



Hall Green School

An Academy

12 November 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you are well.

I am writing to inform you of some concerns regarding social media, specifically the platform TikTok. Please read the content below carefully. We would also urge you to take the time to regularly monitor your child's phone, internet devices and any social media accounts that they may have, if they are at the legal age to hold one. This is an important safeguarding exercise that I know all parents and carers will take seriously.

What is TikTok?

TikTok (formerly Musical.ly) is a free social media platform for creating and watching short videos and sharing them with friends and strangers. Clips are often created using short grabs of music and can be enhanced by a range of tools such as filters, animation and special effects. The majority of videos produced are of young people lip-syncing and dancing to popular music but there are also talent videos, comedy skits, challenges and informational clips.

According to mobile intelligence firm Sensor Tower, in 2019 TikTok reached 1.5 billion downloads and was the third-most downloaded non-gaming app of the year, behind only WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. The popularity of the app, especially among younger students, is quite staggering.

The minimum age for users to sign up to a TikTok account is **13 years** of age.

Parents **must** be vigilant in how their child accesses social media. The attached guide can be used to support this.

There have already been several concerns raised regarding the existence of TikTok. This is a significant concern for our school too. Some platform users are using TikTok in very negative and sometimes, quite naively, even illegal ways. We have seen that some pupil users are tagging in and/or are making videos which include staff and pupil names and even including edited images downloaded from our website. This is completely without the permission of these people, who are in most cases, totally unaware of these videos. Some of this content is malicious, insulting and hurtful.

We are aware of a current 'challenge' circulating on TikTok encouraging school pupils to make dummy school accounts and post unpleasant content that vilifies teachers at their school. We are aware of accounts that are currently targeting Hall Green teachers. This is happening in a number of other Birmingham schools also.

We categorically object to the use of social media platforms to impersonate, insult, troll, bully or exploit any member of staff at Hall Green School. We will apply our behaviour policy most severely if any investigation discovers that a pupil has used social media in a way that goes against our school values and high expectations of behaviour & conduct, and/or is illegal, defamatory or against the Equality Act of 2010. We have already referred the accounts and videos we are aware of to the police and will have no hesitation

in continuing to do so. It is worth highlighting that pupils who 'like' or 'share' this malicious, and sometimes illegal content, could also be subject to these sanctions as they affirm the content.

The action we have taken as a school so far:

- Delivered assemblies to all year groups on online bullying and the consequences;
- Reported all inappropriate accounts and videos to TikTok;
- Reported all inappropriate accounts and videos to the police; this is an ongoing, live investigation with the police continuing to gather evidence.

Thank you for your ongoing support in working with teachers and professionals to keep children safe and also in the important work that we all do to ensure that our children behave in a way that is safe, respectful, responsible and lawful. We would ask that you discuss the content of this letter with your child. We are fully aware that the vast majority of our school community are equally horrified and disgusted by the content of these videos and are proud of our values and the fact we are often referred to as a 'family'.

If you have any information relating to any of the above, then please do not hesitate to contact us on our enquiry email enquiry@hallgreen.bham.sch.uk.

Yours faithfully



Miss K Slater
Headteacher

Hall Green School is a company limited by guarantee. Registered in England & Wales. Registered Number 7892732.
Registered Office: Southam Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AA Headteacher: Miss K Slater Tel: 0121 628 8787
Fax: 0121 702 2182 Email: enquiry@hallgreen.bham.sch.uk www.hallgreen.bham.sch.uk