

Dear Parents

We would like to bring your attention to some concerning apps being used by our children throughout Blackpool. By far the most popular games played by children aged 5 to 10 years old are Music.ly, Roblox, Fortnite and Minecraft.

This problem isn't unique to these games. Far from it. Throughout the online gaming world, wherever games are marketed to children, online predators lurk. This includes games on such consoles as Xbox, Playstation and Nintendo. Social games on these gaming consoles are often used as a platform to lure children away from the game and onto other platforms: eg. Facebook, Snapchat and even in some cases Skype. These games appeal directly to children under 12 years who are easy targets and lack the ability to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate requests.

The Awaken team, along with local police, have been speaking to a large amount of primary school children throughout Blackpool, raising their awareness of the online dangers and how to keep safe. 97% of primary age children we have spoken to are online unsupervised. Many disclosed that they have online friends that their parents didn't know about. More worrying is that many children stated that they had received 'in game' messages from 'Strangers' and they hadn't told their parents. Over 60% of Y6 students have told us that they have been sent rude pictures or messages online.

A large number of children we have spoken to appear to be talking to strangers in the games by using headsets. These can be just a normal set of headphones as well as the specific gaming headphones.

We advise every parent to check their child's account and look to see if they have friends that they do not know. We would also ask parents to check your child's 'in game' inboxes to check if they have been receiving inappropriate messages.

Thanks,

Awaken Team

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