

Wanstead High School

Education with Character

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Headteacher: Miss E Hillman

23rd November 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

Community Incident & Safety

We have received reports of a mugging last night in the local area with pupils of another local school as victims. There were a number of similar incidents last year on the High Street and The Green which did affect our pupils and seem to involve youths with balaclavas/face masks looking for phones and other electronic equipment. Please ensure your children are aware of this and do not hang around the local area unnecessarily and ensure their possessions are not on show. We have also provided previous advice about local businesses that will offer a safe space for our pupils if they are concerned: Petty Son and Prestwich, MUST Wine Bar and Assemble.

All pupils received assemblies related to safety over the Challenge Week period and so this should be fresh in their minds. You also received a letter about community behaviour last week from Mrs Martin which also contained some good advice about safety too. Please do keep us updated if you have any further information or concerns or feel you or your child need more support around safety. Please talk to us also if you feel you need your child to stay longer in school until you can pick them up and we will try and accommodate even though there may not be specific activities arranged. We have also introduced a revised procedure for clubs, as you know, to ensure you know if a club is cancelled or a child doesn't turn up.

Social Media

On another note, a group of pupils are creating TikToks using photos of staff from the website. We are aware of all the accounts and have contacted TikTok to take these down and will be investigating further today. Please be very aware if your child has a TikTok account that you know what they are doing – I attach further information about TikTok as it is really important as parents/carers that you understand what your children are doing on social media.

School Access

Due to ongoing concerns about safeguarding and security of the school site (which we have raised continually with the Local Authority over the last year) and an attempted theft from a contractor's van in the front car park today, we are going to have to make the decision to lock the gates at the front of the school between certain times of the day. This will mean parents/carers will not be able to drive into school and there will be a new system for pedestrian entry. We will keep you updated about when this will start. Longer term, it is very clear that we need financial support from the Local Authority to fully review access to the school site and improve safeguarding. The Leisure Centre car park is now ANPR controlled as you know but there is parking in local areas for a limited time.

INSET Day – Friday 24th November 2023

Reminder: the school is closed for pupils tomorrow.

All the best

Emma Hillman
Headteacher



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

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

TikTok is a free social media platform that lets users create, share and watch short videos ranging anywhere from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in duration. The app gained notoriety for its viral dances, trends and celebrity cameos and can be a creative, fun platform for teens to enjoy. Now available in 75 languages, it has more than a billion active users worldwide (as of spring 2022) and is most popular with the under-16 age bracket. In fact, a 2022 Ofcom report found TikTok to be the most-used social media platform for posting content, particularly among young people aged 12 to 17.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's "Following" feed only displays videos from users someone follows, "For You" is a stream of clips based on their previously watched content. Most videos on a child's "For You" feed will therefore be light-hearted and amusing, but it could potentially surface something unsuitable. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the sheer volume of uploads mean they aren't manually monitored and vetted.

18

CENSORED

DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

Due to TikTok's immense popularity, some young people have unfortunately been influenced by videos challenging them to perform harmful, criminal or even deadly acts. One extreme example was the "blackout" trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out from a lack of oxygen. It led to two families filing lawsuits against TikTok over the tragic deaths of their children.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With around 1.1 billion users globally, the potential for contact from strangers on TikTok is high – especially as accounts created by over-18s (or youngsters using a false date of birth) are set to public by default. This not only means that someone's profile is visible to everyone else on the app; it also lets their videos be suggested to others and enables anyone to comment on them or download them.

IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase emojis in the app. These emojis are then sent as rewards (retaining their monetary value) to other users for videos they've created. Coin bundles range from £9.99 to an eye-watering £99; TikTok's policy is that they can't be bought by under-18s, but it's possible to bypass this with a fake birthdate.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

TikTok can be addictive, especially for young people: compulsive repeated use can interfere with sleep patterns and be a distraction from other activities. The platform recently introduced default usage time limits of 60 and 100 minutes for new members under 18 (in the UK, children with TikTok average 102 minutes per day on the app), but these restrictions can easily be removed in the settings.

TIKTOK NOW

Introduced in late 2022, the 'TikTok Now' feature lets users post a daily video or photo at the exact same time as their friends. Users receive a synchronised notification at a random time of day, giving them three minutes to take a video or real-time photo. This addition can not only be a distraction to young people but could lead to them inadvertently sharing private content such as their location.

Advice for Parents & Carers

ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account with their child's and control their settings remotely. Parents can then, for example, turn on Restricted Mode (reducing the chances of a child seeing inappropriate content); set screen time limits; and manage their child's ability to send messages (and to whom). Children can't alter these settings without parental approval.

MAKE ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Although under-16s will have their TikTok account set to private by default, bypassing this setting is relatively easy. However, parents have the ability to manually set their child's account to private – meaning that their videos won't be visible to strangers and they won't be able to exchange messages with people who aren't on their friends list.

LIMIT IN-APP SPENDING

If your child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can alter the settings to prevent them from making in-app purchases. We'd recommend that you enable this feature, as it's quite easy for a young person – without realising what they're doing – to spend a significant amount of real money buying TikTok coins so they can unlock more features of the app.

DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If your child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's crucial to talk about the potential risks in this type of app. For example, ensure they understand not to share any identifying personal information – and that they realise they could be exposed to inappropriate content. Thinking critically about what they see on TikTok can help children become generally more social media savvy.

READ THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that your child might be spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by something inappropriate or upsetting that they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the possible signs. Increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as are failing to complete homework or regularly not eating meals.

Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid *The Inquirer*, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



NOS
National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday