

Dear parents and carers,

There has been a recent rise in children accessing the app TikTok which is a social media app that gives users the opportunity to share 60 second short videos with friends, family or the entire world. The app is for those who are 13+ but we recognise that children of primary age are using it.

As a parent you need to be aware that the app not only gives children the opportunity to watch a range of 60 second videos but also a chance to create their own, have their videos rated and receive and send messages.

Children can download the app and immediately start watching content, all of which is not filtered. Many of the videos are funny but there is a lot of explicit language and content which would be hard to monitor. Once a child has created an account, they are able to share and post material. Children can easily lie about their date of birth in order to create an account.

The app also encourages users to become 'TikTok famous'. This not only encourages children to push boundaries to achieve 'fame' but also encourages a focus on self-image.

If children create their own videos and upload them, their videos can be viewed publicly and can receive comments. Children can become focussed on achieving good comments and find it difficult to handle negative feedback. There is also a danger of contact from an online predator due to the ease of contact through this app.

**We would not recommend this app for children of primary age.** You may be worried that your child may access this app without your permission. We would recommend that you get to know the app yourself. If your child is very keen to access the app we suggest that you do it together **through your own account on your device** helping them select appropriate choices of videos and discussing those that are not appropriate and why. This will also ensure your child knows they can come to you if they see something that makes them feel uncomfortable or upsetting, as you would have modelled these conversations whilst using this app together. Other online safety issues you can discuss are regarding people who contact them online are not always who they say they are and the importance that children should not give away their personal information.

If you do decide to set up your own account on your device to share with your child you should change the settings to help make it safer to use (although it will never be 100%). Settings should be changed from public to private, selecting restricted mode and manage who can comment and message on the app.

For further information about TikTok and how to change the settings please see the article on Parent Info by following this link: <https://parentinfo.org/article/tiktok-what-parents-need-to-know>

For more online information about a range of online safety matters please remember you can use the link on our website to access 'Parent Info' a site by CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) and 'Parent Zone' to give you the latest online safety information. The

link is on the Online Safety pages and can be reached by this [link](#). We also have links to other Online Safety Websites.

### **Family Link app**

To keep an eye on what your child is accessing online, you may want to consider using an app to help you. If your child is on an iPhone you can set up family sharing but on other devices, you may want to check out a new app called Family Link. It's currently got 4.6 out of 5 rating in the App Store. The app lets you set digital ground rules to help guide your children as they learn, play and explore online.

-You can monitor together how much time is spent on particular apps by getting activity reports and use this to agree on an amount that you think helps their wellbeing.

-Set time limits and 'bed times' - even locking their device if required.

-Manage which apps they can download.

-Use the location tracker to see where they are.

-Use the list of suggestions from teachers on apps which will develop their curiosity.

It's available here:

Apple (<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/google-family-link/id1150085200>)

Android

([https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.apps.kids.familylink&referrer=utm\\_source%3Dfamilylink%26utm\\_medium%3Dwebsite%26utm\\_campaign%3Dgetapp](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.apps.kids.familylink&referrer=utm_source%3Dfamilylink%26utm_medium%3Dwebsite%26utm_campaign%3Dgetapp)).

It does require a Google account for you (on your device) and one for them (on their device). Help is provided on this in the app, but it's really straight forward.

Please do let us know if you have any online safety worries or concerns.

Kind regards,

Lynda Hood

Hawks class teacher and Online Safety lead.