

Abacus Primary School



Newsletter 554 17 / 1 / 25



We were delighted to welcome Kayleigh from The Multi Schools council to our assembly today, where she presented our Good Practice seekers with a bronze award certificate to celebrate our work around Inclusion and SEND. Kayleigh told the school how we are the first school in the South East of Essex to achieve this award and that she is excited to support us in collecting evidence for the silver award.



Next week we will be on **WEEK 2**



WEEK 2





Miss Hodkin leaves us today to begin her maternity leave. I am sure you will join me in wishing her and her husband all the very best as they begin their new exciting adventure.

Mr Swanson joins our site team as our Site Manager following Mr Draper leaving.

Year 5 are heading off to the O2 on Monday to perform as part of The Young Voices choir. They have been practising songs for a number of weeks and will have the opportunity to sing these, along with a



number of other schools from across the country, on Monday evening. Thank you to the Year 5 team for helping prepare the children for this event and to Mrs Haley for her efforts with ticket allocation and the admin for this event - including sitting on the phone for over two hours. We hope that the parents attending will enjoy this event. Tickets were emailed to parents this week, so if you have not received them please contact the school office as soon as possible.

Children will have lunch before we head off on Monday (they can order a school meal if they wish) but will also need a meal for the evening and drinks to keep hydrated throughout the whole event.

We will text parents as we leave with an expected arrival time at school (according to Google Maps) but staff will not be accessing the text system after this. As this will be a late evening, children will be allowed to come in to school by 10am on Tuesday 21/1/25 but will be marked late after 10am.

YOUNG LEADERS



Our Young Leaders were so happy to have Jean and Leah from Silvana Court join our meeting on Tuesday afternoon to talk about strengthening our links with the home and becoming Dementia Champions.

The Young Leaders will be busy coming up with ideas on events and ideas we can plan to support residents at the home with their dementia and to try and keep them smiling.



Year 4 were in a different lounge on Monday afternoon for book club at Silvana Court - Runwood Homes Senior Living which meant they got to meet some new resident friends.



Mrs Ferrari and Mrs Smith are busy planning a range of activities for Children's Mental Health Week, which will be taking place during the week beginning 3rd February 2025. The theme for 2025 is **Know yourself, Grow yourself**. On Friday 7th February 2025 we will be holding a 'know yourself, grow yourself' day

where we invite children to dress in a way that tells us something about them (or if you don't want to take part then please wear school uniform as usual). This could be their favourite colour, outfit, what you want to be when you are older, your hobby or culture and the list could go on. If you would like to know more about the Place2Be charity and their work around children's mental health copy and paste the link below:

<https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk>



School Council members were delighted to take delivery of our new outdoor table tennis table today. We are all looking forward to warmer weather and lunchtime competitions!



Boccia County Final



On the 15th January 2025, our Boccia team represented our partnership area (Wickford, Billericay and South Woodham) in the County Boccia final at Basildon Sporting Village which is part of the School Games.

They competed against 14 other schools from across Essex and had some very close games. They were placed 8th overall out of 14 schools which is a great achievement and we are very proud of them all.

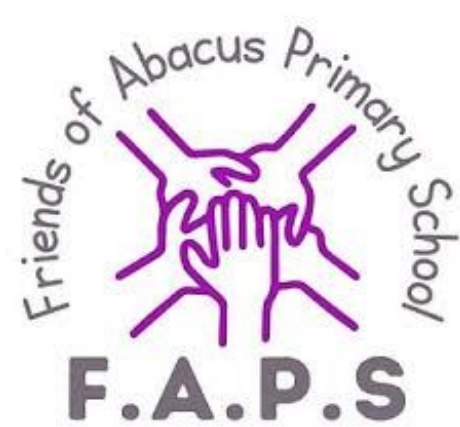
Thank you to parents for transporting the children to the event and for being their best supporters.



House Points



			
			
2228	1658	2226	2382



Bingo Night – 25th January 2025

Join us for an evening of fun when Skittleman leads us through our Bingo Night!

This is an **adults-only event**, so organise a babysitter, and bring all your friends!

We'll be in the school's large hall - doors open at 6.45pm. Please arrive in advance of the start time of 7.30pm.

Tables will be set up for groups of 8-10, so you may be asked to sit with other people if your group is smaller than this. Please bring your own drinks and nibbles – nothing containing nuts, thanks.

There are very limited numbers of tickets, so please don't delay if you'd like to join the fun.



Tickets cost £10 and are available from www.pta-events.co.uk/faps-abacus

This covers your first book of 7 games; more will be available to purchase on the night – please bring cash for this.

Any questions, please contact faps@abacus.essex.sch.uk

Thank you

From the Friends of Abacus Primary School Committee



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 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.

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.

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.

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>



Below is a Focus on the NHS' Learning Disability Register



Did you know that your SEN child may be eligible for extra health support from their GP?

What is the Learning Disability Register?

The Learning Disability Register is for babies, children, young people and adults who have a learning disability and are registered at their local GP practice.

The register lets the health staff at the (Doctor) GP practice know that a person has a learning disability and that the person may need reasonable adjustments.

Questions to help you think if your child could have a learning disability

If you answer yes to some of the questions below, it's really important you contact your Doctor (GP) practice and ask them if your child could or should be on their Doctor's (GP's) Learning Disability Register. This can be done at any age.

- Is your child on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Support Register?
 - Does your child attend a special school?
 - Does your child have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?
 - Do you have any reports about your child which say that your child has a learning disability, intellectual disability or global development delay
 - Is your child entitled to Personal Independence Payment, this used to be called Disability Living Allowance.
- If they agree that your child would benefit from being added to their Doctor (GP) practice's Learning Disability Register, you can be noted as their carer.

What is a learning disability?

There are three things which help the Doctor (GP) decide if someone has a learning disability.

These could be:

- If your child is less able to understand new information and to learn new skills.
- They are less able to cope independently than those without a learning disability.
- This started before the age of 18 years old



What should I do if I think my child has a learning disability?

If you think your child may have a learning disability, you can book an appointment to talk to your Doctor (GP).



For More Information



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<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/find-out-more-about-the-learning-disability-register/>

<chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/Doc%20%20learning%20disability%20register.pdf>

https://news.news.essex.gov.uk/9j46/send/cd8-4hu2?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR1_XwneeRABkDzeITBk2guQ5szzcIB-



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