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DIGITAL SAFETY FOR ALL

# ONLINE SAFETY NEWSLETTER



“ **Welcome to the fourth edition of Digital Safety’s half termly bulletin. This edition contains information of what is currently happening in the online world** ”

**Claire Turnbull, Digital Safety**

## Some worrying social media figures from Ofcom 2024

**Around a quarter of 5-7 year-olds - 24 % now own a smartphone, while three-quarters use a tablet (76%).**

Compared to a year ago, a higher proportion of 5-7s go online to send messages or make voice/video calls (59% to 65%) or to watch live-streamed content (39% to 50%).

Similarly, overall use of social media sites or apps among all 5-7s has increased year-on-year (30% to 38%), with WhatsApp (29% to 37%), TikTok (25% to 30%), Instagram (14% to 22%) and Discord (2% to 4%) seeing particular growth among this age group.

While around two in five parents of 5-7 year-olds (42%) say they use social media sites and apps together with their child, worryingly, a third (32%) report that their child uses social media independently.



Compared to last year, parents of these younger children are more likely to say they would allow their child to have a profile on social media services before they had reached the minimum age required (30%, up from 25%).

It follows that more children of this age now have their own personal profiles on YouTube or YouTube Kids (48%, from 39%), WhatsApp (11%, from 7%) and Instagram (9%, from 5%) than a year ago.

Three-quarters of parents of children aged 5-7 who go online say they have talked to their child about staying safe online (76%), and over half do so at least every few weeks (56%). Parents of older children who go online (those aged 8-17) are more likely to have ever had online safety conversations with their child (over 90% of parents of children in each age band).

The research suggests a disconnect between older children’s exposure to potentially harmful content online, and what they share with their parents about their online experiences. A third (32%) of 8-17s say they have seen something worrying or nasty online in the last 12 months, but only 20% of parents of this age group report their child telling them they had seen something online that scared or upset them in the same time frame.



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## Spotlight on Tik Tok

### Dangerous TikTok challenge.

Something to be aware of but not to share with young people as it may encourage them to watch or try.

The latest TikTok challenge is to drop things on your foot to see how much it hurts. The idea is you drop something on your foot without shoes on, writhe around in agony and then rate the pain on a scale from 1 to 10.

People are going viral after dropping multiple items ranging from a can of deodorant, then increasing to heavier and heavier objects like a toaster, an air fryer, and televisions.

Hashtags are being used such as #DropChallenge #droptrend #droppingthingsonmyfoot

Thankfully, it looks like TikTok has pulled some of these videos down, because it's dangerous, however, TikTokers are changing the hashtags to avoid being detected.

### TikTok accounts spreading malware through fake free software tutorials.

TikTok accounts have been making multiple videos claiming to offer free software like Spotify Premium or ChatGPT Plus if the user enters some code into their computer, with step-by-step instructions.

However, this is actually a way of distributing malware (software that is specifically designed to disrupt, damage, or gain unauthorised access to a computer system) onto victims' machines.

The malware runs on Windows and can collect a wide range of sensitive data from browsers and folders.

Additionally, the malware is used to later create ransomware (a type of malicious software designed to block access to a computer system until a sum of money is paid).

Do not believe everything that you see online.

**If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.**





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## What is the Online Safety Act?

**The Online Safety Act 2023** is a new UK law designed to help protect children and adults from harmful content online. It makes social media companies, gaming platforms, and websites more responsible for keeping people safe on their platforms. It's a law that makes big tech companies (like YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, and gaming platforms) legally responsible for protecting children from harmful or dangerous content online.

### What does it protect children from?

It helps protect children from things like:

- Bullying or harmful messages online
- Inappropriate content (like violence or pornography)
- People trying to contact children in unsafe ways (grooming)
- Videos or posts that encourage things like self-harm or eating disorders
- Fake news or harmful challenges going viral

### What do companies have to do?

Social media and gaming companies must:

- Remove harmful content quickly
- Stop children from seeing content that isn't suitable for their age
- Make it easier to report bad content
- Prove they are keeping children safe or face huge fines

### What does this mean for schools?

Teachers can feel more confident when teaching online safety because the law means:

- Platforms must be safer by design
- There will be more resources to teach children about online risks
- It encourages positive conversations about how to stay safe online
- You can remind pupils that reporting harmful content is a right, not just a suggestion



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## What is the Online Safety Act?

### What can teachers tell pupils?

Here's a child-friendly way to explain it: "The internet is like a giant playground – full of fun, games, and friends. The Online Safety Act is a set of rules to make sure the playground is a safe place, with adults watching to protect everyone from anything harmful."

### Top Tips to share with pupils:

- Be kind online – treat others how you would like to be treated
- If you see something upsetting, tell a trusted adult straight away
- Never talk to strangers online, even if they seem nice
- Keep personal information private
- Remember – not everything online is true

### Final thoughts

This law is a big step towards making the internet safer for children – but education is still key. By teaching children how to think critically and stay safe online, you're giving them the best tools to protect themselves.



Online Safety Act 2023

STAY SAFE ONLINE



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## Red Note - the new TikTok?

### Red Note – a new app that may replace TikTok.

You might have heard that TikTok could soon be banned in the US. According to a recent news article, FBI Director Chris Wray stated that TikTok poses a national security risk, explaining that Chinese companies are required to 'do whatever the Chinese government wants them to in terms of sharing information or serving as a tool of the Chinese government'.

If the US bans TikTok, app stores would likely be instructed to remove it – making it unavailable for download.

### What could replace TikTok?

Currently, an app called Red Note (Xiaohongshu), which is also Chinese-owned, is gaining traction. In January 2025, it was the most downloaded app in the UK, sitting at No. 1 in the free app charts.



### What do parents and carers need to know?

Firstly, Red Note is very similar to TikTok and is centred around user-generated videos. Its algorithm suggests content based on interests and random selections, meaning your child could encounter inappropriate, unsettling, or unexpected material.

If **TikTok** wasn't suitable for your child, **Red Note** likely won't be either.

**Red Note** includes features such as commenting on videos, direct messaging, and live streaming, which increase the likelihood of interacting with strangers. The app store listing for Red Note also indicates that it may collect and link the following data to users' identities:

- Purchases
- Contacts
- Search history
- Identifiers

While Red Note offers a Teen Mode, much of the app is in Chinese, making it difficult to locate and activate.



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## Is Red Note the next big thing?

New apps, games, and platforms will always emerge, and this trend isn't changing anytime soon. What's particularly interesting about Red Note's growth is how it's being fuelled by concerns over TikTok, highlighting the ongoing importance of digital literacy and critical thinking.

Helping young people make informed decisions about their online behaviour is more essential than ever.

## Implementing 'Blackout' Apps to Enhance Classroom Focus

Schools across southeast England are piloting the use of a "blackout" app called Blackout to manage student smartphone usage during school hours.

This initiative, involving approximately 2,300 pupils from four schools, aims to block access to distracting content such as social media, games, and web browsers, while permitting essential functions like calls and calendars.

The goal is to promote healthier phone habits, improve focus, and enhance mental health among students.

Both parents and teachers have expressed support, anticipating reduced distractions and better classroom behaviour.

### KEY DIARY DATES

**Date for next online session:  
Wednesday 14th May 3.45 – 5.15pm**

**Date for next newsletter:  
Thursday 15th May**

If you have any topics you'd like me to cover in the next edition, or any questions, please get in touch.

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