



Headteacher:
Mr D A Mackenzie
BA (Hons) NPOH

Freshfield Road
Formby
Liverpool
L37 3HW

01704 873100

enquiries@
formbyhighschool.com

www.
formbyhighschool.com

@FormbyHigh

E-Safety Guidance Pokémon Go

You may be aware from the news that there is a new mobile phone app that can be called Pokémon Go. The app is currently very popular amongst our students across all year groups and as we begin the summer break I would like take this opportunity to provide some information about the app and guidance for its safe usage.

What is Pokémon Go?

- A smartphone game that allows users to interact with the real world using the phone's camera and GPS capabilities.
- The game uses augmented technology to allow players to catch Pokémon in real life. Players will see a map of their current location that is super-imposed with their character and all of the game elements.
- As players move around, different types of Pokémon (rats, snakes dragons etc) will appear, depending on where they are and what time it is.
- The idea is to encourage users to travel around the real world to catch these 'wild' Pokémon in the game.
- Different types of Pokémon can be found in different types of terrain and some types are easier to find in certain geographical locations. If players want to hatch an egg (to produce a rare Pokémon) then they will need to walk: each egg requires 2 to 5 km walk before it will hatch.
- When a player reaches Level 5 they also have the opportunity to unleash their Pokémon on 'gyms' – normally located at real-life local places of interest – to do battle with other people's Pokémon characters. The people need to be at or near the same real world location.



What do parents need to be concerned about?

- The general lack of awareness players have for the world around them has led to accidents - running into things, falling and wandering into hazardous places.
- You need a Google account to sign up to play the game and there have been reports that the app is automatically granting itself permission to access people's Gmail and Google Drive accounts, which could leave them open to hackers.





- Security experts have spotted a malicious version of the Pokémon Go Android app that has been infected with a remote access tool that gives attackers full control over the victim's phone.
- The immersive nature of the game may make some players more trusting of strangers if they are fellow gamers, but children still need to apply the same safety rules that they would use for online gaming.
- A game that makes children exercise and talk to each other and one that adds a fresh perspective to familiar surroundings shouldn't be demonised. But you need to ensure that your child is aware of the dangers before playing and remain safe while using it.
- There are some aspects of the game that many parents will want to talk to their child about before deciding if they will let them play it.
- If they want to venture out without you, make sure they do so with a friend.
- Let them know that they don't have to walk around while staring at the map on the screen. So long as the game is open on their phones they can hold their mobile in their hand or even put it in their pocket while they walk. If a wild Pokémon appears in their immediate area, the phone will vibrate to let them know.
- Let them know that you don't have to visit a Pokémon's exact location to capture it – you can stop at a nearby area where it's safe (i.e. not in the middle of a busy junction). So long as it appears on their game map, they can capture it.
- As with online gaming aliases, remind your child to choose a username that won't identify either them or where they live. If your child captures a 'gym' their username will appear and anyone in the area who touches the gym to see the details of who is in control of it will see it.
- Apply real world caution when visiting Pokéstops and gyms. Your child might make some new friends at these places – as they might in a shopping centre, park or cinema, but they need to be aware of the dangers. Make sure you know where your child is going who they will be accompanied by or, even better, offer to take them there yourself.
- Be wary of 'lures'. There is an item called a 'lure' that players can purchase with in-game tokens. They drop it at a Pokéstop and Pokémon are lured to that stop for around 30 minutes. You can tell when someone has dropped a lure at a stop because it will have confetti flying out of it on the map. There is the potential to capture lots of Pokémon, but this feature basically gives people the power to lure a group of kids to a certain spot for 30 minutes, so you'll need to use your judgement and set rules with your child about how to handle this situation if it occurs.
- Remind them to save some phone battery for the journey home. The game uses a lot of a phone's power and will run out of battery faster than normal. Make sure they check their battery level and start heading back when it's low. There's a battery saving mode in the game settings, which will dim the screen and use fewer resources while they are walking around.

The NSPCC have also released a guide for parents to keep children safer whilst playing on the app. This can be found at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/pokemon-go-parents-guide/>