives the suggested minimum age that you must be to play a game due to the suitability of the content.**
- As parents you can take direct control of what games your children play at home, how they play them and for how long through parental controls on video game systems such as the Xbox or Playstation.
- Choosing and playing appropriate age rated video games as a family is the best way to understand and enjoy them together.
- The stories, worlds and characters in **age appropriate video games** offer playful ways to engage with a wide range of subjects and fuels creativity, interests and imagination.
- The recently re-launched askaboutgames.com website provides further information about video games ratings and offers real family stories and suggestions on how video games can be a creative and collaborative experience for all the family.
- We also recommend that all parents visit the CEOP Think U Know website for more information on keeping your child safe online www.thinkuknow.co.uk

4) School support and action

Cheapside School is committed to addressing e-safety issues as part of learning and keeping children safe. If you feel that you, or your child, needs further support in keeping your child safe on the internet, please speak to your child's class teacher.

With thanks for your continued support,



Mrs Searle
Headteacher