



St. Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Dear Parents and Guardians

Welcome to the Autumn edition of our E-safety newsletter. The information provided here is intended to bring to your attention the current issues surrounding E-safety and responsible technology use that are particularly relevant to families with primary aged children. The links provided in this newsletter will take you to trusted third party sites where much more information and support can be obtained. In addition, other information has been provided by 'Ditto' the online safety magazine: www.esafety-adviser.com

The latest advice from Dorset Police's Child Online Safety team.



Keeping Children Safe Online

Children learn through exploration and natural curiosity, and the internet can be a wonderful educational tool. But there are risks in the virtual world as well as the real world and our children need to be protected from everyday dangers – and that includes going online. In the age of smartphones and tablets adults can find it a real challenge to not only educate children in doing the right thing, but monitor and control their online behaviour.

None of us – of whatever age – are immune from encountering problems online and our children are certainly more vulnerable and naturally more trusting than adults. Some of these potential issues are as follows:

- Inappropriate contact: From people, who may wish to abuse, exploit or bully them.
- Inappropriate conduct: because of their own and others' online behaviour, such as the personal information they make public, for example on social networking sites. Unfortunately, children can also become cyberbullies, especially when encouraged by others.
- Inappropriate content: being able to access or being sexually explicit, racist, violent, extremist or other harmful material, either through choice or in error.

QUIZ TIME

I'm afraid that there are no prizes for completing these quizzes but by following these links you can test your E-safety knowledge with four quizzes provided by Dorset Police.

- [Quiz 1](#) [Quiz 2](#) [Quiz 3](#) [Quiz 4](#)





TikTok is a video-sharing social media app available on iOS and Android which lets users create, share, and view user created videos much in a similar manner to Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. It's main draw, however, is that users can record and upload bite-sized looping videos of themselves lip-synching and dancing to popular music or soundbites, often for comedic effect, which can then be further enhanced with filters, emojis and stickers. TikTok has been designed with the young user in mind and has a very addictive appeal. At the beginning of 2019 it skyrocketed in popularity to become the iOS store's most downloaded app with over 33 million downloads. Estimates suggest that it now has anything between 500 million and over 1 billion monthly active users worldwide.



What parents need to know about

TIKTOK



MATURE CONTENT

On the iOS store, TikTok is listed as 12+. On the Google Play Store it is rated as 'Parental guidance recommended'. When signing up for the app, it's possible to lie about your age without any form of verification. As children scroll through their feed, most of the videos they're likely to come across are lighthearted or funny takes on dance routines which are designed to make people laugh. However there has been a slew of videos which have been reported for featuring drug and alcohol abuse, self-harm and sexual content, including young teens dressing overtly sexually and behaving suggestively. Given the deluge of material uploaded to TikTok every day, it's impossible to moderate everything and it can be quite common to come across explicit content on the 'for you' feed when logging into the platform.

INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC

TikTok revolves around creating music videos through lip-synching and dancing. Inevitably, some of the music featured by users will contain explicit or suggestive lyrics. Given the undeniably young user base, there is a risk that children may look to imitate the explicit language they hear or the suggestive actions they see when viewing others user's videos on the app.

TIKTOK FAME

TikTok is very image focused and there is a notable preoccupation with appearing cool and attractive. Many teenagers now attempt to go viral and become what's known in-app as 'TikTok famous'. TikTok (and its predecessor Musical.ly) has spawned its own celebrities - social media stars Loren Gray and Jacob Sartorius have been catapulted to fame through their initial exposure on the app. Obviously, most budding influencers looking to become the next big thing will be disappointed, but this may have the knock-on effect of making them go to more and more drastic lengths to get noticed.

ONLINE PREDATORS

As a social network, TikTok makes it easy to connect with other users. This includes the ability to comment on and react to other user's videos, follow their profile and download their content. Be aware that by default, any user can comment on your child's video if their account is set to public. Most interactions are harmless enough but as an app, TikTok is prone to predators because of the abundance of younger users.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

Social media is designed to be addictive and TikTok is no different. It can be fun and hugely entertaining. However, it is also because of this that it can be hard to put down. In addition to the short, punchy nature of the looping video format, the app's ability to keep you guessing what will come on screen next makes it easy to turn a five-minute visit into 45-minute visit.

IN-APP PURCHASES

Aside from the content, there's also the option to purchase in-app extras called 'TikTok coins'. Prices range from £0.99 for 100 coins to an eye-watering £93.99 for 10,000 coins. TikTok coins are used to purchase different emojis to reward content creators that a user finds funny or entertaining. In the iOS version of the app you can disable the option to buy TikTok coins but this sadly doesn't seem to be a feature in the Android version.



Safety Tips For Parents

TALK ABOUT ONLINE DANGERS

Assuming your child is above the age limit to use the app, make sure you also take the time to talk to them about what they are seeing on the app. Have a dialogue, get them to give you their opinion on what is appropriate and model the correct behaviour for them. Go over why they shouldn't give out private information or identifiable photos and be positive and understanding of them. In the long run, getting them to think critically about what they're seeing goes a long way to keeping them social media savvy.

USE PRIVACY SETTINGS

Undoubtedly, the easiest way to safeguard your child on TikTok is to make sure their account is set to private. This means only those users your child approves can view, like, and follow their content. Setting the account to private may clash with your child's goal of social media superstardom, but it will keep their account secure from strangers. This setting can be enabled under the privacy and safety menu by pressing the ellipsis in the 'me' tab of the app. To be extra safe, there are additional controls available to toggle such as who can send comments and messages, among other options.

ENABLE RESTRICTED MODE

In the digital wellbeing section there's the ability to turn on restricted mode using a PIN. Restricted mode filters out content that is not age appropriate although it should be noted that this isn't always 100% fool proof. When enabling restricted mode, parents should still be vigilant to what their child is watching and take note that the algorithm moderating content is not infallible.

EXPLORE AND LEARN YOURSELF

Understanding and learning the app yourself is a great way to get to grips with TikTok. You could then even use the app with your child and watch some videos with them. If you are the parent of a teen, even if it does not make you popular, keep a close eye on what they're viewing and sharing. That said, it's a brilliant chance to turn it into a bonding opportunity with your child also. You could even unleash your inner performer and make videos with them while (more importantly) keeping them safe online.

LEARN HOW TO REPORT AND BLOCK INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

With the proper privacy settings in place, TikTok can be a safe space for your child to express themselves. However, just in case something does manage to slip through, make sure your child knows how to recognise and report content that isn't appropriate and get them to come to you about what they have seen. TikTok allows users to report offenders and comments within the app. You can also block individual users by going on their profile.

MODERATE SCREEN TIME

As entertaining as TikTok is, you can help your child moderate their time on the app by making use of the digital wellbeing section. Under the screen time management option, you can limit the daily allotted time allowed on the app in increments ranging from 40 to 120 minutes. You can also lock this preference behind a PIN number which has to be inputted in order to then exceed the daily time limit. This way your child can get their daily dose of memes without wasting away the day.

Meet our expert

Pete Badh is a writer with over 10+ years in research and analysis. Working within a specialist area for West Yorkshire Police, Pete has contributed work which has been pivotal in successful winning high profile cases in court as well as writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.



NEW FOR 2020 FAMILY SAFETY MODE

TikTok Family Safety Mode allows parents to link their own TikTok account to their child's. It's a great way to oversee your child's digital wellbeing by giving you direct control over their safety settings and being able to remotely turn features on and off. This includes managing screen time, the ability to send and receive direct messages (and with whom) and the ability to restrict the appearance of content that might not be age appropriate.

SOURCES: www.tiktok.com

Online Grooming on the Rise

The NSPCC have **recently reported** a significant increase in online grooming. Figures from a freedom of information request to 42 police services in England and Wales have found that:

- In 2021 there was an all-time high, a jump of around 70%.
- Snapchat and Instagram were the most common tools used by offenders.
- There were 5,441 offences of sexual communication with a child recorded between April 2020 and March 2021.

There can be little doubt that lockdown played a significant role in this and I would like to make a couple of important points:

- These are recorded offences; it is widely suspected that the majority of offences go unreported and undetected.
- Although the most common tools used by offenders to groom children were Snapchat and Instagram, grooming can happen anywhere, e.g. it can start in a game and lead to private chat within an app or within the game.

Advice

Talk to your child. Their online lives and the myriad of games/apps they are using can appear overwhelming, but unless you understand their online lives, the support you can give them is limited.

To learn more about grooming and how to talk to your child see [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

Use **parental controls**. All games, apps and consoles come with parental controls such as turning off chat. Many children and young people use gaming for socialising with their friends so if you do allow them to chat, keep a watchful eye on their friends list.

To learn more about what parental controls are available on devices and how to set them up, see [HERE](#).

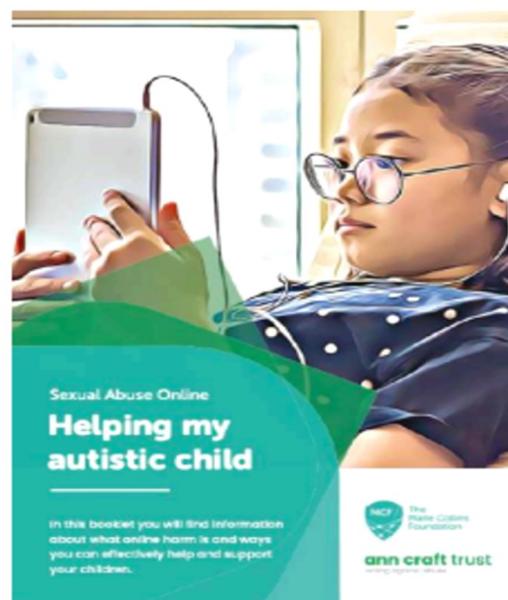
Report it - if you know or suspect your child has or is being groomed you can make an online report to CEOP [HERE](#).

Make sure your child also knows that they can make a report.

The Ann Craft Trust and The Marie Collins Foundation have collaborated to produce a resource to help parents of children with autism understand various online risks.

You can download a really useful leaflet which helps with talking to your child about sexual abuse, spotting the signs and much more.

Download the leaflet [HERE](#).



LEGO have created some activities for parents of younger children to talk about digital safety and wellbeing. These look really good and are free. See [HERE](#) for more information.