

# DIGITAL SUPPORT FOR PARENTS/CARERS

As a staff we are aware that there are an increasing number of children using the app TikTok across school. So we felt it was important to give Parents/Carers some information about the platform so you know what your child may be accessing and how you can support them.



## **What is the Age Limit for TikTok?**

The minimum age for a TikTok user is 13 years old. However, it's important to note that TikTok doesn't use any age verification tools when new users sign up. That means, if your child signs up for a new account without your knowledge, they'll have access to explicit and inappropriate content without restriction.

## **Is TikTok Safe for Children?**

Privacy Settings Have Been Updated for Young Users. With its new 2021 update, TikTok accounts for users aged 13-15 will now default to "private". Also, videos created by users under 16 years of age are restricted by default for download unless the settings are changed or updated.

## **What are TikTok's Parental Controls?**

With a feature called "Family Pairing", parents can link their child's account to their own where they can control direct messages, set screen time limits, and turn on/off restricted content directly from their phone. Parents will also receive a notification if any of the settings are changed or turned off from their child's phone. There's also a "Digital Wellbeing" Setting. Once turned on, this setting will set time limits on app use, which can help your child moderate the time they spend on their phone. Settings also allow a parent to put restrictions on their child's account. This will block videos that have been flagged as inappropriate. An important point to remember however is that not all inappropriate material is flagged properly; things slip through the cracks.

## **Will TikTok Affect My Child's Mental Health?**

While TikTok is great for communicating and can provide a creative outlet for your child, it can also have some harmful effects. Like with any social media platform, posting videos and pictures regularly leaves your child open to negative reactions and harsh comments. This can have a huge impact on your child's self-esteem, body image, and confidence. In some instances, it can lead to depression, anxiety, and even eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. While those are extreme cases, young users and even influencers on the platform have expressed concerns over the negative comments they receive and how it affects their daily lives.

## **Does TikTok Collect User Data?**

While this is nothing new and all social-media apps participate in this practice, it is worth reminding you. This is a quote directly from TikTok's page on privacy-

"We share your data with our third-party service providers we rely on to help provide you with the Platform. These providers include cloud storage providers and other IT service providers. We also share your information with our business partners, advertisers, analytics and search engine providers..."

One thing they don't mention is that even when the app isn't being used, it's collecting info off of your phone clipboard. That means if you or your child copy and paste sensitive information such as passwords or private conversations, TikTok is noting and storing that information. For iPhone users, updating to the latest iOS update should fix the issue.

# MYTH BUSTERS FOR PARENTS/CARERS/CHILDREN



There are also a lot of myths about TikTok as well as all other social media platforms. Here are a few MYTH BUSTERS!!!

**MYTH** Reposting a clip that someone else made isn't a problem

- **FACT** Reposting a video or clip that isn't nice can really hurt people and is as bad legally as posting it in the first place. You can get in trouble both with the school and possibly the Police for re-posting!

**MYTH** There isn't anything you should do if you see an inappropriate clip.

- **FACT** Report it and stop more harm being done!

**MYTH** Nothing I post can be traced back to me.

- **FACT** The device you use has a unique ip address and police can trace this back to your phone – usually through your service provider

**MYTH** Anyone can use TikTok

- **FACT** The minimum age is 13, anyone younger than 13 is breaking the terms and conditions of the service and the account can be deleted. Only use an app if your parents or carers approve!

**MYTH** It's not illegal to post a joke video.

- **FACT** The malicious communication act makes it illegal to post a message that is grossly offensive, indecent or menacing. School or others may choose to contact the Police.

**MYTH** The Police can't do anything

- **FACT** The Police can and will act, and some youngsters have found that as they get older when they apply for jobs in some careers, for instance caring or working with children or older people their online behaviour may stop them getting a job!

**MYTH** – It does not matter because no-one will ever find it

- **FACT** Many companies are starting to search social media before making a job offer – if you have posted something inappropriate, they will probably find it!

**MYTH** I posted it at home - even if I get found out the school can't do anything

- **FACT** Your school behaviour policy will allow them to act even if you posted it at home. Some pupils have been excluded as a result of what they have posted.

**MYTH** Teachers cannot take my phone off me...

- **FACT** Teachers are allowed to search and confiscate phones. This is explained in the DfE guidance published in 2018.

If you feel you need more support then please get in touch with school.