# TikTok

Guide for Schools
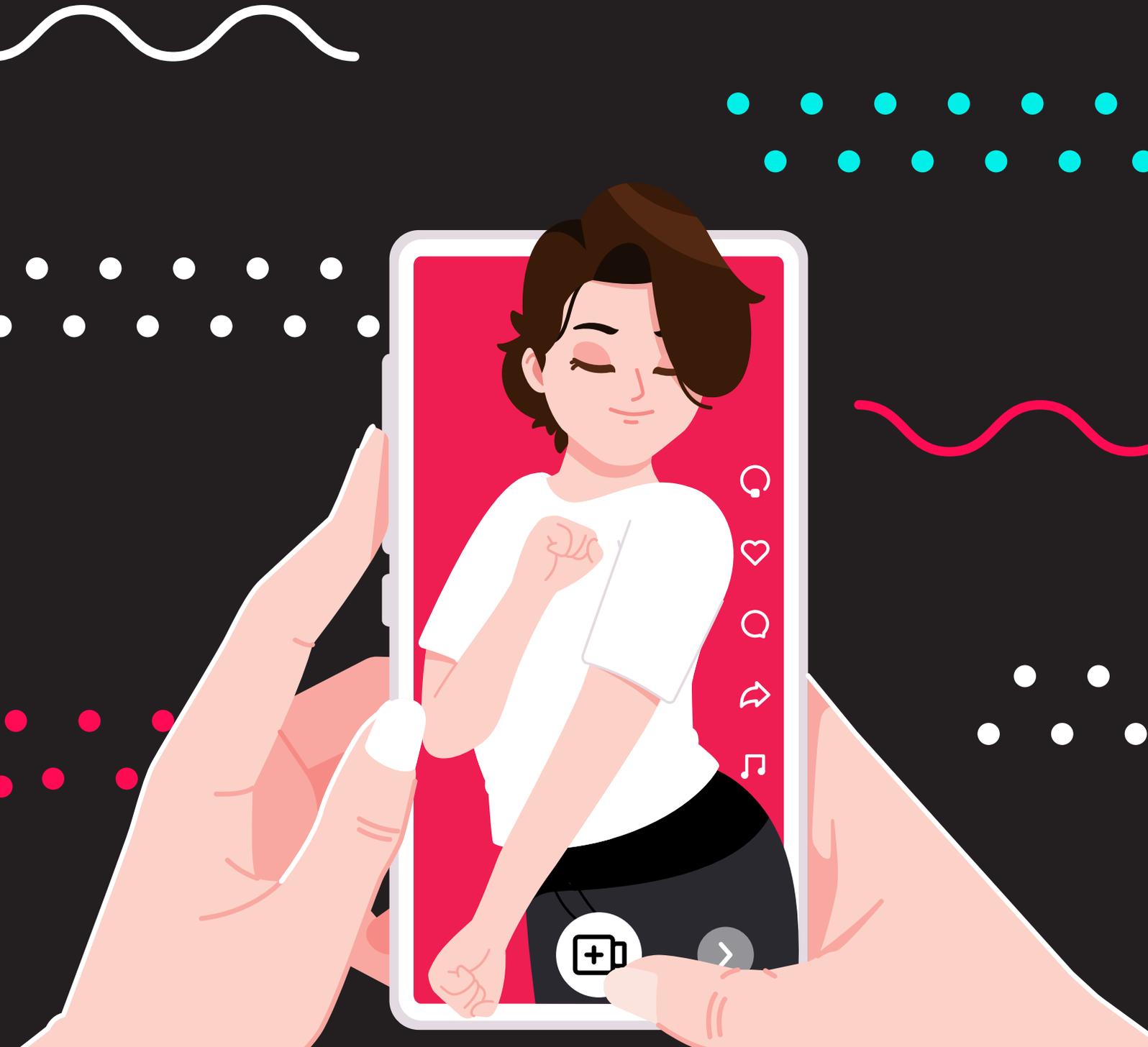
What is TikTok?

TikTok is a social media app set to reach 1.5 billion users across 155 different countries, where users can create, share, and watch short videos. The app contains a variety of music and special effect features that allow users to express themselves in creative ways. This includes singing, viral dance trends, lip-syncing, performing comedy sketches and online challenges.

How do you get it?

