

E-Safety Alert for Parents 21/01/2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Today all schools received a safeguarding notification about an application (app) that some children are accessing. It is called Avakin Life. I have included the link to the alert below and copied the reasons why this application has been flagged as a risk to children.

Please check if you child(ren) are using this application and follow the guidance below. The app is aimed at 17+, however, younger children have been using the app. The app is not suitable for primary aged children and we recommend that if your child is using the app, that you delete it.

Thank you for your continued support.

Mr Simon Dickie

Assistant Headteacher

https://oursaferschools.co.uk/2021/01/20/avakin/?utm_campaign=Avakin%20Life&utm_medium=email&_hsmt=107379669&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8ouwRZhQgfbMYIHTOrd0mLlqZqmmfc8q42liSZdiaZ93JeP_R-QpLsfjGKGwxNnw3hCitfTnbUugAWlZelpG_pNhUiBwC9aHVXMPWDMZVPpNQE2Y&utm_content=107379669&utm_source=hs_email

Safeguarding Alert – Avakin Life

Why have you received this alert?

We have been alerted to the risk of potential grooming and abuse on the Avakin Life platform by members of our network.

Our online safeguarding experts have reviewed and tested the game, and discovered a number of potential risks to young people.

The major risk is that users can easily access children and young people online via private and public chats.

2 million people currently use the platform, with **half a million using it every day.**

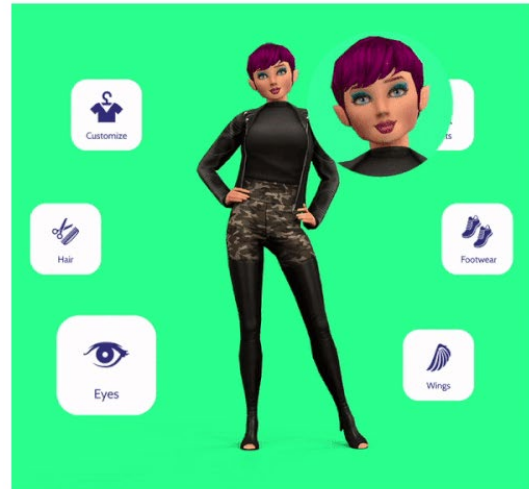
Once a user has kitted out their character, they can embark on 'endless adventures' in what the company says is 'a world with no limits'.



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Key Risks

- ❗ Our testing found that users under 13 would see a message saying they were not eligible to play, but they could still enter the game, if they lied about their age to bypass the age verification process
- ❗ The platform uses public chat rooms, live events and one to one conversations to facilitate interaction
- ❗ The game was initially designed for users aged 17+ but now allows children aged 13+
- ❗ Despite a fun design, it isn't suitable for children due to the suggestive nature of chats, actions and 'meet-ups'
- ❗ There is evidence that the platform has been used to groom young children internationally



©Avakin Life Official (YouTube)

So what should you as a parent, teacher or safeguarding professional be aware of?

- ❓ **Anyone** can start a conversation with a user
- ❓ Direct messages are called 'whispering' when two users are in the same venue
- ❓ Users can communicate privately at any time, if they are friends
- ❓ The clothes options for Avatars can create sexualised characters
- ❓ There are references to drugs and alcohol
- ❓ New users are awarded coins for in-app purchases
- ❓ Users can buy each other online 'gifts' such as outfits and even apartments which may facilitate online grooming
- ❓ Linking other social media accounts such as Facebook and an email address also earns more coins

Our Advice

- ❗ Engage young people in a conversation about keeping safe online and who they would talk to if someone made them feel uncomfortable
- ❗ Check that they understand what they should do if they see something online that upsets or worries them
- ❗ Use our resources to support the children in your care to stay safe online
- ❗ If you have concerns about online abuse and exploitation. You can also submit an online report to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) by clicking [here](#)



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Blocking and Reporting on Avakin Life

- ❌ **Blocking** – Once a user is blocked, they can't contact you or join you in venues throughout the game
- ❌ **Reporting** – You can report a user to the company if you feel they have breached guidelines – this is called filing a 'Grief Report'
- ❌ **Be aware** – There is no way to make an account completely private