**Games, Geeks and the Parent's Dilemma - Audio**

*Teachers*

Key:

**AS: Angela Saini**
B: Boy
G: Girl
F: Female
VC: Victoria Cooper
KS: Kieron Sheehy
PS: Phil Stuart
TF: Tia Fisher
J: James
C: Caroline
V: Vicky
Fel: Felicity
Ba: Barney
DH: Dawn Hallybone
Mi: Miranda
Ma: Martha
H: Hamish
JPG: John-Paul Gayford

**AS: Suites of PCs and interactive whiteboards are common place in today's classrooms. Information and communication technology or ICT is a statutory subject on the school curriculum from Key Stage 1 upwards teaching children to use the computer based technology they need for the future.**

**Schools do not generally allow their pupils to play their own games during the school day and restrict access to personal smartphones and other devices. However, teachers do notice the influence of video games on the lives of their pupils.**

F: I definitely am in favour of games that have some educational value and get the stimulus for their imaginations. But, in general, I think that the games that the children play at home stop them from doing other things.

**AS: This primary school teacher believes they have detrimental effect on her students.**

F: They stop the children from interacting in a social way with other children, they stop them from physical activity and they stop them from having proper conversations with other children. They are lacking in the social skills. The child is sitting in a room on their own on a computer. That's not the same as

face-to-face interaction and social skills that you learn from play. That's how children learn; they learn through play.

Children, you know, they've got lots of imagination but they also need to be fed with culture and reading book and ideas. They are not getting that from playing a game. They come into school and we do creative writing. Some of them, really, have not got anything to write about. "What did you do in the holidays?" "Well, I played on the computer." And then you've got the other children and you can see the difference between those children who have actually gone and done stuff, that's where they learn.

**AS: So, played in excess and without being counterbalanced by other activities, gaming can appear to have a detrimental effect on a pupil's performance, as we have heard from Barney in the previous track.**

**However, a number of teachers have been exploring the ways they can extract educational uses from commercially available games. Dawn Hallybone is a junior school teacher who does just this.**

DH: We use off-the-shelf games so commercially available because they are very high spec, great graphics, great storyline, which appeals to the children and we look at those and see how they can be integrated. So, for example, Mario Kart lends itself to mathematics work, to decimals, to working out averages, to working out speed times. Endless Ocean is a lot calmer so it leads itself to descriptive writing imagining you are a diver under the sea, and then it can be linked across the curriculum.

**AS: Video games are a major feature of lessons taught by this secondary school teacher, John-Paul Gayford.**

JPG: For some young people that I work with, video games and gaming is the primary media that they engage with and so as a teacher I find it is extremely useful to engage with that. What I feel I am doing in my school is probably the same as a large number of teachers at working independently all over the country. I am working to find ways to include games and games material in media lessons and English lessons.

When I get students to do narrative writing, which could go to facilitate game design, they are incredibly involved and you harness an enormous amount of energy.

**AS: Since 2006, teachers in Scotland have been encouraged to explore games based learning with an initiative called the Consolarium, set out by Derek Robertson and run by Education Scotland. Dawn Hallybone.**

DH: Informal networks have set up around the country in boroughs to support teachers of database learning networks, not necessarily supported by English Government or Welsh Government, unlike Consolarium, with Learning Teaching Scotland.

**AS: In 2009, an EU report called for schools across Europe to use games for educational purposes, saying:-**

*'Video games can stimulate learning of facts and skills such as strategic thinking, creativity, co-operation and innovative thinking.'*

DH: I would say it's definitely a growing number of teachers can see what the games based learning can bring into the curriculum but also now it's not just about consuming but also creating games and looking at coding and looking at game mechanics as well.

**AS: The concern that children are passive recipients of video games, that it's not a creative activity, is reflected more widely in the computer world.**

**In the 1980s, the early days of home computing, children routinely learned how to write lines of code and programme their computers. Now, we have much less of an idea of how a computer works. This was a concern for computer scientist, Eben Upton. He has designed the Raspberry Pie. It's an affordable credit card sized programmable computer aimed at schools and colleges, it's intended to create a new generation of computer programmes and bring coding skills back to the classroom.**

**Schools also play a role in guiding pupils and their parents on the social and safety aspects of online gaming and social networking.**

F: My main idea about it is that it should be used in moderation like everything else and it should have a balance within a child's life.

**AS: This deputy head teaches online safety to pupils and their parents.**

F: I think it starts from setting up a contract with your child. Very early on, when they are two or three years old and then changing the contract as they get older; making sure that their computer isn't in their room, that it's outside, so you can actually see what your child is doing and they are aware that you have access to anything that they are using online. And making sure that you are a very good role model as well for your child – not being on your computer all the time, making sure that you are sociable with your child.

KS: My research focus is on inclusion and inclusive education.

**AS: The beneficial possibilities of video games is something that's at the heart of Dr Kieron Sheehy's research at the Centre for Childhood Development and Learning.**

KS: So that would encompass special educational needs, perhaps assistive technology and new ways of interacting, new ways of bringing children together to learn curriculum content, to learn from each other and looking at developing pedagogies, ways of teaching that make the best use of the technologies that are emerging now. This might include virtual worlds. Virtual worlds play a significant role in the lives of most children in this country. The sort of online gaming environments are entered by millions upon millions of children around the world.

Children who find real world standard schooling difficult are children who perhaps have problems with certain aspects of social interaction or particular language and communication difficulties, can find the experience of being online very positive ones, very engaging, and helpful places for them to interact with other children, which they find difficult in their school lives.

Whether that's like something like, World of Warcraft or Second Life, Moshi Monsters, up to RuneScape, there is thousands and thousands.

Children who might find these environments helpful, for example, will be those perhaps who may have a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome or autism, where the subtle nuances of social interaction are very difficult in the real world to manage because they are fast and they are not picking up all the time. That's lessened and they have much more control over that online and that's what those children told us that they like.

**AS: In the next track we'll be finding out more about this work at the Open University and discussing some of the points raised throughout this programme with the Open University's Dr Victoria Cooper and Kieron Sheehy. Psychologist, Mark Griffiths, will be there too and young gamer, Barney.**