



SACRED HEART CATHOLIC SCHOOL

4 Richard Porter Way
PYMBLE NSW 2073

September 25, 2018

Dear Parents,

At school we are experiencing increasing references to 'gaming' as a reason for behaviours. Children are coming to school after having played games for many hours over the weekend or at night and when a challenge is experienced at school, children will often say 'that person is always picking on me in the online game too'. So the online game avatar becomes the child at school on the soccer field. Keeping up with the latest online gaming is a challenge for parents – but it is also impacting on behaviours at school.

During the past week, I have had discussions with children about a game called ROBLOX. Apparently JAILBREAK is part of ROBLOX collection of games which the children are also playing. If children wish to exclude others from their online game they simply 'unfriend' them.

At school we are seeing the children managing new levels of frustration in their interactions with **real** people rather than games. 'Unfriending' someone online becomes a playground issue at school. In doing some reading about ROBLOX, it is promoted as recommended for 8-18 years. I read the following comments (direct quote – not edited) and would suggest that parents make an informed decision about their child in primary school playing a game such as this.

Roblox has been called "the world's most popular game you've never heard of." In fact, this massive multiplayer online game has recently outstripped even Minecraft's user numbers. While the game may seem like an innocent digital playground for children, there are some frightening issues with its online community.

What is Roblox about?

Roblox is a vast online platform where kids can create and interact in what its makers describe as "immersive 3D worlds." Players are given the opportunity to create an avatar (player) for themselves and allotted a small amount of digital money to rent a house. Money to furnish and decorate the house requires real world money, with costs adding up fast. A variety of different outfits are also available to purchase which is a huge drawcard for many young children who want to make their avatar look as cool as possible. Players who don't buy upgrades may be mocked by other players and pressured into spending more.

Why is it such a risk to children?

But additional purchases are not the biggest issue with this game - the social interaction amongst players is. The purpose of Roblox is for players to interact and make friends. This is achieved by wandering around the online world and stopping to talk with other players within an unmoderated chat feature. Like any online multiplayer game, there is little to no control over the types of people or age limits of those playing the game. Despite the fact that strict chat filters can

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be activated - blocking inappropriate words and phrases - children are still susceptible to being targeted by online predators.

The game invites players to explore imaginary worlds of all kinds. Some of these are sexual in nature. One British dad who decided to check out the game his sons were obsessed with was shocked to discover avatars having virtual sex, ABC News reported in 2017.

"The chat function poses a real danger to children playing this popular game," explains ySafe psychologist Jordan Foster, a leading Cyber Expert at Family Zone. "With limited safety measures embedded within the game, children are open prey for predators to communicate with.

"Consider it similar to sending a child out into a real room filled with strangers, with no barriers in place to stop people being able to talk to whomever they like."

For these reasons, Ms. Foster regards Roblox as unsafe for children under the age of 12 and possibly older children as well.

I am NOT a gaming expert but I am aware of behaviours that are presented here at the school. Please ensure that your child is not railroading you into allowing them to play a game – ‘because everyone else’s parents are letting them play’. I would also be very careful about the filters that are promoted to allow access to such games. As the quote above says, you wouldn’t allow your child to play in a room filled with strangers.

As I did some research about this issue I did stumble across another ‘wake up’ call about technology and the impact on children. Please watch the following self-explanatory clip.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YacGL3iOmm4>

Once again, I am NOT a gaming or technology expert and throughout the year in newsletters we regularly suggest that parents look at the eSafety Commission which is a good source of information about online safety issues.

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/esafety-issues/online-gaming>

Yours truly,



Mary Hor
Principal