Dear Parents/Carers,

It has come to our attention that TikTok and Snap chat are being used more and more by students in Year 7&8, where generally students are not old enough to officially have signed up for the accounts; with both applications having an age rating of 13+

We are aware that this is not just a Frensham problem and that most schools grapple with this issue. However, we do know of a small number of cases where at best, posts are thoughtless or at worst, are deliberately unkind. This is obviously something that you would expect us not to condone.

Only three weeks ago, students were given a copy of our Acceptable Use Policy and were reminded of our expectations regarding technology; it is therefore disappointing that we have seen cases since this was highlighted to them. That said, we will continue to raise awareness of expectations and Year 7&8 will be having another information and reminder session this afternoon.

At school we continue to follow up matters as best as we can with the information we have, and will continue to deliver online safety messages and education now and throughout the year.At school we continue to follow up matters as best as we can with the information we have, and will continue to deliver online safety messages and education, now and throughout the year.

One thing that you may be able to do to help us, is to continue to share concerns with us as soon as you hear of them, so that we in turn can have follow up conversations. As parents, please also take the opportunity to have a chat with your children about inappropriate content on any mobile device that they have access to, including the storage of images/film and harmful chats.

A particular focus of your conversation could be photos on their camera role, any saved Snapchat files and anything stored on "for your eyes only" a hidden file within Snapchat. Group chats on WhatsApp, Instagram and Snapchat are commonly used to share material between friends. Not all of these are harmful, however, children are often caught up in content that they do not contribute to but receive by being part of these groups.

We would encourage our families to have open conversations with children about this, share some knowledge around the emotional damage that this content can cause and the long reaching ramifications on children who are victims of online bullying or see content that distresses them.

Can I ask you please to access all devices with your children, check the devices together deleting anything inappropriate and alert school if you have any concerns.

If you do have any concerns, please do let your child's tutor know so that they in turn may have follow up conversations or pass to a member of the Middle/Senior School Team.

The following links may be of use to families as they cover risks, tips and age restrictions for all of the main platforms:

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/
https://nationalonlinesafety.com/hub/view/guide/tiktok-2022
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/is-snapchat-safe-for-my-child/
TikTok safety guide to support young people on the app | Internet Matters
Is Snapchat safe: A how to guide for parents | Internet Matters

With best wishes

Becks

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about
TIKTOK

TikTok is a video-sharing social media app which lets people create, view and download looping 15-second clips. Typically, these are videos of users lip-syncing and dancing to popular songs or soundbites (often for comic purposes), enhanced with filters, effects and text. Designed with young people in mind, TikTok skyrocketed in popularity in 2019 and has featured near the top of download charts ever since. It now has around a billion users worldwide.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Most videos appearing on a child's feed are light-hearted and amusing. However, some clips have been reported for featuring drug and alcohol abuse, themes of suicide and self-harm, or young teens acting in a sexually suggestive way. The sheer volume of uploads is impossible to moderate entirely – and since TikTok Jump's introduction in mid-2021, users can view third-party content outside the app.

EXPLICIT SONGS

TikTok primarily revolves around videos of users lip-syncing and dancing to music. Inevitably, some featured songs will contain explicit or suggestive lyrics. Given the app's young user-base, there is a risk that children may view older users' videos and then be inclined to imitate any explicit language or suggestive actions.

TIKTOK FAME

The app has created its own celebrities: Charli D'Amelio and Lil Nas X, for example, were catapulted to fame by exposure on TikTok – leading to many more teens attempting to go viral and become "TikTok famous". While most aspiring stars hoping to be 'the next big thing' will find it difficult, setbacks may in turn prompt them to go to even more drastic lengths to get noticed.

HAZARDOUS VISIBILITY

Connecting with others is simple on TikTok – including commenting on and reacting to users' videos, following their profile and downloading their content. The majority of these interactions are harmless, but – because of its abundance of teen users – TikTok *has* experienced problems with predators contacting young people.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

Like all social media platforms, TikTok can be extremely addictive. It can be hugely entertaining – but that also makes it hard to put down. As well as the punchy nature of the short video format, the app's ability to keep users intrigued about what's coming next means it's easy for a 5-minute visit to turn into a 45-minute stay.

IN-APP SPENDING

There's an in-app option to purchase 'TikTok coins', which are then converted into digital rewards for sending to content creators that a user likes. Prices range from 99p to an eye-watering £99 bundle. TikTok is also connected with Shopify, which allows users to buy products through the app.

Advice for Parents & Carers

TALK ABOUT ONLINE CONTENT

Assuming your child is above TikTok's age limit, talk to them about what they've viewed on the app. Ask their opinion on what's appropriate and what isn't. Explain why they shouldn't give out personal details or upload videos which reveal information like their school or home address. In the long run, teaching them to think critically about what they see on TikTok could help them to become social-media savvy.

MAINTAIN PRIVACY SETTINGS

The default setting for all under 16s' accounts is 'private'. Keeping it that way is the safest solution: it means only users who your child approves can watch their videos. The 'Stitch' (which lets users splice clips from other people's videos into their own) and 'Duet' (where you build on another user's content by recording your own video alongside their original) features are now only available to over 16s. This might clash with your child's ambitions of social media stardom, but it will fortify their account against predators.

LEARN ABOUT REPORTING AND BLOCKING

With the correct privacy settings applied, TikTok is a relatively safe space. However, in case something *does* slip through, make sure your child knows how to recognise and report inappropriate content and get them to come to you about anything upsetting that they've seen. TikTok allows users to report anyone breaching its guidelines, while you can also block individual users through their profile.

ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

'Family Pairing' lets parents and carers link their own TikTok account to their child's. Through your mobile, you can control your child's safety settings remotely – including limiting screen time, managing their ability to exchange messages (and with whom) and blocking a lot of age-inappropriate content. TikTok's Safety Centre also provides resources for parents and carers to support online safety among families. These resources can be found on their website.

USE RESTRICTED MODE

In the app's 'Digital Wellbeing' section, you can filter out inappropriate content (specific content creators or hashtags, for instance) using 'Restricted Mode'. This can then be locked with a PIN. You should note, though, that the algorithm moderating content isn't totally dependable – so it's wise to stay aware of what your child is watching.

MODERATE SCREEN TIME

As entertaining as TikTok is, you can help your child to manage their time on it in the 'Digital Wellbeing' section. Under 'Screen Time Management', you can limit the daily permitted time on the app (in increments ranging from 40 minutes to two hours). This preference can also be locked behind a PIN. That way, your child can get their regular dose of TikTok without wasting the whole day.

Meet Our Expert

Parven Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Clicks; a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.

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