

Misuse of social networking applications

In recent days, the SSTA has been receiving a stream of concerns from members regarding misuse of social networking applications, particularly TikTok. TikTok is a video-focused social networking service which allows users to post short videos which tend to be humorous, fascinating, or outrageous in the hope of gaining significant numbers of likes and followers.

There are widespread news reports of users making TikTok videos including still or moving images of teachers taken from online sources or even recorded in school. Some use humour, but more insidiously some include statements which could cause reputational damage. Without wishing to cause fear or alarm, the SSTA wants to ensure all members are aware of this craze.

Making unfounded anonymous claims about teachers which can cause reputational damage is not something limited to TikTok, but also crops up on other apps such as Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and so on. Using readily available resources to cause harm without thinking through the potential consequences can cause unjustified anxiety for victims. The relative ease and speed with which people can create and publish video clips with very little moderation is a source of concern.

The SSTA offers this advice to members:

- continue to be highly vigilant regarding how young people are using their phones, particularly around school;
- review the school's policy on internet use;
- ensure all personal social media accounts are secure;
- do not respond to, or investigate, irresponsible postings yourself;
- seek the full support of the school if you have concerns; your Headteacher should exercise a duty of care and take the issue seriously;
- in any case where a teacher has experienced online abuse members should expect the school to be involving the local authority and the Police.

Other actions:

- The SSTA expects that schools will, in partnership with families and carers, already be educating young people in safe use of internet resources as part of PSHE programmes. Young people should understand that one person's enjoyment must not infringe on another's rights and wellbeing. There are useful resources here [Resource Library \(thinkuknow.co.uk\)](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) which are accessible and free to teachers who sign up using a school email address.
- Schools should remind pupils that they must not be making or taking images of their teachers without permission.
- It would be helpful for schools, as part of a programme of CLPL, to familiarise teachers with how some people are using and misusing online platforms so they can recognise harmful behaviours.
- People of any age who are creating and publishing videos or other content online with malicious and/or abusive content need to understand that, apart from any legal repercussions, they risk the inconvenience of having internet-connected equipment taken from their homes for forensic examination by the Police (it is helpful to have this kind of message delivered by a Police Officer).

Members with concerns should inform their Headteacher without delay, and should contact info@ssta.org.uk for further advice if required.