The TikTok app is free to download on Android and iOS devices, and it can also be accessed on web browsers and some smart TVs. However, if a user has a direct link to a specific TikTok video, they can click the link to watch it and do not need to have the app installed on their device. It is only if the user wants to like, comment, or create their own video content that they will be asked to sign up for a free account.

Creating an account

Accounts can be created using a phone number or email, or by connecting the TikTok account to a Facebook, Twitter, or Google account. If 'Use phone or email' is selected, the user will be asked to enter their date of birth, create a password and given the option to verify their contact details.

How does it work?

Once signed up and logged in, users can search for categories and topics that may interest them, follow celebrities, influencers and creators, or find people they know via their phone's contact list. Users can also upload, comment and like videos using a variety of the inbuilt tools and features.
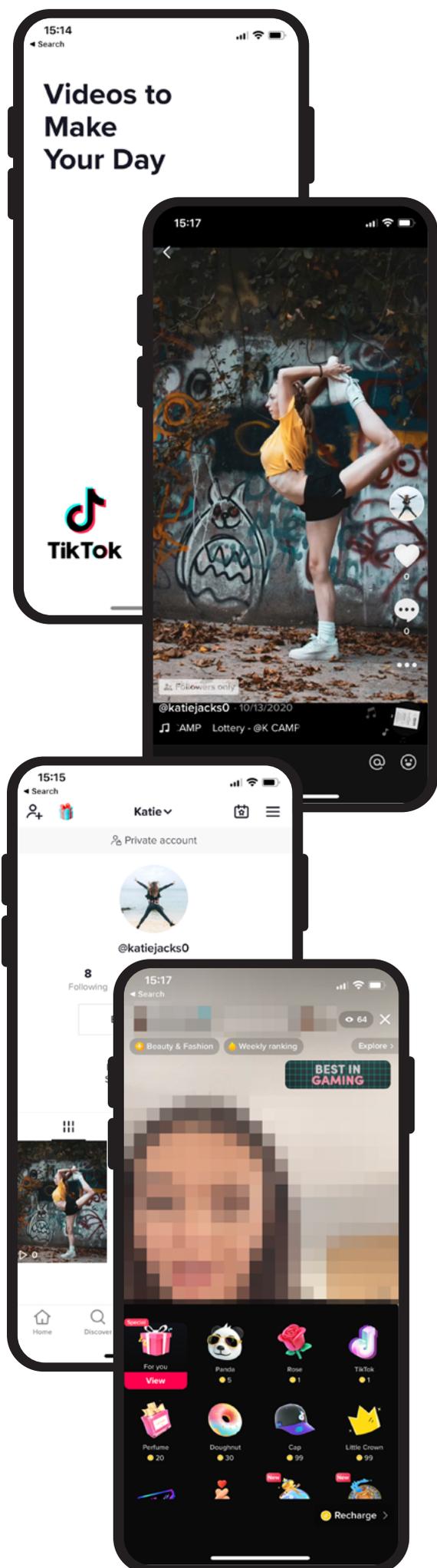
Age Verification 👶

TikTok requires users to be at least 13 years old, however, there is no strict age-verification in place and there is nothing to stop users from claiming to be older than they are.

13+ Age Rating

Stranger Danger 🤓

Not only can users input a fake age, but they can also create an entirely fake profile (name, location, bio details). Other people may also be able to contact the user directly through the app, depending on the user's privacy settings. Once contact is made between users, they can then move to another social media platform such as Instagram or Snapchat.

Explicit Content 🔞

Explicit and/or sexual language may be heard in the music/audio features within the app, and users may also use suggestive emojis or hashtags to discuss explicit content that would not be suitable for young audiences.

External Links 🔗

Users can click on external links found on profiles, meaning they may be signposted to inappropriate or explicit content found in profiles on other platforms e.g., Twitter, Instagram or OnlyFans.

In-app purchases 🤑

Users can buy digital goods on the platform and gift these to others, young people may be asked to gift or be encouraged to send gifts for a 'shout out'.

Payment Links 💸

Users can share links to their PayPal meaning other users can send them money – this can create risk as money can be used to coerce young people.

Persuasive Design 🔥

The platform is based on 'vertical/portrait videos' and a series of repetitive actions and behaviours which include swiping through infinite videos and double tapping to like a video.

