



31.01.2020

**Keep your children safe online – Urgent information for any parents/carers of children with access to  
electronic devices**

Dear Parent/Carer,

I have this week been made aware that some children at Barrow Hedges are using an application called 'Tik Tok' which is for people to share videos with other users, either privately or more widely. This application is available to people for download on most devices and does not cost anything. 'Tik Tok' requires that users be at least 13 years old to use the app and that anyone under the age of 18 must have approval of a parent or guardian; and 'Common Sense Media' recommends that users should be at least 16. Despite this, I have been made aware today that there are children throughout our Key Stage Two (Year 3 to Year 6) who are using this application.

Having spoken to some children who have used the application today I was concerned by their naivety about the risks of using this application in the way they have been using it and therefore ask any parent or carer whose child does have a device such as an iPad, iPhone or other tablet, to check which applications their child is using, what age restrictions there are, and also ensure that their child is applying appropriate measures to keep safe online, whatever applications they might be using.

'Internet Matters' advise parents:

***What should parents be concerned about?***

*When you download the app **users can see all the content without creating an account** although they are not able to post, like or share anything until they've set up an account on the app.*

*You can set up your account by using your existing Google, Facebook, Instagram account, via email or phone.*

***By default all accounts are public*** so anyone on the app can see what your child shares. However, only approved followers can send them messages. Users can like or react to a video, follow an account or send messages to each other. ***There is the risk that strangers will be able to directly contact children on the app.***

Children may be ***tempted to take risks to get more of a following*** or likes on a video so it's important to talk about what they share and with who. To delete an account you have to request a code from the app using a phone number



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For your information, as shared previously, I have listed some applications below with their actual age limits, though I would advise caution even with older siblings who are of the age specified because many of these applications do place young people at risk:

Application	Age Limit		Application	Age Limit
Instagram	13		Skype	13
Facebook	13		Youtube	13
Snapchat	13		TikTok	13
Pinterest	13		Kik	13
Whatsapp	16		Monkey	13
Tennonym	17		Episode	13
Yubo	13			

I can also advise that there are additional challenges for parents/carers monitoring app use now as children and young people are using 'ghosting' settings and other mechanisms to hide which apps they have. For example, there is an application that helps them do this that looks like the calculator app but then when a code is entered, other hidden apps, photos or text messages become available.



A really good website is available to support parents in locating age restrictions and learning about different apps, endorsed by the NSPCC, is 'Net Aware' which you can access at <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/>

I hope that this letter has been helpful. We will continue to speak directly with children about how to keep themselves safe online also. If you would like any advice then please do feel free to get in touch with a member of the leadership team or our Family Support Worker, Ms Lucy Gardiner.

With best wishes,

Mr Lowes  
 Deputy Head Teacher  
 Inclusion Leader  
 Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer