

Q Julia Bishop (researcher)

A Melanie G (after-school family club organiser, Abbeycliff Primary School)

Q So thank you for resuming, Melanie, this interview. So I just wondered I think we did touch on this earlier. So when you're using technologies we were talking about golden time, and I was thinking you were, you were talking about the way you engage with them first of all, I think, and how you sort of start them off maybe, sometimes?

A Yeah. You know, some children are not as confident as others. And so they just need a little bit of guidance. You know, we give them something to either research or look up, you know, Google. And it could be, you know, at this time of year it's a picture of Lapland or Santa or find out what you can about Harry Potter. Depends on their theme. You know, things that they're interested in.

Q I was going to say, do you ask them to get suggestions?

A Yeah, definitely.

Q Yeah. And so will they type that in? Will they speak it? Will you type it? How do you sort of support that?

A They will... If they can they'll have a go at typing, if not they'll say to me, how do you spell...

Q Yeah, and then you type it in.

A Well no, I tell them, I will...

Q Oh, and they...

A I will spell it out. And so let them type it in.

Q Yeah. Do you ever use the voice?

A The, not really, no.

Q No, no, okay. I just wondered.

A Maybe that's something we could look at. Be a good idea.

Q [Laugh] I know that some of the focus children use the voice-activated...

A Definitely.

Q But also I know that people are frustrated with it sometimes. I've heard it said, oh, you know, I can't make it understand the way I speak. You know? So there's...

A This is not related, I've got a two-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter who, all I hear from her is, Alexa. That's all I hear. Because she wants...

Q Do you mind me recording this? Cos actually it's sort of relevant and I'll ask you a bit about your own experiences.

- A No, no. She's, she'll be three in April next year. And she loves, you know, songs. You know she, she calls it Sleeping Bunny, so then she can lay on the floor. Alexa, play Sleeping Bunnies. Alexa, play Thingy Shark. Baby Shark.
- Q Yes, Baby Shark.
- A Oh, you know? And, but she can speak to Alexa and Alexa can understand, understands even at that age, and it's brilliant. But she can do it herself.
- Q Yeah, absolutely. And does it activate any screen or is it more audio that it's...?
- A It's audio.
- Q Yes. We've seen a bit of this in some of our research.
- A Yeah, but she'll play on your phone or, you know, she's got a tablet, coming from Santa. Just makes you wonder what we would do without it. Because everything revolves around it. Everything revolves around it and when you think about how much we use it in school, you know, we use technology, and but then you balance that with keeping them safe while doing it, you know, so we have firewalls in place in school. You know, we've... When it comes up to Safer Internet Day we run parent courses. You know, like a workshop for parents. You know, to keep your child safe, put controls on there. And things like that. You know, make sure your child, you know what your child's doing online. Cos it is scary.
- Q I was going to ask you if you have any concerns around those sorts of things.
- A Oh, we do have, we do have incidents that come into school where there's been messages sent. You know, some can be quite, like, can be quite hurtful, you know?
- Q Mm, mm. Is that peer to peer?
- A Yeah. But then they bring it into school. So yeah, so they bring, you know, things that have happened over Messenger or on Snapchat and things like that. You know, mainly older girls. And I'm talking, you know, Years 5/6 girls.
- Q 6 and 5, yeah.
- A You know and they bring it into school and...
- Q Are they accessing their parents' phones to do this or have they got their own phones by that stage?
- A No, most of them have got their own. You know, we try, we ask them not to bring them to school. However, some do because they walk home on their own and it's their parents' way of keeping in touch. So they have to hand them into the office and collect it in the day.
- Q Yes. Yes. Yeah. And do you have other concerns about safety online, stranger danger online and things like that?
- A We do. We do all that, and we do things we work with Sheffield Sharks and they come and do a project called Respect. And that's all about anti-bullying and...
- Q Right, and that would include cyber bullying.

