



# SAUNCEY WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL



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## Staying Safe Online - TikTok

Dear Parents and Carers

Our children are part of the digital age. The internet is the most wonderful resource we have ever had. At the click of a button we can find out about anything we want. It is also a point of vulnerability for children if they do not use it safely. We cannot prevent our children living in this modern, technological-driven world, therefore we need to teach our children how to safely navigate their way through it. This needs to start from the minute they are engaging with technology, in an age appropriate way. At school we talk to the children a lot about staying safe online - this starts from the Early Years and continues right the way through to Year 6.

One of the issues children (particularly our older pupils) have to come to terms with is the use of social media. Whether primary school age children are meant to be using these apps is irrelevant - we know they are so we have to help them stay safe. Currently, TikTok is rapidly becoming the bane of our lives again at Sauncey Wood - staff are dealing with issues raised by this app on an almost weekly basis.

I am not trying to be some sort of killjoy - social media can be a wonderful addition to our lives but if used inappropriately it can be harmful to your children's well-being or actually place them in dangerous situations. You should be 13 years old to have a TikTok account but I am aware that a substantial number of our KS2 children are posting on this app. I am not naive enough to believe that by telling them they are too young that they will stop - therefore, I believe it is our job to ensure that our children are using TikTok, or any social media platform, as sensibly and safely as possible.

Over the past few weeks, we have had children from Year 4 to Year 6 use TikTok in an unacceptable manner: writing abusive messages aimed at children in their class; sharing videos that are not appropriate for their age; posting unacceptable content that would land an adult in an awful lot of trouble.

I am sorry to say this but I am not sure that some parents are fully aware of their children's use of TikTok; I know of one of our children had a 'secret' TikTok account. Their parents were monitoring their other 'official' account & were none the wiser of the content they were posting on the hidden account. Their official account was private but their secret account was open for anyone to access.



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If some of our children are posting inappropriate content this is obviously disappointing, and needs to stop, but this is not even my main concern. Some of our children are putting themselves at risk in multiple ways:-

- posting from open accounts where anyone can access their account and posts;
- wearing school uniform in photos/videos - there are not that many Sauncey Wood Primary Schools in the UK and a quick check of the school badge will identify the location of our school;
- including their names in posts - people who are unknown to the child now know their name (and where they go to school);
- they are interacting with complete strangers - they do not know if these people are who they say they are (I do not believe that a child in Year 5 knows the 113 people that follow them on TikTok).

Comments about posts can be disgusting. We know some of our pupils have had vile things said to them, and about them, by complete strangers.

A great deal of content on TikTok is not suitable for primary school age children. TikTok's algorithm works in such a way that if you watch a video all the way through to the end (you don't even have to 'like' it) the app will show you more videos of a similar nature, whether it's a funny video about a dog, a violent argument between adults or a dance off video.

Please watch the BBC Panorama programme 'Is TikTok Safe?', which sets out the very real dangers of children using TikTok. The programme is only 29 minutes long and is available to watch on BBC iPlayer (link below):-

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000p3p9>

Childnet & Net Aware have both produced an excellent guide for parents/carers, they cover how to ensure TikTok accounts are set up as safely as possible:-

<https://www.childnet.com/blog/tiktok-an-updated-guide-for-parents-and-carers>

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/tiktok/>

Ideally, none of your children should be on TikTok. As I stated earlier, I am not naive enough to think this will happen therefore we need to ensure that our children are using TikTok safely. At Sauncey Wood, e-safety is a central pillar of our computing curriculum - we are confident our children are aware of how to stay safe online, unfortunately, too many of them are not putting their knowledge into practice.



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The core of this message also applies to the use of messaging platforms such as WhatsApp; I have had a number of parents contact me because of both individual and group messages being inappropriate and unacceptable. Please, keep an eye on your young person, we need to continue to educate, support and ultimately keep them as safe as we can.

Yours sincerely

Mr Lloyd  
Headteacher



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