

# The Bulletin

Friday 10th November

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been a very busy week and one where we have seen the best attendance figure for some of our students in the centre for some time. Many of them achieved 100% attendance to school or significantly improved on the previous week – well done! Teachers have commented this week on the impact that this has had on the student’s learning because they come in to the lesson with no gaps or catching-up; this means they can fully engage with any new content straight away. THANK YOU for your continued support in ensuring your child is here every day.

Next week we look forward to welcoming new students to the centre and other students beginning tuition at home whilst they convalesce. We are particularly proud of students this week that have begun to have tuition in the centre, the resilience and determination they have demonstrated makes all the staff very proud.

Wishing you a lovely weekend.

Louise.

**Our vision:**

- To provide a safe, enriching and nurturing environment, with wellbeing at its heart; where children and young people, can learn, gain confidence and thrive.

**Our values:**

To promote **resilience, self-confidence, tolerance,** and **respect**

**Our aims: ‘Building confidence for the future’**

**Our value this half term is**

**TOLERANCE**

**SAVE THE DATE -Christmas Lunch**

All centre students and their families are invited to a Christmas lunch on **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December at 12:30pm.**

Further details to be sent nearer the time.



**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November – 4-4:30pm**

We invite all parents and carers of our year 11 students to a “Maximising Potential” evening in light of the upcoming mock exams. This will be run by Ann-Marie and Louise and will discuss the best way to support your child through the 2 week exam period.

This will be an **online** meeting via Google Meet.

<https://meet.google.com/zbn-hspo-spz?hs=122&authuser=0>

We are in the process of renewing our Optimus Wellbeing Award. All parents should have received a questionnaire in their inbox this afternoon – we would be very grateful if you could complete this.



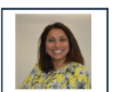
We invite all to wear odd socks to school on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November. It’s a great way to celebrate what makes us all unique in Anti-Bullying Week! All students will be taking part in a workshop on Friday morning about what Bullying is and how we can all work together to stop it.



**Here to listen: our safeguarding team**



Designated safeguarding lead (DSL): **Louise Togher**  
Contact details: **07735826382**  
**ltogher@ashleycollege.brent.sch.uk**



Deputy DSL: **Ranjna Shiyani**  
Contact details: **07900192271**



Deputy DSL: **Anne-Marie Mika**  
Contact details: **07866217122**

Next week we will be celebrating Anti-Bullying week. This is an opportunity to spotlight bullying and consider the steps we can take together to stop it. Anti-Bullying Week 2023 will take place from Monday 13th to Friday 17th November, with the theme ‘Make a Noise About Bullying’!

As a parent or carer, you are a vital piece of the puzzle in tackling bullying. You have a unique role to play in guiding and supporting your child through their school years and there are many positive steps you can take to help keep your child safe from bullying and harm. One of the steps is knowing when to ask for support.

Please see attached for resources. [Anti-Bullying Week 2023 - Parent Pack \(anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk\)](https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November is World Diabetes Day. This holds great significance for our school as we have actively supported numerous students managing diabetes. Our commitment stems from a passionate belief that, with proper support and comprehensive healthcare plans, all students with diabetes can access a complete and typical education. This day serves as a reminder of our dedication to fostering an inclusive environment, ensuring every student’s well-being is prioritised for their successful academic journey.

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many issues which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit [nationalcollege.com](http://nationalcollege.com) for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about MICROTRANSACTIONS

Microtransactions (often abbreviated as "MTX") are digital purchases made within an app or game to unlock extra features or additional content such as new levels. A popular sub-set of these are loot boxes, which contain a selection (usually random) of virtual items: from character skins to game-changing equipment like better weapons. Microtransactions (and loot boxes in particular) are now widespread in apps and games, but concerns persist that they normalise gambling and can foster addictive behaviours – especially among younger players.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### GATEWAY TO GAMBLING?

Microtransactions have been criticised for promoting gambling-adjacent behaviour in children. Research has also suggested that exposure to the loot box system could affect the likelihood of a young person suffering gambling harms later in life: children who purchased or used loot boxes in the last 12 months were found to be more likely to have gambled during the same period, as well.

### ADDICTIVE NATURE

Microtransactions (and loot boxes especially) could lead to young people displaying compulsive behaviours. Loot boxes are designed to be addictive, and the sought-after prizes they contain are dispensed at random. This means that young gamers might not get what they want straight away, causing them to spend more money as well as additional time gaming.

### PAYING TO WIN

In many popular games (the FIFA series being a notable example), microtransactions make it far easier to succeed – which is a concern because children can often find it difficult to keep track of their spending. Once a child starts making in-game purchases, they may continue buying to keep up with their friends and other players – sometimes without recognising the mounting real-world cost.

## EXCLUSIVE CONTENT

### DATA COLLECTION

To allow a young person to complete microtransactions, many app and game developers collect personal data such as their name, address, email, geolocation information, photos, payment details and so on. Even if this data remains secure (which is by no means guaranteed), there's always the chance that it will be used – and possibly sold on to third parties – for marketing purposes.

### AFFECTING DAILY ROUTINE

Online games tend to revolve around repeated loops of activity that can affect purchasing decisions and potentially influence children's spending patterns. This could lead to your child not only handing over more money but also adjusting their daily routine to match the game's schedule – potentially impacting more important elements of their day, such as homework and family time.

### SATELLITE SPENDING

If you've linked a payment method like a debit card or a PayPal account to your child's game or app, it's wise to keep a close eye on their microtransactions to ensure they aren't racking up a large bill. Letting a child have access to your card (if they're still too young to have their own) or other means of payment could also lead to them spending beyond the apps and games they normally use.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### DO YOUR RESEARCH

It's important to have a serviceable idea of whether the games your child plays use the loot box system (even if it goes by a different name) or include the option of buying items, equipment and so forth. If so, it's crucial to help your child understand that this costs actual money, and that they shouldn't feel pressured into making any purchases.

### CHAT ABOUT 'CHANCE'

It may help to explain to your child that many microtransactions involve an element of chance: they could pay money and still not get what they want in return. Emphasise that – while not usually costing much individually – these in-app and in-game purchases can soon add up. Talk to your child about how spending their money in a game or app means they have less to use in the real world.

### (GIFT) CARDS ON THE TABLE

Investing in an in-game currency gift card can be a useful way of helping your child get to grips with budgeting. If you buy, say, a £10 V-bucks Fortnite gift card, monitor how long it takes them to spend it. When they come to you asking for more, you could make it the starting point for a conversation about how quickly that money went and how they could earn their next gift card.

### STOP SPENDING AT SOURCE

You might decide that the wisest strategy is to remove the potential for spending money on microtransactions. If so, most games, apps and devices have options in their settings to help you manage what your child can spend – or to disable that function altogether, preventing them from buying additional items for their games or boosted functionality for certain apps.

### WATCH FOR THE SIGNS

If you're worried that your child's passion for a particular game or app may tempt them into habitual spending on microtransactions, it's important to remember the indicators of addictive behaviour. Irritability, a lack of concentration and prioritising recreational screen time ahead of homework or mealtimes could all be signs that you need to have a conversation about a more balanced routine.

### Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech website *The Inquirer*, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.