Powerful Algorithm 📈

TikTok delivers its content using a powerful algorithm that learns from users and shows them content they are most likely to engage with. If they like content related to mental health they may see more of the same.

Video Downloads ▶️

Videos can be downloaded and saved without permission. These can also be shared on other external apps and platforms.

62.3k

Social Pressure 🥺

Young people may feel pressure to take risks on video in the hope they will gain a larger following, more likes and shares. They may also be pressured into 'trading' or 'swapping' intimate videos or pictures.

569

2138

TikTok's Community Guidelines

TikTok provides guidance on what is and not allowed on the platform and state that they will remove any content that violates these guidelines. This covers areas such as violent extremism, hateful behaviour, and illegal activities. More information can be found in TikTok's Community Guidelines at **tiktok.com/community-guidelines**.

TikTok content that a school may deem inappropriate can include:

- Unofficial/fake accounts that are pretending to be the school.
- Fake accounts pretending to be a teacher, staff member or pupil.
- Images and videos of teachers, staff members or pupils which have been taken or altered without their consent.
- Pupils uploading inappropriate material where the school building or grounds are clearly identifiable.
- Pupils uploading inappropriate material while identifiable in their school uniform.
- Parents, adults, or non-pupils who discuss or present the school in a negative way.
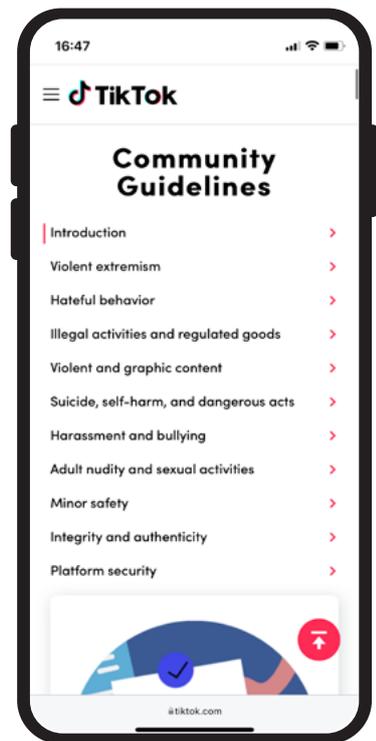
Reporting and blocking

If a school becomes aware of inappropriate content, they may wish to report a video and/or report/block a user.

Reporting a video will refer the individual video to TikTok for examination and they may take action if it goes against the Community Guidelines.

Reporting a user refers the account, including their video content, to TikTok. The platform should then take action if the account goes against the Community Guidelines.

Blocking a user prevents them from viewing your videos or engaging with you through direct messages, comments, follows or likes.
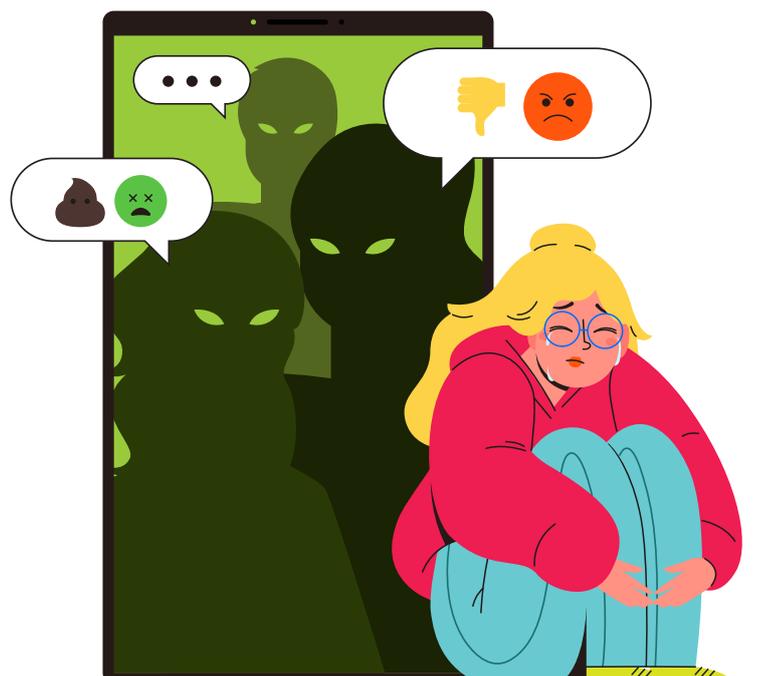
The reporting process is entirely anonymous, and the user will not be made aware as to who has reported them. Posts may need to be reported multiple times if removal is unsuccessful.

