Slaley First School

Friday 9th January 2026

Dear Parents,

Just like that Christmas is over and a new term has begun! I sincerely hope that you all had the most wonderful Christmas and wish you all a peaceful 2026. The children have settled well into school again and they are already familiar with their routine. We are looking forward to next Friday (16th January) when we will be showcasing our new 'Living Room' to parents who are free to join us.

After School Wraparound

Just a little reminder that After School Wraparound care is now available on Monday to **Friday** (3.20pm - 5.30pm.)

Clubs this half term …

Mondays – Multiskills Club until 4.30pm
Tuesdays – Tennis Club– until 4.20pm
Thursdays – Lego Club – until 4.20pm

Keeping Children Safe at Slaley First School

Designated safeguarding Lead – A. Hayward
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead - R. O'Neill

Little Hands, Big Flowers

Watch this space as our Little Hands, Big Flowers project enters its next stage!

Dates for the Diary (more dates will follow soon)

Friday 16th January - Living Room Launch. Times are as previously sent home. Coffee and sponge cake will be served!

Monday 19th January – Emotional Regulation sessions for parents at Whitley Chapel C of E First School. Please can all parents arrive at 1.50pm if possible. The sessions will be led by ladies from the Primary Mental Health Team who will lead a supportive session for Parents and Carers focusing on understanding emotional regulation in children. The workshop explores recognising and labelling emotions, identifying pressure points during the day, and responding to big feelings in a calm and supportive way. Parents are also introduced to practical strategies such as breathing, mindfulness, relaxation, and distraction techniques that can be used at home. There is still time to sign up if you are able to, please simply email admin@slaley.northumberland.sch.uk

Have a lovely weekend everyone!

Mrs Hayward 😊

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about
MINECRAFT

AGE RATING 7+

Minecraft is a beloved classic of modern gaming. First released in 2011, this open-ended 'sandbox' game of building and exploration still has over 140 million players who happily return to play it at least once every month. Minecraft has also been utilised for much more than just entertainment: it's sometimes used in schools to teach children coding, and it's also employed as a tool for computer-aided design, which is another valuable skill. Encouraging creativity and problem solving, Minecraft has plenty to offer gamers of all ages, and it's available on almost all video game platforms.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

PUBLIC SERVERS

Joining a public network (called a server) lets your child potentially interact with strangers through text chat. Some servers focus on building, while others are dedicated to role-playing — encouraging direct player interaction. Anyone can join public servers and connecting to one is relatively simple. Public server IP addresses (and therefore someone's location) are easy to find with search engines.

GRIEFING

Some people in Minecraft delight in purposefully damaging or destroying another player's creation. This is called 'griefing' and is a form of bullying: it intentionally spoils someone else's experience in the game by deleting hours of their work and forcing them to start from scratch. Many public servers treat griefing as a severe offence and frequently ban offenders.

ADDICTIVENESS

Minecraft's gameplay is relatively simple, and the outcome (when a child has built something new, for instance) can be extremely gratifying. This can make the game highly addictive. It's easy to lose track of time while playing Minecraft, causing committed young players to forget about other activities like homework or enjoying family time.

SCARY ELEMENTS

The visual design and gameplay of Minecraft is purposefully child friendly, so there's nothing too untoward in the game. However, some of the 'baddies' that can be encountered might prove a little too scary for very young players. In the game, certain enemies come out at night and are accompanied by audio — such as zombie moans and skeleton bone rattles — that may unnerve young ones.

ADDITIONAL PURCHASES

After initially buying the game, players can make optional extra purchases for cosmetic items and other bonuses. Minecraft Realms is an optional online subscription (requiring regular payments) that lets users run a multiplayer server to play with their friends. Most games consoles also need an active subscription to enable online play — so online gaming can quickly become an expensive hobby.

Advice for Parents & Carers

RESEARCH CONTENT CREATORS

There are a lots of Minecraft content creators who release helpful videos about the game on YouTube and Twitch. Not all of these, however, are suitable for children. Watching these content creators' channels yourself first is a safe way to find appropriate Minecraft videos to share with your children. This also helps you learn more about the game itself, and how your child plays it.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT MODE

Selecting 'Creative' or 'Peaceful' mode allows children to play Minecraft without having to contend with enemies. It's also a great way for you to get used to playing the game with them, since the difficulty level is lower. This allows you to work together on a long-term project, creating something special without the threat of moaning zombies or creepers damaging your build.

HOST A PRIVATE SERVER

The easiest way to find a safe server for your child to play on is to make one yourself. Hosting a server prevents strangers from finding it, unless they've been given the necessary joining details. A private server also lets you control who's allowed to enter and — if necessary — to ban someone who shouldn't be there. This is the closest equivalent to parental controls in Minecraft.

ENCOURAGE BREAKS

It's easy for the hours to fly by while your child is playing Minecraft, so reminding them to take regular breaks is essential. This is a useful way for them to learn good time management, which they'll benefit from as they get older. It will also teach them to play their favourite games in moderation — limiting addictive behaviour and allowing them to manage their day better.

TALK ABOUT STRANGERS

At some point in their lives, almost everyone needs to have contact with a stranger online. Talking to your child about online safety, therefore, is essential — as is having a plan in place for dealing with any hostile or difficult strangers. Ensure that your child knows never to tell a stranger about themselves online, and that they should come to you straight away if they do encounter a problem.

Meet Our Expert

Clare Godwin (a.k.a. Lunawolf) has worked as an editor and journalist in the gaming industry since 2015, providing websites with event coverage, reviews and gaming guides. She is the owner of Lunawolf Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books.

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