



Every Student Thriving

17 January 2025

Dear Parent/Carer,

The Dangers of AI: What Parents Need to Know

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer just a futuristic concept—it's an integral part of our lives. From voice assistants like Alexa to personalized ads on social media, AI is everywhere. While these technologies can make life more convenient, they also come with risks, particularly for children and teenagers. As parents, it's important to understand these dangers to ensure your family navigates this AI-driven world safely and responsibly.

1. Exposure to Inappropriate Content

AI algorithms, particularly on social media platforms and video-sharing apps, are designed to recommend content based on a user's interests. While this can be entertaining, it may also expose children to inappropriate or harmful material, including violent, explicit, or misleading content.

What Parents Can Do:

- Enable strict content filters on apps and devices.
- Monitor your child's activity and set boundaries on screen time.
- Engage in open conversations about what they're watching online.

2. Manipulative Advertising and Algorithms

AI-driven advertisements and algorithms are designed to keep users engaged, sometimes at the expense of their well-being. Children may not recognize manipulative tactics, leading to compulsive consumption, unhealthy body image issues, or unnecessary purchases.

What Parents Can Do:

- Teach children to critically evaluate ads and online content.
- Use ad-blockers or kid-friendly browsers.
- Discuss financial literacy and the difference between needs and wants.

3. Impact on Mental Health

AI-driven platforms, especially social media, can affect children's mental health. Algorithms prioritize content that triggers strong emotional reactions, such as envy or outrage. This can lead to issues like anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

What Parents Can Do:

- Encourage face-to-face interactions and offline activities.
- Teach your child to take breaks from technology.
- Foster a supportive environment where they can discuss their feelings.

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4. Bias in AI Systems

AI is not immune to bias. If the data used to train an AI system reflects societal biases, the AI can perpetuate stereotypes or make unfair decisions. For example, facial recognition software has been shown to perform poorly for certain racial or ethnic groups.

What Parents Can Do:

- Stay informed about the technology your child interacts with.
- Encourage critical thinking about fairness and bias in AI systems.
- Advocate for transparency and fairness in AI technologies.

5. Over-Reliance on Technology

AI is incredibly convenient, but over-relying on it can limit a child's ability to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. For instance, tools like AI-based homework assistants can lead to shortcuts in learning rather than genuine understanding.

What Parents Can Do:

- Balance AI usage with traditional learning methods.
- Encourage creativity, exploration, and independent problem-solving.
- Model healthy technology use as a parent.

Next week I'll be exploring how AI is being utilised and abused to create significant safeguarding issues for young people (and indeed all of us.)

Take care - Ian Brierly

SIXTH FORM APPLICATIONS

A reminder that the application window for students in Year 11 wishing to apply for a sixth form place for September has reopened. Students who have previously completed their application are now required to log in and choose their 3 courses from within the option blocks. Students who have yet to apply are warmly welcomed to do so. The closing date for all applications is 5pm on Tuesday 25 February.



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REMINDERS & NOTICES

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Year 8 Consultation Evening (4.00-7.00)	-	23rd January
Year 13 Consultation Evening (4.00-7.00)	-	6th February
Year 11 Consultation Evening (4.00-7.00)	-	13th February

CURRENT VACANCIES

- Learning Support Assistants
- Business Studies Teacher
- Science Teacher
- Cover Supervisor

Please check our website for further details [here](#).

WHARF ROAD TRAFFIC SURVEY

The local traffic support group would be really grateful if you could fill in the survey below regarding traffic/parking concerns in Wharf Road. Your views would be very much welcomed!

[TRAFFIC SURVEY](#)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEART SCREENING OPPORTUNITY

We have been contacted by the Chairman of Risborough Rangers JFC regarding CRY heart screenings in Feb. The club have arranged for heart screenings for young people aged 14+ via CRY which they started after an ex RRJFC player died at 17 from an irregular heart condition whilst playing football. This is booked for 8th Feb in Risborough and they have a few spaces to fill. Funding has been secured to subsidise the cost across 100 kids so pricing is £65 rather than £85. If you are interested please contact Dan by email: danneale86@gmail.com

WESTONGROVE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Patient Update from Westongrove Partnership – Aston Clinton Surgery, Bedgrove Surgery & Wendover Health Centre

From Wed 8th January there will be a new system for requesting appointments or contacting the surgeries with admin queries. For more information, please go to

<https://www.westongrove.com/how-to-request-an-appointment-from-8th-january-2025/>

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SAFEGUARDING ADVICE FOR PARENTS : Click [HERE](#) for practical tips

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION
13+
(Certain features are restricted to over-18s only)

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 from 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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COMMUNITY SUPPORT



Opening Hours
Every day 8.15am - 8.45am

We have a good selection of second hand uniform items all at **no charge!**

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| blazers | jumpers |
| trousers | skirts |
| white shirts | PE kit items |

If you **need** an item or want to **borrow** or **swap** something for a different size please visit the shop during opening hours. For more information or to request an item please email uniformshop@johncolet.co.uk

We rely on donations so can't guarantee we will have all items in stock.

Wendover Cricket Club

Join Wendover Girls Cricket



The **Girls Section** at Wendover Cricket Club welcomes new recruits to attend its winter indoor training programme.

When	Saturday 25th January - 13:00 to 14:00
Where	John Colet School sports hall
Duration	10 weeks excluding 23 rd February
Open to	Girls year 5 to 8 of any ability, soft balls will generally be used
Cost	1 st session free, £5.50 thereafter



For more info / to sign up
Contact: Jonathan Seabrook jseabrook@wendoveremail.co.uk or 07767-148 119

SAFEGUARDING LEADS & INFORMATION



Mr Crawford
Deputy Headteacher
DSL



**Be Safe,
Be Kind**



Mrs Rowland
*Operational Safeguarding Lead
DDSL

If parents have any concerns about this practice or, believe that any young person at John Colet School might be at risk, then please do contact one of the members of our Safeguarding Team via

safeguarding@johncolet.co.uk

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