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Top Russian Social Network Tackles Bullies

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VKontakte really wants you to watch what you're saying.

Russia's largest social network conducted a one-day test of a tool that urges users to think twice before sending insulting comments, the company said in a press release Monday.

An algorithm detected abuse and recommended the sender "not to waste time on aggression and avoid the offensive remark."

"Write something kind. Surprise them!" said a sample pop-up message over an unsent text calling the author of a post "dumb trash."

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VKontakte said it picked Russia's National Unity Day public holiday to test the new feature,

then gauge how effectively it "reduces the amount of negativity" online. On all other days, the social network reminds users they can still report bullying, harassment and other offensive content through a built-in button.

"This will help protect adolescents who are more likely to experience bullying, and prevent harassment based on ethnicity," the social network said.

Users reported being able to dodge the algorithm, and others suggested that VKontakte's experiment had backfired.

"I cursed out and swore at a bunch of my friends as an experiment, and VKontakte didn't stop me," Russia's Business FM radio station quoted an unnamed user as writing.

VKontakte, run by Russia's internet giant Mail.ru Group, did not say when or whether it plans to roll out the decency function in full.

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