



Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you've all had a lovely week. It's hard to believe there's only three weeks left until the end of term! It's approaching fast and we've lots to share...

We're delighted to announce that, Gus, our therapy dog is visiting again on Monday. He proved to be quite popular during his last visit and pupils haven't stopped asking when he's returning. Wouldn't it be fantastic to have our very own BMS therapy dog? (Watch this space!)

I have a meeting with Neil from The Boe Rigg next Wednesday to discuss Spring menus and share feedback from our parents' forum a few weeks ago; we're looking forward to getting a date in the diary for our planned 'tasting' session. A reminder that Christmas lunch is on Friday 17th December and orders must be placed by Friday 3rd December.

You may have seen some of the bad press regarding the app, 'TikTok' circulating at the moment – it's quite worrying! Please read the parents/carers information I've included on page 3, just to make sure all of our young people stay safe.

I'm delighted to announce that we have had no positive Covid-19 cases reported for ten days! Despite that great news, it's vital that pupils continue to test twice each week, and that we all remember to be extra vigilant with handwashing.

Have a lovely weekend!



Lindsay Hamilton

Attendance this week:

92%

Thank you! We really appreciate all your efforts in getting to school on time, ready to start our day promptly.

Did you know...?



Attendance	Description	Approx. days lost per year	Approx. weeks lost per year
98 – 100%	Excellent	0 to 4	Less than 1
95 – 98%	Good	5 to 9	1 to 2
93 – 95%	Satisfactory	10 to 13	2 to 3
90 – 93%	Unsatisfactory	14 to 19	4 to 6
>90%	Persistent Absence	More than 19	More than 4

The government expects your child's attendance to be 95% or better.
Schools are held to account for your child's attendance.
Please remember holidays in term time will be unauthorised.



Y8 Curriculum Corner

In science, Year 8 carried out an investigation into the permeability of different rocks. After carrying out visual and physical analysis, they measured how much water was absorbed by each rock in 10 minutes.



Throughout their 'Space and Imaginative Art' topic, Y8 have been practising building up a composition and blending, using dark to light and clashing colours. They have progressed by transferring their skills onto papier mâché, creating something rather wonderful which has brightened up a corner of our school and looks fantastic! Well done, Y8!

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

TikTok is a video-sharing social media app which lets people create, view and download looping 15-second clips. Typically, these are videos of users lip-synching and dancing to popular songs or soundbites (often for comic purposes), enhanced with filters, effects and text. Designed with young people in mind, TikTok skyrocketed in popularity in 2019 and has featured near the top of download charts ever since. It now has around a billion users worldwide.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Most videos appearing on a child's feed are light-hearted and amusing. However, some clips have been reported for featuring drug and alcohol abuse, themes of suicide and self-harm, or young teens acting in a sexually suggestive way. The sheer volume of uploads is impossible to moderate entirely – and since TikTok Jump's introduction in mid-2021, users can view third-party content outside the app.

18

CENSORED

EXPLICIT SONGS

TikTok primarily revolves around videos of users lip-synching and dancing to music. Inevitably, some featured songs will contain explicit or suggestive lyrics. Given the app's young user-base, there is a risk that children may view older users' videos and then be inclined to imitate any explicit language or suggestive actions.

W&H*

TIKTOK FAME

The app has created its own celebrities: Charli D'Amelio and Lil Nas X, for example, were catapulted to fame by exposure on TikTok – leading to many more teens attempting to go viral and become 'TikTok famous'. While most aspiring stars hoping to be 'the next big thing' will find it difficult, setbacks may in turn prompt them to go to even more drastic lengths to get noticed.



HAZARDOUS VISIBILITY

Connecting with others is simple on TikTok – including commenting on and reacting to users' videos, following their profile and downloading their content. The majority of these interactions are harmless, but – because of its abundance of teen users – TikTok has experienced problems with predators contacting young people.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

Like all social media, TikTok is designed to be addictive. It can be hugely entertaining – but that also makes it hard to put down. As well as the punchy nature of the short video format, the app's ability to keep users intrigued about what's coming next means it's easy for a 5-minute visit to turn into a 45-minute stay.

IN-APP SPENDING

There's an in-app option to purchase 'TikTok coins', which are then converted into digital rewards for sending to content creators that a user likes. Prices range from 99p to an eye-watering £99 bundle. TikTok is also connected with Shopify, which allows users to buy products through the app.