🚩 How to report a video

- Hold your finger on the video until the menu pops up along the bottom of the screen or alternatively tap on the arrow alongside the right-hand side of the video.

- Tap 'Report' and select a reason for the report from the list of options.

- Select more specific reason details as requested by the app.

- On the final screen tap the 'Submit' button.
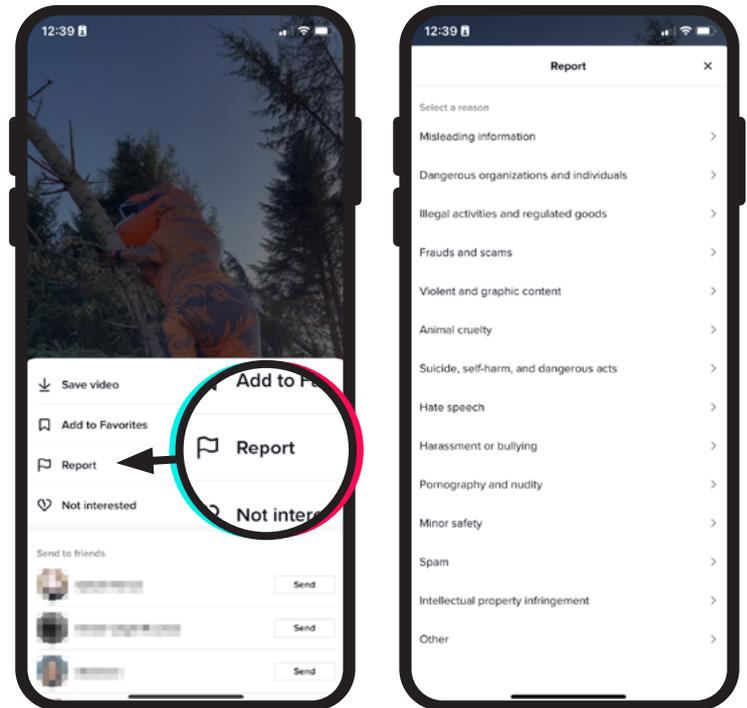
🚫 How to report and block an account

To report or block an account, users will need to create their own TikTok account. Once logged in:

- Go to the profile of the user you wish to report or block and tap the three-dots in the top-right corner.

- Click either 'Report' or 'Block' from the menu that will appear at the bottom of the screen.

- When reporting an account, you will be asked to submit a reason from a list of options.

- Blocking can be done without submitting a reason.

- More information on reporting users and content can be found on TikTok's safety section on their website at **support.tiktok.com.**
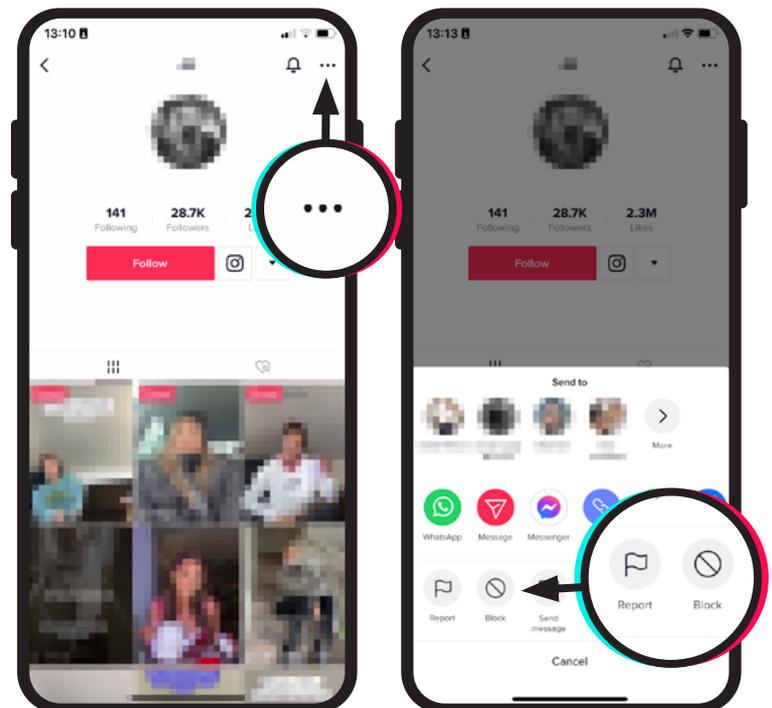
Underage users

TikTok has an online reporting form which can be used to report accounts where it is suspected that the account holder is younger than 13 years of age.

