The BCS coding competition

Every year, the BCS run a competition in Bedfordshire for students from year 5 to year 10. It is an amazing experience where you learn about coding and online safety all rolled into one. This is now my third year taking part in it, and after winning it last year, I can't wait for it to start again.

In the BCS competition you are tasked with making a coding project about an aspect of online safety, depending on your year group. For example, if you are in year 6 you have to create a project covering cyberbullying. This could be a game, or an animation, or a quiz. You can do whatever takes your fancy. This year, my topic is on fake news. You have until a specific deadline to create a project which outlines the important aspects of your topic.

The first year I took part was 2018, and I had decided to do it because computing was one of my favourite subjects and I really enjoyed coding. I was in a group with three other friends. We tried our best, and even made it to the finals. Working in a group is great, but it can be difficult to coordinate between people and make decisions. Then in year 6 I paired up with just one of my friends, and together we made an informative game about cyberbullying, which gave us first place! Working in a smaller group can mean it is easier to find the time to get together, but it means you might have fewer ideas and less help from other people.

I started coding at school when I joined a computer club a few years ago. I have had some great teachers who have really helped me with becoming interested in coding. Before long I was coding not just at school but at home too, using some excellent books to teach myself languages such as Html code and Python, as well as experimenting to expand my knowledge. Doing these competitions has also really helped with my knowledge of coding and online safety.

I am incredibly excited for this year's competition, and I am glad I can take part. I was worried that I would not be able to take part due to lockdown, but thanks to the efforts of my teachers I am once again able to be a part of this amazing competition.

If you would like to start learning to code, I recommend using the free online website Scratch, which is a block based programming language. It is free to use, and comes with plenty of pre-made tutorials to get you started. You could also use this to enter the BCS competition; try and get in touch with your I.C.T. teacher and see if your school is taking part.

By Alex Bourne

I found out about the BCS coding competition as my brother had entered in Year 5 and 6. He had won second time round and I wanted to try and at least get highly commended. I have always liked coding and I love scratch. I have my own account and it's great to explore and test your abilities. My teacher has taught me much much more than I knew before and some of the tips she showed me were so simple. I will definitely use lots of them. My brother (Year 7 and also in the competition) has stuck by me the whole time though we are a little competitive now we're both competing. We are not against each other as we're in different categories but we still have fun. That leads me to my next part. Fun. I really enjoy coding and scratch and I think it's great BCS have organised this event and I hope everyone else can enjoy it as much as me. I have found a few things difficult and I have had to fix a few bugs but it's all under control. This is only my first year in the competition and you could say I have got a lot to live up to but I will do my best and have fun. This is The Hills '3rd year taking part and the 7th year the competition has happened and I hope it's the best. Good luck to all.

Tommy Bourne