

Advice for Managing TikTok Abuse for schools

1. Use a triage system

Leaders should first look to assess how serious the offence is. Here, a triage system is helpful. It doesn't need to be complicated, and can be as simple as a traffic light system

This approach involves identifying whether an online threat should be classed as red for criminal or serious safeguarding risk; orange for risk of legal action; yellow for an ethical, policy or reputational matter; and green for "low risk" (no action needed).

Each of those levels should have a different response. If it's red, and safety is at risk, or you suspect someone is in immediate danger, you need to ring 999 or 101. If it's orange, you should discuss with leaders or staff whether it's right to pursue legal action. If it's yellow, the issue might not need police involvement or legal advice, but nonetheless require some action. If it's green, no action needs to be taken.

In the case of TikTok videos, teachers should be aware that they can go to the police, if it is something at a criminal level – harassment, grossly offensive, indecent, obscene, assault or threats of violence. Some videos might fall into hate crime territory as well. If the messages are insulting, and motivated by hostility around race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or transgender status, it is a hate crime. These can be reported to the police.

If leaders are unsure whether or not videos can be classified as a criminal offence, Powell Jones recommends looking at the [Crown Prosecutors Service's guidelines on prosecuting cases involving social media](#). This is particularly helpful if you do report the videos to the police.

Glitch UK is also a helpful website. They have a template ([accessible here](#)) for making a record of online abuse that details the key information you need to log: which account posted it, the time and date, and the impact it has had on staff.

Schools also need to follow their own guidance on internet usage linked to their behaviour policy.

2. Get legal support

If the videos are of a defamatory nature, and they cause serious harm to a teacher's reputation, staff might want to seek legal support. This level of support may be gained through the Teaching Unions.

3. Report to TikTok or other organisations

Even though there have been suggestions that TikTok are not responding to any reported cases, it is still important that individuals report anything that is offensive. Many schools have already found reporting to the following website very helpful. It also contains some really good resources. <https://saferinternet.org.uk/>.

4. Ask police to come in and speak to students

It's important to educate students about the consequences of their behaviour online and also reflect on the seriousness of certain behaviours and how on-line abuse can be considered a crime.

5. Educate parents

As with any incident involving online safety or on-line abuse it is important that parents are informed and involved. Schools are encouraged to find ways to share the information and educate families on the risks involving incidents of this nature.

NB Useful information – Blogs from Holly Powell Jones who is the founder of [Online Media Law](#)