For more details visit their website at **support.tiktok.com**.

If pupils have parental permission to use TikTok despite being underage, it is important that they correct their age once they turn 13. This is to ensure the platform knows their true age and processes their data appropriately.

Dealing with pupils found to be posting inappropriate content

In the first instance, schools should refer to their own policy regarding the discipline of pupils.

Further escalation

For extreme cases, the school may wish to make a report to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) using the freephone number 101. This will be at the school's discretion but may cover content or behaviour that is illegal, or which could cause significant physical or psychological harm to a person. This may also apply when the school is unable to identify the user. For example, when the user's account contains fake information.

Summary

1. In the first instance of the school being aware of inappropriate content they should report it directly to the platform.

2. For further escalation, the school can make a report with the PSNI.

3. If/when a pupil or pupils are identified, the school should follow its own disciplinary procedure.

4. If you need support, you can also contact the Education Authority's Child Protection Support Service (CPSS) (if you were worried about a child protection issue).

**If you have immediate concerns about the safety of a child call 999 (emergency number)**

Useful Resources

Guidance for Schools

bit.ly/HoaxTikTok
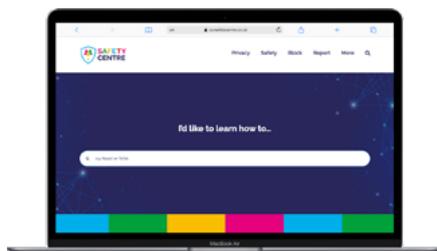
Our Safety Centre

www.oursafetycentre.co.uk

TikTok Safety Audit

bit.ly/tiktokauditssni
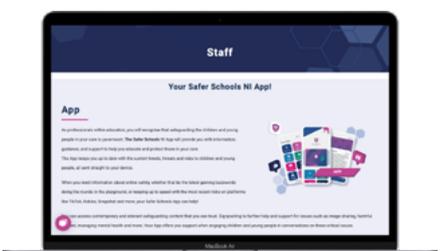
Safer Schools NI App

saferschoolsni.co.uk/staff/

Teach Hub

saferschoolsni.co.uk/teach-hub/

EA: Digital Safeguarding

bit.ly/educationauthority
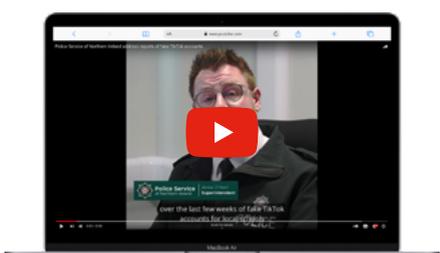
PSNI Video

bit.ly/PSNIvideo
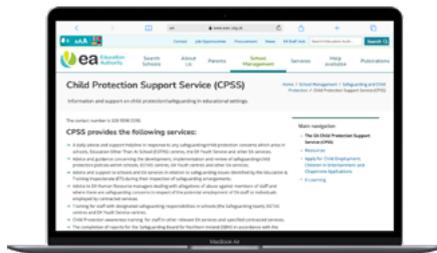
Child Protection Support Service

bit.ly/ChildProtectionCPSS

UK Gov Education Hub

bit.ly/EDUCATIONHUB

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Educating, empowering and protecting the NI school community

The digital world is 24/7; it's outside and inside of the school gates, so you need a service that does the same. Safer Schools NI is a digital library of age-appropriate safeguarding resources that you can check out anytime, from your phone to your computer to your classroom.

As a NI Safer School, you get **free** access to;

- A customised version of the Safer Schools NI App for your school community
- Resources and lessons for your teachers, parents and carers on our Teach and Home Learning Hubs
- Training for your school staff and pupils through the iAcademy
- Age-appropriate resources
- Advice and signposting
- and so much more

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Department of Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

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