- A Yeah, cyber bullying, yeah.
- Q Mm, mm. Do you find those are effective with the young people here? Do you think you're getting through to them?
- A I think we do. And I think the fact that, you know, the Sheffield Sharks come in, so you've got these 6' 8" basketballers in school that even the most high-profile children will sit and listen to.
- Q Yes. Yeah, it's an interesting one, isn't it? They've got a physical presence, even though they might be talking about an online thing. Yeah. And the parents' response as well to the parent courses that you run, do you find that's mainly positive?
- A Yes. And we try to print off things off of the internet, you know? So they've got lots of handouts to take with them. You know? And places to go for help, yeah?
- Q Yeah. Do you run those yourselves? Or...?
- A Normally it's staff in school that do it. So I would be in there, but then, I mean, the last one [male name] ran for parents. You know he's a member of the pastoral team. But we have a computing lead in school. You know, who helps with, you know, that policy. And she delivers assemblies.
- Q Yes, it's Irina, I think, isn't it? I was speaking to her. Thank you. That's really interesting. Then do you think some technologies, we've talked quite a bit about the iPad. Would you say, you know, I mean, do you...? Are you particularly thinking that's a good thing for children? Perhaps better than keyboards or that sort of thing. Or is it just because that's what you've got here?
- A We do have, we used to have an IT suite. We used to have just, you know, computers in rows. And following an Ofsted inspection we had we decided to scrap the IT suite and replaced it with laptops and iPads. So we have a trolley full of laptops that we can wheel into a class if we need to. But each class have got their own set of iPads.
- Q Mmhmm. Oh right, every class has got its own iPads, yes. Is that one per child?
- A It is when you get to Year 6, cos they use them a lot for research for SATS and SATS practice. And, but more the younger end is sort of, you know, they have about eight for the class.
- Q Yeah. Yeah. And those oh, you mentioned a firewall...
- A Yes.
- Q That protects your school. And so that means... Is that ever a barrier? Does it mean that it's difficult to access some sites that you quite like to...?
- A It's, yes. You know, we couldn't, one point we couldn't get on YouTube. And so we have an IT technician that comes in twice a week, so then he has to unblock that. So I can get YouTube on my computer, however the child couldn't get it on their iPad.
- Q Right. Yeah. Yeah, I see. Yeah, so it can be problematic Cos maybe they'd want

to research using YouTube?

A Yes.

Q The better bits of it.

A Yeah. I mean, we can, we can ask for that to be lifted, for a certain project. You know, and some of them have got the camera disabled as well. Cos they were taking photos of people, and people were getting upset, you know, cos they were using Photobooth to make them look a bit funny and...

Q Oh, okay. Yes. So that was problematic, yeah.

A So some of them have got the camera disabled on them.

Q Right, and would that be the same on the when they get them for Golden Time as well, those ones?

A Yes.

Q Do you ever sort of play alongside them? If there's anything that, you know, you can be, actually in the game or something like that?

A Yeah, I mean, when I've done Golden Time and we do iPads, I always have an iPad myself. You know, so then they'll say I'm colouring this. I'll say, I'm going to colour it. You know, there's a game. And it's, you use... It's like you use elastic bands to build pictures or patterns. You know, and so I will do a Christmas tree. So then they want to copy, you know?

Q Oh, that's interesting. Is that with younger ones, or is it across the board?

A Across the board. Yeah. But you find that the, you know, the Year 6s will go for all the intricate patterns, whereas the younger ones are quite happy to just, you know, make us a yellow square, with a red square on the outside, and then a green square, and then a blue square. You know, and then it's suggestions. You know, well what else could you put? You know, put some diagonals in there and just make that picture a little, you know, that pattern a little bit better.

Q Mm, and that's the role you would play with...

A Yeah, encouraging.

Q That's the way you'd say it, yeah. Is that just by, that's your natural inclination to be like that?

A Yeah, yeah. Just, I mean, I like iPads. I, you know, I have my own. And...

Q Yeah, I was going to ask you if technology's important for you.

A Yeah, definitely.

Q Yeah, yeah. Do you think you draw on those personal skills that...?

A I think so.

Q Mm. Mm. And do you have games and apps like that at home? Would you have, like, crafty ones where you're drawing?

- A I do have crafty ones cos, I mean, I've got a granddaughter of seven and she, you know, she likes to have a go. And so there's things on, on my iPad that you think, why's she got that on? Like Snow White's dressing up. But, you know, [granddaughter] will sit for hours. And there's an app on my iPad called Sandbox, and so it's a picture and it's like a paint by numbers. And she will sit and play on that for, for ages.
- Q How do you discover these, are they things that have been recommended to you?
- A Yeah, people will say, have you tried this, have you tried that? You know? Or you, you know, I'll see someone say, what are you playing?
- Q Yes. Are they conversations that might happen in school as well?
- A Sometimes. You know, if you're sat in staff room, you know, I mean, we have a... Shouldn't have your mobile phone out in school time, but you know, at break time and lunchtime, then staff check their phones. And, you know, we're all nosy, you know, what're you doing?
- Q Oh, that's great. So you know, given how you are, are you sort of likely to initiate play with technologies sometimes, all the time? Do you...? Or is it a balance for you?
- A Whenever I can.
- Q Yes?
- A You know, I'm not always class-based. You know, Golden Time is, like, my time when I interact with the children, or at Family Feast. And, but, you know, if I can, then yeah, I will engage with them with technology cos I think it's brilliant.
- Q Yes. Yeah. And is it because you feel it's, you know, well why is that, would you say? Is it just fun? Or is there more to it?
- A I think it's fun, and I think there's a lot for them to learn. Yes, you balance that with keeping safe, but, you know, it's a big world out there. And but, you know, it's also getting them to understand, you know, things, we've got some children in school with Facebook accounts. You know? And, I speak to them about, you know, what they post. And that once it's out there it's in this open arena. You know? And they're like don't think so. And then I'll say, well I'll, you know what, I can find you.
- Q Mm. So will you demonstrate that? Will you do it...?
- A You know, talk to them about their security settings and, you know, because it's their parents' choice. The parents know they've got a Facebook account, even though they're underage. You know? But what I would just then do is just offer some advice about making sure that's a safe place.
- Q Right, yeah. So you don't judge them, you just get and work with what they're doing and where they're at. So with social media, it's not something we're really touched on, is that something else that sort of...?
- A I think it's big, you know, sort of from Year 4 to Year 6. A lot of them have got social media accounts and use it all the time.

Q Mm. Mm, mm. Yeah. Do you ever use things like FaceTime or things like that in [overtalking]?

A Only personally.

Q Oh, okay. Yeah, not in a school setting.

A Yeah. No, not really, not really in school, no. But I do personally. You know, my little granddaughter, yeah, I went to London two weeks ago, and I see her every day, Julia, cos I'm like an obsessed person with her. So I FaceTime her quite often. Yeah. Before she goes to bed at night.

Q Yeah. Yeah. And how old is this...? Is this the seven-year-old or a younger one?

A She's the one that's nearly three.

Q Yes, that's a whole sort of new family practice that's growing up. And how about sort of using you've mentioned that phones aren't allowed, sort of to be used by staff in school. So photographs and things like that, that are taken of the children, you mentioned you use, you know, to send home to parents and things like that. How would they be done?

A It's got to be on school equipment.

Q Okay. So what's...? Is that an iPad again?

A An iPad, take it on an iPad, and then send it that way. But, yeah, photographs have got to be on school equipment, not on your personal device.

Q Thank you. So yes, I think you've sort of touched on this already, but do you think, how do you think that Jacqueline and Noah might draw on their everyday experiences, perhaps, that they're bringing from home in their uses of technology, or their knowledge about technology and media? Do you see anything?

A I think Noah's more tech-savvy. But then, you know, he's that little bit older. I've not heard him speak very much about what he does at home, tech-wise. You know, but he's knowledgeable. When you hear the other boys talking about the games, particularly Fortnite, he's aware. You know, but I couldn't say whether he'd actually got it or whether, you know, whether Lindsay allowed him to play it or not.

Q No. Do you have a sense of that from any of the pupils here, would you say, are you aware...? Do you find you're picking up on everyday practices coming from the home, perhaps, or as the settings in terms of their tech use and what they're doing?

A Yes.

Q You're obviously picking up on the Facebook uses.

A Facebook, yeah, Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp. These are all things that all our kids have got on their phones.

Q Mm, mm. And is it mainly, did you say it's mainly the Y5s and Y6s who tend to have their phones?

A Y5s and Y6s with Facebook. You know. I once did an experiment and pretended to be a seven-year-old child on [unclear] Hotel. Just to prove to children that they said, you know, that I'm telling you I'm seven, but actually I'm not. But you can't see me, all you see is my avatar. So you have to be careful. You know, and that was just an experiment I did with some of the older children.

Q Okay, yeah. So you did it almost like, yeah, you just demonstrated that you could create the...

A Demonstrated that I can create the avatar and that profile to be something totally to what I... Totally different to what I am.

Q Yes, yeah. Oh, it's interesting, thank you. So one thing I haven't touched on, and I don't know if it's relevant, but internet-enabled toys, toys that would connect by Wi-Fi to the internet, or indeed we've touched on Alexa and those sorts of things. So, you know, do you have any concerns about those being used by children?

A We don't have them in school. But, I mean, I suppose at home it's parents' responsibility to monitor what is being access through what you're asking Alexa or...

Q Would you touch on any of your parenting courses?

A I think that would be something that we would do sort of, you know, for next Safer Internet Day. Because I think more and more people have got Alexa in their house.

Q Yeah, yeah. Yes, absolutely. And sort of the toys, you know, they're the ones, you know, don't you... They hook up by the Wi-Fi and stuff, so again, there's sort of also trying to get connected...

A And they're going to be so popular over this Christmas period, you know?

Q Do you kind of keep up in a formal way for your job, or is it kind of just informal knowledge that you're getting through your own family?

A Do you know what? I've got a granddaughter that likes, you know, to show me everything that's going on. And, but then it's talking to the children and they like to come and share their, you know, information about I've got this new, you should try this. Have you seen this? You know, and then, but it's part of my job to try, and it's hard to keep up with what's out there cos there's always something new. But I try.

You know, when they first, when they first spoke to me about Fortnite, I didn't have a clue. So I had to go and do a little bit of research. And then we'd got a little boy who's in our IRU. And he was talking about and it was this character that's on YouTube that he watches all the time. So I had to come and had a look and see who he was and what he did.

Q You just checking out for, so you can understand or...?

A Checking, yeah. But we've gone, we've gone through other stages, Julia, where we've had children absolutely petrified at Freddy. Fortnite at Freddy's [Five Nights at Freddy's?] or whatever, you know? And then saying to parents, you



need to put in parental controls to stop your child accessing this. Cos it's not appropriate. And it's no wonder they won't go to sleep at night.

Q Mm, mm. So you've kind of discovered this through talking to the child at school and then you'll go back to an individual parent and...?

A Yes.

Q So do you think any technologies or media are particularly positive or negative for children?

A I think if used appropriately, I think it's all good. I do. I think you can... There's so much to learn about using technologies. But it's got to be used safely, appropriately.

Q Yes. And would that include, you know, things like games consoles and things like that?

A I do like... I mean, I've never been on a games console, but my children have had them, you know, and I've seen children, you know, other children have got them. And I like it, and I like that they can play with their friend. Even though they're in a different... You know, a different street, different house. And but I do think that also has to be monitored by parents as to who's coming into their game.

You know, but then, you know, you've got the boys who say, 'oh, I beat him last night'. You know, and there's that healthy competition, you know, and I think that's good as well. I think a bit of healthy competition is good.

Q Yes. Yeah. That's really interesting, thank you. And well you've mentioned you have got some concerns about children's experiences with technology and media and you've been dealing with them. Are there any others that we perhaps haven't covered?

A No. At the moment, our main issue is messages between peers at night. You know? And then I've found recently that older siblings are getting involved. Which is making it a little bit more fraught. You know? And so parents are coming into school saying what can I do? You know? And my advice to them is, it's happened out of school, report it.

Q Right, yeah. To the police.

