

Youth Produced Sexual Imagery Policy

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations



Youth Produced Sexual Imagery Policy

Whilst professionals refer to the issue as 'sexting' there is no clear definition of 'sexting'. According to research, many professionals consider sexting to be 'sending or posting sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobiles or over the internet.' Yet, recent NSPCC research has revealed that when children are asked 'What does sexting mean to you?' they are more likely to interpret sexting as 'writing and sharing explicit messages with people they know.' Similarly, a recent ChildLine survey has revealed that many parents think of sexting as flirty or sexual text messages rather than images.

This policy only covers the sharing of sexual imagery by children. Creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of under-18s is illegal, and therefore causes the greatest complexity for the school when responding. It also presents a range of risks which need careful management.

On this basis, this policy introduces the phrase 'youth produced sexual imagery' and uses this instead of 'sexting'. This is to ensure clarity about the issues this advice addresses.

What is youth produced sexual imagery?

'Youth produced sexual imagery' best describes the practice because:

- 'Youth produced' includes children sharing images that they, or another child, have created of themselves.
- 'Sexual' is clearer than 'indecent'. A judgement of whether something is 'decent' is both a value judgement and dependent on context.
- 'Imagery' covers both still photos and moving videos (and this is what is meant by reference to imagery throughout the policy).

What types of incidents are covered by this policy?

Yes:

- A child creates and shares sexual imagery of themselves with a peer (also under the age of 18).
- A child shares sexual imagery created by another child with a peer (also under the age of 18) or an adult.
- A child is in possession of sexual imagery created by another child.

Disclosure

Disclosure about youth produced sexual imagery can happen in a variety of ways. The child affected may inform a class teacher, the DSL in the school, or any member of the school staff. They may report through an existing reporting structure, or a friend or parent may inform someone in the school, or inform the police directly.

All members of staff (including non-teaching staff) are aware of how to recognise and refer any disclosure of incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery. This will be covered within staff training and within the school's safeguarding policy.

Any direct disclosure by a child should be taken very seriously. A child who discloses they are the subject of sexual imagery is likely to be embarrassed and worried about the consequences. It is likely that disclosure in school is a last resort and they may have already tried to resolve the issue themselves.

Handling incidents

All incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery should be responded to in line with the

School's safeguarding policy.

When an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery comes to a member of staff's attention:

- The incident should be referred to the DSL as soon as possible.
- The DSL will hold an initial review meeting with appropriate school staff.
- The DSL will follow the procedures and guidance set out in Sexting in schools and schools: responding to incidents and safeguarding children.
- There will be subsequent interviews with the children involved (if appropriate).
- Parents will be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the child at risk of harm.
- At any point in the process if there is a concern a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm a referral will be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.

Education

Teaching about safeguarding issues in the classroom can prevent harm by providing children with skills, attributes and knowledge to help them navigate risks. The school will provide children with opportunities to learn about the issue of youth produced sexual imagery, as part of its commitment to ensure that they are taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities – as also referred to in the school's e-safety policy.