DAIGON ESPORTS

Heads and Schools Esports Handbook

Part 1: Why introduce esports in schools?

The benefits of esports and supporting evidence

Esports is more than just gaming – it nurtures vital skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, communication, digital literacy, creativity, and resilience. Well-structured esports programmes are shown to boost student engagement, support behaviour management, and enhance emotional wellbeing. For some pupils, representing their school in esports may be their first opportunity to shine. For others, an after-school esports club becomes a space where they feel they truly belong.

Research supports this approach showing that playing video games enhances spatial awareness, memory, multitasking, and creative problem-solving. Participation also promotes positive friendships, self-esteem, and inclusion within the school community.

Suggested reading:

- **Spatial attention and multitasking skills**
  Feng, J., Spence, I., & Pratt, J. (2016). Playing an action video game reduces gender differences in spatial cognition. Psychological Science, 18(10).
  https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01990.x
    - Key findings: Just 10 hours of action gaming can improve spatial attention and mental rotation. Regular play sharpens multitasking and focus.
- **Memory and creative thinking**
  Gray, P. (2015). Cognitive benefits of playing video games. Psychology Today.
  Available at: Psychology Today
    - Key findings: 3D games can improve memory recall and reasoning; even brief sessions enhance creativity.
- **Friendships, belonging and self-esteem**
  Digital Schoolhouse research
    - Findings: 67% of pupils reported stronger friendships from esports tournaments; 95% retained or built on these connections over time.

Addressing common concerns: why esports should not be feared

Understandably, some school communities raise concerns about screen time. Structured esports, however, differs from passive consumption. It is social, active, collaborative, and managed. At DAIGON, we ensure games are age-appropriate, access is safeguarded through private school accounts, and online safety is built into every activity.

How esports complements the curriculum

Esports seamlessly integrates into school curricula and extracurricular programmes. Esports enhances learning across the curriculum and beyond. Activities develop strategic thinking, digital literacy, leadership, and collaboration. Esports is also inclusive, offering an alternative arena where pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND can thrive.

Being proactive – not reactive

Esports is rapidly becoming a prominent part of global culture and education. Schools that proactively embrace esports can effectively manage student participation and shape positive digital behaviours. Being proactive in esports implementation positions schools to harness its educational potential responsibly and effectively. The global video game industry now exceeding $333 billion, esports also connects pupils with future careers in digital, creative and STEM fields.

Safeguarding best practices

Safeguarding students is paramount and DAIGON prioritises students' safety by only selecting age-appropriate games using international rating standards (PEGI), providing secure platform access through school-managed accounts, and incorporating comprehensive online safety education into all esports programmes. Schools should treat esports as they would any other pupil-facing activity – with risk assessment, adult supervision, and clear behaviour expectations.

Managing screen time

DAIGON's approach is to distinguish between screen *time* and screen *use*. Our activities are planned, purposeful, and collaborative. Structured esports activities prioritise active engagement and skill development rather than passive consumption, aligning gaming sessions with educational goals and holistic development.

Case study: COBIS x DAIGON esports competition

The COBIS and DAIGON partnership demonstrated the power of esports in fostering student engagement, inclusivity, and essential skills. Over 90 teams from 31 schools across 20+ countries participated, highlighting esports as a platform for students to build digital collaboration skills, improve behaviour and social connections, and gain global citizenship awareness through international interactions. *Read the full COBIS x DAIGON case study here*.

Part 2: How to introduce Esports in your school

Identify a lead member of staff

Any enthusiastic teacher can lead an esports programme with the right support. DAIGON offers full training for staff, even those without prior gaming experience. Passion for pupil success is the only requirement.

Running an esports team is much like running any school sports team. Teachers quickly see pupils

stepping into leadership roles, collaborating on strategies, and showing real pride in their involvement.

What about the costs?

Esports does not require major funding. Many schools start with existing IT infrastructure – desktops, Chromebooks, or iPads. Start-up costs are minimal and primarily relate to optional game licences or accessories. As interest grows, schools may choose to invest in higher-spec hardware.

Managing your esports programme

Effective esports management involves clearly defined objectives and structured programming. DAIGON supports schools by providing session outlines with specific educational objectives and regular evaluations to track and support student growth, ensuring alignment with school educational goals.

Fitting esports into your timetable

Esports programmes can easily begin as extracurricular activities, minimally impacting existing timetables. Esports works well as a lunchtime or after-school club. Once embedded, schools often choose to integrate it into computing, business, or PSHE lessons.

As schools observe the benefits, programmes can naturally expand to incorporate competitive tournaments and curricular integrations into subjects like IT, business studies, and personal and social development.

James Luxford, Queen Ethelburga's Esports Co-ordinator – has to say:

"Esports can form a part of many different lessons. Integrating simple esports warmup exercises such as blindfolded Pac-Man (you can see this in action here) gets students talking and animated. Minecraft Education has hundreds of lessons on just about every topic you can think of, and at Queen Ethelburga's we have tremendous success having students go through Minecraft worlds with worksheets, using the information in the game to fill in the answers. Students engage more in this than just searching through a textbook to find the info".

Read more about how to get started with esports here.

Example lesson plans or activities

- **IT:** Pupils analyse data and review performance to refine team strategies.
- **Business Studies:** Plan and deliver an esports tournament, covering budgeting, marketing, and logistics.
- **PSHE and teamwork:** Build communication and leadership skills in a structured, goal-oriented environment.

Read more about the BTEC in Esports here.

Gaining parental support

Parents are key partners. We recommend clear, transparent communication that highlights the educational value, safety measures, and skills pupils will gain. DAIGON provides a dedicated *Parent Handbook* to support your engagement strategy.