

Parental Communication & Engagement



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Message from Headteacher

On Wednesday and Thursday this week we welcomed many of our parents/carers into school for our very special Tie Reward Assemblies. It was fantastic to see so many of our parents/carers present to see their child receive their next tie!

Today, some of our History students attended a Holocaust Survivor Talk at Dudley College. As you can imagine, this was a very poignant, moving and inspiring talk and our students conducted themselves brilliantly.

As you may recall, we sadly lost Mrs Blewitt our Pupil Receptionist very suddenly last year after over 20 years' service. As well as our donation of over £420 to Birmingham Hospice and opening 'Blewitt's Stationary Shop' in her honour we also wanted to let you know that we have also just planted a camelia in the Staff Garden along with a special plaque dedicated to her. Thank you once again for your kind donations to Birmingham Hospice, they have been gratefully received.

Best wishes.

Mrs Sutton
Headteacher

Key Letters/Information Sent Out Recently

The vast majority of all letters are now emailed home and we use electronic reply slips as much as possible. The criterion for 'selected student only' opportunities are based on various factors depending on its focus. Unfortunately, we are unable to allow every student the opportunity to be involved with every activity which we understand sometimes causes disappointment. If you require more details about the selection process for any opportunity please contact the event organiser.

- Tie Reward Assembly Letters;
- Pizza Reward Invite Letter;
- Year 8 Update Letter;
- School Production Programme Consent Letter.

Events/Reminders

- Year 10 RS Debate Trip Permission Slip Deadline - Monday 20 January 2025;
- World Religions Day - WC 20 January 2025;
- Year 11 Photographs - Tuesday 21 January 2025;
- Year 8 Talking Head Workshop - Thursday 23 January 2025;
- Pizza Reward Evening - Thursday 23 January 2025.

Updates

School Production Tickets - ON SALE NOW!

Come along and see our School Production of Grease! The show runs from Wednesday 12 February 2025 to Friday 14 February 2025. Tickets are £6.50 and are available from [seaty.co.uk](https://www.seaty.co.uk) NOW!



Year 11 Photographs - Tuesday 21 January 2025 *REVISED DATE

Year 11 Photographs will now be taking place on Tuesday 21 January 2025. Please ensure your child is in full and correct uniform on this day. Students will be given QR codes by us shortly and will need to be photographed with these codes. Students will need to take these QR codes home after the shoot, as parents/carers will need to use the information provided to set up an account on the ordering website. Parents/Carers can then register for a notification email when photos become available. Please note that the images will be live to view/order approximately 7-10 working days after the photoshoot.

Assisted Instrument Purchase Scheme (AIPS)

The Assisted Instrument Purchase Scheme (AIPS) enables young musicians who are receiving musical tuition in school to purchase musical instruments through the school without the cost of VAT. For example, if you purchased an instrument worth £120, then you would only need to pay £100 to the school for it. More information can be found here: <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/assisted-instrument-purchase-scheme-aips/>

Year 11 Consultation Evening - Thursday 6 February 2025

Just to give you the heads up that we will be holding our Year 11 Consultation Evening on Thursday 6 February 2025. Although this event will be face to face, appointments still need to be made using our on-line booking system. The booking system will go live on Thursday 30 January 2025 at 8.00am and will close on Wednesday 5 February 2025 at 3.00pm. Further information to follow shortly!

TikTok Guidance

Please see below TikTok Guidance for Parents/Carers.

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about TIKTOK

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.

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.

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.

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>

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Congratulations/Well Done

Headteacher Commendations

Congratulations go to the following students who received Headteacher Commendations this week.

Liam Wood	Baylee-May Hardy		
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