A You know? Report it.

Q Is this MSN mainly, or WhatsApp or...?

A Yeah, Messenger. [Unclear] WhatsApp. And, but, you know, and then, but we will sit and we will do some work with the girls, you know, talk to the girls about, you know, why it's not appropriate to send these kind of messages and that we can, even though you delete it, it's still out there. You know, someone can retrieve it.

Q Is it because there are kind of arguments erupting, or are you aware of hostilities and it's often...?

A I think it's just, I think it's so-and-so's fell out with so-and-so and don't be her



friend and, and it starts off small but then by the time you've finished you've got some inappropriate language thrown in there. Yeah? But then 'I've never said that'. But it's here in black and white. 'Yes, you have'. You know? And so that's a wake-up call for some of them. When they know that you've actually seen what they've typed and sent.

Q Yes. Yeah. Cos there's a sort of written record of something that might in the past have only been spoken.

A Yes.

Q Yeah. Again we've talked a little bit about data privacy in relationship to children. Is there anything you'd like to add, you know, to your concerns there and how you address them?

A Mm... What are you meaning?

Q Well we spoke about you know, sort of avatars and, you know, sort of obviously putting their personal information in there, their names and where they live or their photograph or anything like that.

A We encourage children not to. We speak to parents about not posting your child's picture on Facebook and things. And particularly, you know, they might put their child's picture, but their child will be in their school uniform. And then you've got the school name on their tie, or on their jumper. And I think that is so risky. You know, that opens a whole new can of worms, I think.

Q Yes, yes. Have you ever had any incidents of...?

A We haven't. We haven't. I've heard some horror stories in my job. Particularly from other schools. Where one child had put her picture on Facebook and she'd got a message then saying, oh, I used to go to that school. I'm a couple of years older than you. Actually, it was a guy and he wasn't. You know? And it was like, what're you doing this weekend? Oh, I'm going ice skating on Saturday morning with my friends. There's only one place to go. In Sheffield. You know? And it, and I think they don't understand the seriousness of that.

And I feel really, really bad sort of saying to them, you know, it's easy to find you. From a very, very small amount of information.

Q Mm. Yeah. I think you've also indicated that technology... So you, you feel overall they impact very positively on children's lives?

A I think so. I think so. I think in the balance I think the positives outweigh the negatives.

Q Yes. Yeah. And you sound like you're, you know, ready to sort of address the negatives in order to capitalise on the positives.

A Definitely.

Q Yeah. And where do you think that attitude sort of does come from? Is it things...? Is it shaped by your own experiences in technology?

A I think it is. I think it is. And that I've always loved technology. You know, and

when, in fact, at a computer, and I want it to do something, and it takes me a while, but then I'll go and try and find a shortcut to do it. And it's, you know, we've got a great IT technician here, you know, and I've always said to him, how can I do this? And, but there's a lot of work, in my job, a lot about making sure things are, if I'm sending things, then it's sent securely. You know, or password-protected and things like that. And passing on that knowledge to staff to make sure that any documents they're sharing...

Q Yes, I've encountered this the policy that you have of not actually using the children's names in emails.

Yes. So, final, final bit. This is about technology and wellbeing. And emotions. And I just, you know, you shared some really interesting thoughts earlier about sort of the animated way that children might share stuff that they had each learnt about via some sort of media source, and I just wondered if you wanted to, had any other thoughts about children's emotions, wellbeing, and their uses of technology.

A I will say that it impacts on sleep. You know, if they use it, you know, if parents don't limit the amount of time they're on media. You know, and the child's on his iPad 'til 8:30 and then going straight to bed. And then mum'll come and say, well he hasn't slept. You know, he didn't sleep well. You know? And we say, you know, turn it off. You know? Do something else. You know, read a book. You know, just some winding down time. Turn off the iPad, turn off the computer. And I'm as bad as anybody else. I must admit. The, you know, the last thing you do before I go, shut my eyes, is check my phone, and the first thing I do in the morning is check my phone.

But, you know, we do a lot of work with parents around sleep. And the impact that, you know, technology has on sleep.

Q Do you have any thoughts about technology actually in bedrooms?

A You see, I feel that personally, that it shouldn't be in the bedroom. You know, that is a place for sleep. And I think particularly with children in primary school, then anything they're accessing, you know, sort of online, needs to be done with a grown-up in the room. So that that's monitored, parents can see then what, what you're doing. And, yeah, so I don't, I don't think it should be in a, personally, in a bedroom.

Q Yes. Yeah. That's interesting. Is that something you would sort of suggest to parents, or...?

A Yes. And, but as then, some of them'll say, well, you know, he has a DVD on and falls asleep watching it. But quite often they'll say, oh, he's not slept well, and then that impacts on behaviour at school cos they're tired and they're getting a bit cranky.

Q Yeah. Yeah. And so do you think certain types of technology lead to expressions of joy and enjoyment from children more than other types or do you think there's...? They're all pretty much of a muchness in that way?

A I think it depends what they've got. And I think it depends on the child. Cos

some their whole world revolves around their tech, around their iPad and their mobile phone. You know, we had a Year 6 pupil last year who, you know, anybody'd think her life had ended because her, her parent took her phone away for a night. And she came into school next morning and she was so upset, and they haven't given me my phone back, and I don't know when I'm getting it back and... You know, but you took it for a reason.

Q Right. Yeah. So do you ever think about, you know, is it your role to kind of suggest balance or to create balance in lives, do you feel the one way or the other sort of thing?

A Yeah.

Q Do you try to give them...? You know, cos a lot of people say, oh you know, balance and mixture is what children need. Is that sort of a position...

A You know, try and give them a little bit of advice on how to balance that out.

Q And do you feel technologies are good for learning? Are you seeing that in the school, do you think?

A I think so, yeah. I think we see a lot of that. And children use iPads for research and, you know, for their projects and things like that that they do.

Q Yeah. That's great, thank you. Do you ever see children getting bored with using technology?

A Some. You know they'll say, I've had enough of that now. But then you'll equally get children that you said to them, your iPad time's finished, and they won't want to come off.

Q No. And are there any...? Is that, do you think that boredom thing, does that apply to any particular type of app or game? Or any particular type of device?

A I think it depends what they're doing. You know, I mean, we've got boys that won't do any writing. But yet they'll write a story on an iPad. You know, you'll say, well, you can do your writing on the iPad and they'll do it. But equally you've got girls that'll say, I don't want to do it on there. You know, can do it better. And so I think it's boys more, want iPads more.

Q Yeah. No, that's interesting. And just one final question, we've sort of come across iPads and technology being used just as sort of, like, children might talk to a pet or, or to Alexa even, about personal things, you know, that, on their mind. Or maybe look at photographs of family members.

A Mm.

Q I just wondered if you, that's something that I hadn't personally expected to encounter. It was a new thing to me. And I just wondered if you had any insights or experience of that sort of thing.

A No, not really. Not used in school.

Q No. No. That's fine. And do you have any other thoughts of any type that I've not asked you about or anything you feel might be relevant?

- A Oh, I don't know. I think we've pretty much covered a lot.
- Q Yeah, you've been amazing, it's been fascinating talking to you, Melanie.
- A You see, I love tech. I love, you know, I can take my iPad anywhere and as long as I've got Wi-Fi I'm quite happy. You know, wherever I go. And I just love it, and...
- Q Yeah. Do you find it connects you to other people as well?
- A It does, you know? I've got a sister that lives in Malta, my brother-in-law's in LA. So I'm, you know, I mean, my ex-husband is, even though I still talk to his family, they're in Malta. You know, so it's keeping in touch with people. I think for that aspect, I think it's brilliant.
- Q And do you feel that, you know, for children sometimes there's an argument that it makes them more isolated from each other. Do you see it sort of impacting on play in any way here?
- A Oh, I think sometimes we [unclear] Year 6 girls when they're, you know, they're, they're arguing over, over, you know, Messenger and things like that. And I just want to say to them, you know, just leave it alone. Just put it down, just leave it alone. And have a night off.