Advice for Parents & Carers

TALK ABOUT ONLINE CONTENT

Assuming your child is above TikTok's age limit, talk to them about what they've viewed on the app. Ask their opinion on what's appropriate and what isn't. Explain why they shouldn't give out personal details or upload videos which reveal information like their school or home address. In the long run, teaching them to think critically about what they see on TikTok could help them to become social-media savvy.

MAINTAIN PRIVACY SETTINGS

The default setting for all under-18s' accounts to 'private'. Keeping it that way is the safest solution: it means only users who your child approves can watch their videos. The 'Stitch' (which lets users splice clips from other people's videos into their own) and 'Duet' (where you build on another user's content by recording your own video alongside their original) features are now only available to over 18s. This might clash with your child's ambitions of social media stardom, but it will fortify their account against predators.

LEARN ABOUT REPORTING AND BLOCKING

With the correct privacy settings applied, TikTok is a relatively safe space. However, in case something does slip through, make sure your child knows how to recognise and report inappropriate content and get them to come to you about anything upsetting that they've seen. TikTok allows users to report anyone breaching its guidelines, while you can also block individual users through their profile.

ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

'Family Pairing' lets parents and carers link their own TikTok account to their child's. Through your mobile, you can control your child's safety settings remotely – including limiting screen time, managing their ability to exchange messages (and with whom) and blocking a lot of age-inappropriate content. TikTok's Safety Centre also provides resources for parents and carers to support online safety among families. These resources can be found on their website.

USE RESTRICTED MODE

In the app's 'Digital Wellbeing' section, you can filter out inappropriate content (specific content creators or hashtags, for instance) using 'Restricted Mode'. This can then be locked with a PIN. You should note, though, that the algorithm moderating content isn't totally dependable – so it's wise to stay aware of what your child is watching.

MODERATE SCREEN TIME

As entertaining as TikTok is, you can help your child to manage their time on it in the 'Digital Wellbeing' section. Under 'Screen Time Management', you can limit the daily permitted time on the app (in increments ranging from 40 minutes to two hours). This preference can also be locked behind a PIN. That way, your child can get their regular dose of TikTok without wasting the whole day.

Meet Our Expert

Parven Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N' C@re, a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.



**National
Online
Safety**

#WakeUpWednesday



Advent Activities!



You may have heard of a company called 'imoves'. They work with and provide 'active educational' resources to schools across the UK and beyond. Each Christmas, they produce what they call an 'Active Advent' calendar which many teachers will use in school, during the last couple of weeks before the holidays. This year, in response to the devastating impact of the pandemic, self isolation and lockdowns, they've gone even further. They've created a completely free 'Active Advent' calendar, designed specifically for children, their friends and their families to enjoy at home. Just like the traditional advent calendar, an amazing new activity is revealed each and every morning throughout December - but with no chocolate in sight! It's 100% FREE. No catches, no hidden agenda, just a nice thing to do because it's the right thing to do. You can join in literally 10 seconds at www.activeadvent.fun



We're thrilled to be part of a collaborative event to celebrate the 1900th anniversary of Hadrian's Wall! Schools across our partnership are working together in dance, drama, art and music which will culminate in a performance in the vicinity of Hadrian's Wall involving all schools. The Northumberland National Park have been approached for their support and have given a very positive initial response and the event has been added to the official listings for the festival! This is a wonderful opportunity for our children and we're sure they'll enjoy working with pupils from across the partnership. More details to follow in due course.



Please support us in ensuring our pupils are as organised as possible by signing their school journal each week. The journal is a vital tool of communication and has messages from staff (both positive and concerns), as well as pupil reflections about their own learning, and details about weekly English and Maths homework. If homework is not submitted, a note is written in the journal so that parents are aware.



Dates for your diary...

Friday 10th December

Christmas Jumper Day

Monday 13th December

Enrichment Homework reward - afternoon

Tuesday 14th December

Christmas Parties - afternoon

Wednesday 15th December

Christmas Fayre: 1:30pm – 3:00pm

Thursday 16th December

Christmas Carol Service – 10:00am, St Cuthbert's

Friday 17th December

Christmas Lunch

Friday 17th December

School closes for Christmas holidays

Tuesday 4th January 2022

Training Day

Wednesday 5th January 2022

School opens for Spring term

Friday 7th January 2022

Pantomime, Theatre Royal, Newcastle

(Oh yes, we are - hopefully!)