



## Newsletter

### 4th July, 2022

office@stjamesvaschool.co.uk  
head@stjamesvaschool.co.uk

It was so good to see you all at our Sports Day on Friday—after the past two years, it just felt so good to be a school family again and we were delighted that so many of you could come along. A special day indeed.

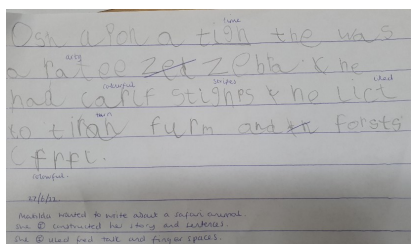
As we move into July, the calendar gets very full indeed, so if you weren't able to join us on Friday, hopefully you will be able to join in with some of the other events coming up.

This week saw the PSA Sponsored Scoot, which was really enjoyable for the children. The PSA are busy counting up the proceeds from this event, and are very grateful for all your support. Green Jays had a wonderful day out in the Forest on Tuesday—their behaviour was impeccable, as you would expect, and I know they enjoyed all their outdoor learning immensely. Mrs Rai and Mrs Warren both spent some time out of school on various training courses which will set us up well at the start of the new academic year.

Next week sees our Year 6 children start to visit their new secondary schools as part of their transition. I'm sure they will enjoy their days and will be very well looked after by our secondary colleagues. Robins and Whinchats are off to Woburn on Tuesday, some of our older children will be back at Biddenham School on Wednesday for a STEM Fair (Science, Technology, English & Maths) and Year 5 are off to Box End on Friday. I know many of you are helping with these trips—thank you for offering your time and giving us your support! On Friday, we will be welcoming Carole Bennett into school—Carole is the CEO of the Diocese of St Albans Multi-Academy Trust, which we have recently joined; essentially, she is my new boss. She has visited St James' before, but this time she comes to see us to formally welcome us into the Trust and celebrate our new, formal working relationship. We will also be sending home your children's end of year reports on Friday, so make sure you check bookbags when children come out of school.

With all good wishes for a happy and enjoyable week,

Maria & all the team at St James'





# 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 lot 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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### Term Dates

w/b 4th July	Various Transition Days for Year 6 pupils moving into secondary school
5th July	Robins & Whinchats Trip to Woburn
6th July	Kingfishers & Peacocks Stem Fair
7th July	Harpur Trust Art exhibition
8th July	Peacocks Trip to Box End
13th July	Moving Up morning—children spend time in new classes Parents Evening to discuss end of year reports queries, if necessary 4.00-7.00
15th July	Music Concert 1.00pm—parents welcome (children who have had music lessons will perform on the piano, guitar, recorder and violin)
18th July	Green Jays & Kingfishers concert at the Corn Exchange
19th July	Proms in the Playground 'Best of British' - whole school from 5.30pm
20th July	Leaver's Service 2.00pm
21st July	Last Day of term, own clothes, 1.30pm finish
22nd July	Jubilee Holiday

### Additional Information:

Proms in the Playground—classes, the choir, and the whole school are learning songs for a special Best of British concert. All children take part in this. This is held outside (so we pray for good weather) and you and your families are the audience. Bring blankets, chairs etc so you're comfortable. It lasts about an hour. Think music festival, but on a much smaller scale!

We've been reminded that in the past, we have allowed children to stay in school between 3.30 and the proms starting at 5.30. If it is easier for you, then children can stay at school. Please send them into school with a snack (and make sure they know it's not their morning snack!), and with the outfits they need for the proms. Children who normally go to after school club should carry on as usual with that. If you want to collect your child at 3.30, the gate will be open as usual; please return them to school at 5.00.

### Staffing Update

Sadly, Mrs Corby continues to be unwell and has been signed off work for another month. This means she will not be returning to school before the end of this term. I know the children in Year 4 will be sad not to see her before they move up into Year 5, and I'm sure you will all join with us in wishing her well in her recovery.



## Sunflower Diaries competition for Biddenham Village Show (at St James VA School on Sunday 11th September 2022)

After two years of covid restrictions Biddenham Village Show is back for **September 11th 2022!** This is a village show that has been running since around 1865, so there is a lot of history, and it needs everyone's support to keep it going!

There will be a series of competitions posted throughout the next half term for all age groups of children to enter. The first competition is for everyone!

### **SUNFLOWER COMPETITION!**

#### **Competition rules;**

1. Plant your sunflower seed (ideally now!)
2. Photograph the milestones of your sunflower growing
3. Add a few words to your photographs to explain what is happening, where it is growing (your house, grandparents' house, school etc...) and how high it is reaching.
4. Height measurement is from the base of the stem at soil level to the top of the stem (where the stem meets the flower). The stem can be extended to measure the full height of the plant.

Width measurement is the diameter of the seed head over the top of the flower (excluding the petals).

If you would like to email your progress, please ask your parent/carer to email the address below and we will post your updates on the Biddenham show website <http://www.biddenhamshow.org/>.

**By 1st September**, measure your sunflower **height and seed head width** by taking a photo with a **tape measure by the side** (a person may be in the photo holding the measure).

(photographs will appear on the website and at the Show, so by emailing you are giving us permission to use your photograph)

*Please don't forget to include your school year (or state over 19 if an adult), your name and address in your entry.*

Post your diary (if you kept one) and final photographs to [bidenhamsunflowers@gmail.com](mailto:bidenhamsunflowers@gmail.com) by 1st September.

8. Show judges will visit the top 3 entries in each category to verify their measurements, before the results are revealed on 11th September at the Show!