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Dear Parent/Carer,

As a school we are constantly trying to keep up to date with trends and Apps that our children are using online. We have a growing concern that children have access to Apps that are not age appropriate and, in many cases, appear to be using them without parental control or input.

As part of our ongoing work to help safeguard our children we would like to share the following information with you. We appreciate that this information may not be relevant to all of you at this stage but may be of use in the future or as an opener to conversations with older siblings / relatives.

The NSPCC has a wealth of information available on the website helping both children and parents understand online safety. The NSPCC states in relation to online grooming that

"Figures show that since April 2017:

- 32.6% of grooming cases involved the use of Facebook
- 18.8% of grooming cases used the Facebook owned apps Instagram and WhatsApp
- The second most-used app in grooming cases was Snapchat."

The apps are as follows:

#### **Snapchat Streaks – age 13+**

Young people are giving out their passwords to their accounts to friends in order that friends might continue their 'snapchat streaks' when they themselves cannot be on snapchat. No young person should give away their passwords to anyone other than their parents or carers. Passwords should not be given out to friends. Parents/carers should check their children's passwords for all their social media accounts and reinforce to them the importance of keeping these confidential. Snapchat has also introduced a new tracker update where you can view the exact location of your friends. It can give you the area, town and street and if you zoom in it will give you the position of the house on the street and your exact location will be revealed.

To disable this go into ghost mode. NSPCC rate this app as high risk for issues of a sexual or bullying nature.

#### **Musical.ly – age 13+**

This App allows young people to create, share and discover short videos. The videos can be shared with friends or with other Musical.ly users. This use of this app needs to be monitored for unkind and inappropriate comments, seeing inappropriate videos that other people post, getting requests to follow you from people who are unknown. The App has a feature called My City which shows all of the videos made in the young person's location. Turn off location settings within the app by going into settings, scrolling down to 'Hide my location' and move the slider to the 'green' position to protect your child's location. NSPCC rates this app as being medium risk for sexual issues, violence and hatred, bullying, suicide and self-harm, drink, drugs and crime.

#### **Yellow (now called Yubo) – age 13+**

An app where under-18s can post profile pictures to engage in liking and dating and other conversations of a sexual nature. The app can be linked to Snapchat accounts and there have been many concerns about requests from users of this app for inappropriate pictures. With many young people having Snapchat, and potential access to this app, parents/carers should talk to their children about the dangers of engaging with others via this app. Clear advice is that young people should not have or use this app. NSPCC gives the app a high risk rating for sexual issues and drink, drugs and crime. It is possible to click on 'Hide my city' inside the app to make sure no one can see where the child is. There is also a feature that lets you restrict friends by inputting a mobile number to find them.



### **Instagram – age 13+**

There are some sites on Instagram requesting that young people send in ‘mugshots’ of themselves. Instagram and Police Support Officers have been made aware of the existence of these sites. No young person should send or post a ‘mugshot’ of themselves (or of another young person) to these sites and no young person should make any comments on these sites. No young person should be attempting to create such sites on Instagram or any other social media platform. Parents/carers should check that their children are not in any way linked to these sites and to use the reporting functions on Instagram as appropriate. NSPCC gives a high risk rating for sexual and bullying issues.

### **Facebook – 13+**

Facebook is a much used app. It is used as a communication tool. NSPCC gives Facebook a high rating for sexual issues, violence and hatred, bullying, suicide and self-harm, drink, drugs and crime.

### **Roblox – 7+**

Roblox is a gaming platform where you can create your own games or play games that other users have made. There is also the option to chat to other players, but this can be disabled. Young people who reviewed Roblox thought it was unsafe. The main issues were:

- Receiving or seeing bullying messages in the chat
- There are in-app purchases
- Being contacted by people you don't know

The NSPCC has a high risk rating for bullying with this app.

We know that as parents you take the online safety of your children very seriously. If you are monitoring what your child is using and tracking messages etc. we know that you can keep your child safe. We are asking all parents to have a conversation with their children about keeping themselves safe when playing online and safe when playing online with friends and family outside of the family home. As a school we have evidence that often it is outside of the family home where children are exposed to new apps and unrestricted gaming. Across the federation we have had to deal with serious matters such as grooming, bullying and issues leading to thoughts of self-harm and suicide; all linked to online apps. We take the safeguarding of your children seriously.

Please be assured that TT Rockstars is safe because although the children are competing against others they are unable to communicate in any form including chat.

There are information pages available on our website and the NSPCC in conjunction with O2 have an excellent guide to apps and gaming: [www.net-aware.org.uk](http://www.net-aware.org.uk). It can also be accessed directly through the NSPCC website.

Many thanks for your continued support in this matter.

Kind Regards

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Sue N'Jai  
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H/E Safety: Letter over apps concerns May 2018

