

# Our Weekly Update



## Headteacher update

Dear Parents, Carers and Families,

Happy New Year! It has been lovely to welcome the children back to school this week. They have come bounding through the doors in the morning, looking smart and ready for the term ahead.

On Tuesday, the first day back, children entered our start of term assembly with fantastic behaviour. They listened attentively as we discussed New Year's Resolutions, and how breaking these into small, achievable steps was better than trying to conquer one big goal. They reflected on their own Resolutions and gave the staff some excellent advice about how to make their goals for the new year more achievable!

On Monday, teachers enjoyed a training day exploring a range of things linked to school development. Some staff had training on a reading fluency intervention for children in Years 5 and 6, while the rest of the teachers looked at the enrichment opportunities we offer as part of the curriculum and how we can broaden these

even further. Our Teaching Assistants worked with colleagues across Meridian Trust to learn more about our approach to managing behaviour. It was certainly a busy day, linked to our School Improvement Priorities for the year.

The spring term is shorter than the other two, but with just as much to fit in! There is lots of curriculum content to learn, statutory assessments to prepare for, as well as enrichment events to enjoy, such as Safer Internet Day, Science Week and World Book Day. Years 3 and 4 will be performing to the school and there will be continued sporting events and clubs for the children to participate in. These will help the children to continue to grow and develop and provide them with lots to focus on to get them through these cold winter days!

Best wishes for a lovely weekend,

Jonathan Clarke and the SPS Team



# Key Dates – updates in blue



Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup> January	Deadline for applying for a Reception school place for September '26
Friday 16 <sup>th</sup> January	Anxiety Workshop (ref. communication from Mrs Gardner)
Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> January @ 17:30	SATs Information Evening for Parents/Carers of children in Y6
Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> February	Safer Internet Day
16 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> February	Half Term
Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> March	World Book Day (details to follow)
Week beginning 9 <sup>th</sup> March	Science Week
Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> March	Sport Relief
Tuesday 24 <sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> March (09:20)	Year 3 and 4 production to parents/carers
Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	Last day of the spring term
Week beginning Monday 11 <sup>th</sup> May	Year 6 SATs week
Monday 30 <sup>th</sup> March – Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> April	Easter break
Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> May (09:20)	Reception production to parents/carers
Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> June	Sports Day: KS2 AM and Reception/KS1 PM (timings tbc)

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

# TIKTOK

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Online videos are often associated with apps such as YouTube, but among teens, TikTok is king. The app provides a potentially addictive, never-ending stream of short clips tailored to users' interests based on their viewing habits. Around half of British children use TikTok, and while most content is benign, Ofcom considers it the app where young people are "most likely to encounter a potential harm".

## AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

TikTok's Following Feed shows videos from known creators, while the default For You Feed serves endless clips based on viewing history. Most are harmless, but unsuitable content can still appear, and watching for long enough signals interest to the algorithm. Although TikTok bans illegal or inappropriate uploads, the volume of posts means some slip through, increasing the chance that children encounter age-inappropriate material before it is detected or removed.

## BODY IMAGE AND DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

Ofcom reports that most online harms for girls involve body image, while boys more often see dangerous stunts. Both types appear frequently on TikTok and spread quickly through its engagement-driven algorithm. Harmful challenges have included the "blackout" trend, where users held their breath until passing out. Families filed lawsuits after children died linked to the trend, showing how extreme or risky content can rapidly reach young people and negatively influence them.

## IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but children can still spend money. TikTok coins, costing £9.99 to £224.99, let users buy gifts for creators. TikTok Shop adds risk by allowing purchases from influencers or companies, sometimes leading to poor-quality items driven by persuasive marketing. A Canadian investigation found TikTok collected personal data from many children for targeting and advertising despite age limits, meaning young users may lose control over their personal information.

## ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account to their child's in order to manage 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 cannot 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 they don't share any identifying personal information or respond to dangerous trends, 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 important to talk about misinformation and propaganda.

## 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*.



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

## CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

Between 1.6 and 1.9 billion people use TikTok, meaning there's a high risk of unwanted attention from strangers. Accounts created by over-16s (or young people using a fake date of birth) are set to public view 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 allows anyone to download or comment on them.

## MISINFORMATION AND RADICALISATION

TikTok's short videos may appear lighthearted, but they can expose young people to harmful ideas. Misinformation is common, and Ofcom reports that nearly one third of 12–15-year-olds use TikTok as a news source, increasing the chance of seeing racist, misogynistic, extremist or conspiracy material. Even brief clips can influence impressionable users and shape their worldview, making discussions about critical thinking, propaganda and online influence especially important for parents and educators.

## ADDICTIVE DESIGN

TikTok's fast-paced stream of eye-catching videos can be potentially addictive for young users. In 2024, UK children spent an average of 127 minutes per day on the platform, double the time recorded in 2020. Excessive use can disrupt sleep, increase irritability, and distract from healthier activities. Constantly skipping between short clips may also affect attention span, making it harder to focus on longer tasks such as homework or reading.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Parents can restrict in-app purchases on iPhone and Android devices to prevent accidental or impulsive TikTok spending. Young people can easily spend large amounts on TikTok coins or low-quality products promoted through TikTok Shop. If a disappointing purchase occurs, turn it into a discussion about influencer marketing and how online promotions can be misleading.

### DISCUSS THE DANGERS

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.

See full reference list on our website

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