

Welcome to this week's SMRT safeguarding update...

WAKE UP WEDNESDAY

Road Safety

As the winter months continue and increasing numbers of students are receiving lifts into SMRT, we wanted to remind you of some key safeguarding advice we gave at the start of the year, regarding road safety.

You may have noticed that pick up times at the end of the school day can create a lot of traffic outside the main entrance. To make sure all students are kept safe; please could you consider picking your children up from Somerset Street rather than in the tighter one-way system on Somerset Square. Somerset Street runs alongside the school, is much wider, and can be accessed by students walking a few meters past the nearby basketball court.

This will help to ensure that students are kept safe and roads in the one-way system are not overcrowded. This will help to avoid causing any issues for our local residents and help to keep our students safe. We appreciate your cooperation!



TikTok

This week's WUW edition focuses on TikTok – a social networking app that young people can use to generate and share their own short videos and lip sync to popular audio clips. The app allows users to create and upload videos, remix existing videos using in-built editing tools, and also to view and comment on videos created by other users.

TikTok is very popular among young people as it allows them to become content creators and to design their own videos to the songs that they love.

What features does TikTok have?

On TikTok users can create their own videos where they lip-sync along to popular songs and audio clips. Users also caption their videos using hashtag to help others to find their content, and also to find content that has been created by others.

On TikTok there is also the ability to livestream via 'LiveMe' – Live Video Chat, where users can directly interact with online audiences through chat and live video.

The app puts some focus on themed challenges, encouraging users to make videos of themselves doing things like editing two videos together or performing trending dance moves.

There are also Tikok 'celebrities' who regularly get over 100,000 views on their videos. These 'celebrities' can start new challenges or trends on the app, and for some users it may be aspirational to gain a similar level of fame and influence.

Things to be aware of

Because the app allows users to create videos using current and popular music, some of the songs contain explicit swearing, sexual content and references that may be inappropriate for younger users.

Users also have the ability to interact and chat to other users of the app through the comment section under videos and the private messaging function. Private messages can only be sent between users who are follow each other or are 'friends' and the messaging function can also be turned off entirely.

Making a report

The reasons that you are able to give for the report are: self-injury, harassment or bullying, nudity or pornography, violence or harm. You can also block a user by clicking on the three dots at the top of their profile.

To report a comment, you need to double tap on the comment you wish to report, click on report and select the reason that you are making the report.

For more information please see the Wake up Wednesday guide below and follow this link for information about Tik Tok from the UK Safer Internet Centre:

[https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers.](https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers)

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

(Certain features are restricted to over-18s only)

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Adults tend to associate online videos with YouTube – but among teens, TikTok is king. The app provides a stream of short clips tailored to users' interests, based on what they've already watched. Around half of British children use TikTok, and while much of the content is benign, Ofcom considers it the app where youngsters "were most likely to encounter a potential harm".

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's Following feed only displays videos from familiar creators, For You is a collection based on a user's previously watched clips. Most of these videos will probably be inoffensive, but the app *could* potentially show something unsuitable. If children then engage with this content, more like it will follow. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the huge number of uploads means that a small amount inevitably slips through.

BODY IMAGE AND DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

According to Ofcom, most online harms for teens are body image related for girls (promoting unhealthy eating, body shaming and so on) and dangerous stunts for boys. Both are prevalent on TikTok. One extreme example of the latter was the 'blackout' trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out from a lack of oxygen. This led to two families filing lawsuits against TikTok over the tragic deaths of their children.

IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase gifts for content creators. Coin bundles range from £9.99 to an eye-watering £99; while that may not sound appealing, the app still generated £7.9 billion in user spending in 2023. TikTok's policy is that under-18s can't make in-app purchases, but it's possible to bypass this with a fake birth date.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With more than 1.5 billion users globally, the potential for contact with strangers on TikTok is high – especially as accounts created by over-16s (or young people using a fake date of birth) are set to public by default. This means that not only is someone's profile visible to everyone else on the app, it also suggests their videos to others and enables anyone to download or comment on them.

MISINFORMATION AND RADICALISATION

Although the short videos on TikTok tend to be more frivolous than the longer ones on YouTube, clips can still influence impressionable minds in a negative way. Not only is there plenty of dangerous misinformation on TikTok, but Ofcom reports that nearly a third of 12 to 15-year-olds use TikTok as a news source – so you should be wary of misogynistic, racist or conspiracy-themed material shaping how they see the world.

ADDICTIVE DESIGN

With its constant stream of eye-catching videos, TikTok can be addictive to young brains. In 2024, UK children spent an average of 127 minutes per day on the app; that's twice as much as in 2020. Excessive use can interfere with young people's sleep patterns – often leading to irritability – and distract them from other, healthier activities. The instantly skippable nature of bite-size videos may also impact children's ability to maintain focus.

Advice for Parents & Educators

ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account to their child's, and control settings remotely. Parents can then turn on Restricted Mode (reducing the chances of a child seeing inappropriate content), set screen-time limits, make accounts private and manage whether their child can send messages – and if they can, to whom. Children can't alter these settings without parental approval.

DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If a child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's good practice to discuss the potential risks. Ensure that they don't share any identifying personal information, and that they know to talk to a trusted adult if they're worried by interactions on the app. With more teens using TikTok for news, it's also worth talking about misinformation and propaganda, and how to identify it.

BLOCK IN-APP SPENDING

If a child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can alter their settings to prevent them from making in-app purchases. We'd recommend enabling this feature, as it can be quite easy for a young person to spend a significant amount of real money buying TikTok coins to unlock more features of the app – sometimes without even realising.

READ THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that a child is spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by something they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the signs. Increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as is failing to complete homework or skipping meals. Remember, the parental controls are there for a reason, and it's never too late to introduce limits.

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist who has written for the likes of Wired, TechRadar, Tom's Guide, The Evening Standard and The New Statesman.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/tiktok-2025>

@wake_up_weds

/www.thenationalcollege

@wake.up.wednesday

@wake.up.weds

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 15.01.2025

As always, if you have any immediate concerns about safeguarding issues, students, or the school site, please get in touch via:

safeguarding@smrt.bristol.sch.uk