



LIME HOUSE SCHOOL



SEXTING POLICY (07/06/2018)

This policy has been prepared with reference to 'Sexting in schools and colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people' UKCCS, 2016 – update January 2017. In all cases of sexting the school's Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) – Mrs Rice & Mr Thompson should be contacted.

What is 'sexting'?

In the latest advice for schools and colleges (UKCCIS, 2016), sexting is defined as the production and/or sharing of sexual photos and videos of and by young people who are under the age of 18. It includes nude or nearly nude images and/or sexual acts. It is also referred to as 'youth produced sexual imagery'.

'Sexting' does not include the sharing of sexual photos and videos of under-18 year olds with or by adults. This is a form of child sexual abuse and must be referred to the police.

What the law says?

Sexting can be seen as harmless, but creating or sharing explicit images of a child is illegal, even if the person doing it is a child. A young person is breaking the law if they:

take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend

share an explicit image or video of a child, even if it's shared between children of the same age

possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave their permission for it to be created.

However, as of January 2016, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, the police can choose to record that a crime has been committed but that taking formal action isn't in the public interest.

Crimes recorded this way are unlikely to appear on future records or checks, unless the young person has been involved in other similar activities which may indicate that they're a risk.

Why do young people sext?

There are many reasons why a young person may want to send a naked or semi-naked picture, video or message to someone else:

joining in because they think that 'everyone is doing it'

boosting their self-esteem

flirting with others and testing their sexual identity

exploring their sexual feelings

to get attention and connect with new people on social media

they may find it difficult to say no if somebody asks them for an explicit image, especially if the person asking is persistent

What are the risks of sexting?

1. No control of images and how they're shared

It's easy to send a photo or message but the sender has no control about how it's passed on. When images are stored or shared online they become public. Some people may think that images and videos only last a few seconds on social media and then they're deleted, but they can still be saved or copied by others. This means that photos or videos which a young person may have shared privately could still be end up being shared between adults they don't know.

2. Blackmail, bullying and harm

Young people may think 'sexting' is harmless but it can leave them vulnerable to:

Blackmail

An offender may threaten to share the pictures with the child's family and friends unless the child sends money or more images.

Bullying

If images are shared with their peers or in school, the child may be bullied.

Unwanted attention

Images posted online can attract the attention of sex offenders, who know how to search for, collect and modify images.

Emotional distress

Children can feel embarrassed and humiliated. If they're very distressed this could lead to suicide or self-harm

Talking to children.

Every child is different, so your approach should be based on their character and your relationship with them. You could:

outline your expectations and explain the rules of having a mobile, tablet or smartphone

ask them what they feel is acceptable to send to people, if they'd be happy for you or a stranger or other children to see certain photos. If the answer is 'no', explain that the image, video or message is probably not appropriate to send

make sure they're comfortable saying no, that they know their body is private and being asked to share explicit images is inappropriate

explain to them about the importance of trust and consent in a healthy relationship. Tell them that it's not ok for someone to make them feel uncomfortable, to pressure them into doing

things that they don't want to do, or to show them things that they're unhappy about. Let them know that they can speak to you if this ever happens

Look at Childline's advice about relationships and online safety.

Explain the risks of sexting

Tell them what can happen when things go wrong. Don't accuse them of sexting, but do explain the dangers and legal issues

you may find it easier to use real-life examples, such as television programmes or news stories, to help you explain the risks

ask them if they'd want something private shown to the world. Talk about the Granny rule - would you want your Granny to see the image you're sharing?

talk about whether a person who asks for an image from you might also be asking other people for images

if children are sending images to people they trust, they may not think there's much risk involved. Use examples of when friends or partners have had a falling-out and what might happen to the images if this happen.

Make it clear you'll be supportive and understanding

make sure they know that you're always there for support if they feel pressured by anyone

explain that they can come to you if someone asks to send them a nude picture or if they receive an explicit message

let them know that you won't be angry with them but just want to make sure they're safe and happy.

What to do if an incident involving 'sexting' comes to your attention

Report it to your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately.

- Never view, download or share the imagery yourself, or ask a child to share or download – this is illegal.
- If you have already viewed the imagery by accident (e.g. if a young person has showed it to you before you could ask them not to), report this to the DSL.
- Do not delete the imagery or ask the young person to delete it.
- Do not ask the young person(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery. This is the responsibility of the DSL.
- Do not share information about the incident to other members of staff, the young person(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers.
- Do not say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved.
- Do explain to them that you need to report it and reassure them that they will receive support and help from the DSL.

Further Advice

What to do if a child has been affected by sexting?

If a child has been sending explicit images or videos of themselves:

- (i) They may feel anxious about talking to you. so, give yourself time to process the information and remember they'll be watching your reactions.
- (ii) reassure them that they aren't alone
- (iii) listen and offer support – they're probably upset and need your help and advice, not criticism
- (iv) try not to shout or make them feel like it's their fault
- (v) don't ask questions like "why have you done it" as this may stop them from opening up to you
- (vi) discuss the problem and the wider pressures that they may face, to help them to understand what's happened
- (vii) assure them that you'll do all you can to help.
- (viii) remind them that they can always talk to Childline or another trusted adult if they aren't comfortable talking directly to you.

If a child has shared an explicit image or video:

- (i) ask them who they initially sent it to, their age, and if they know whether it's been shared with anyone else
- (ii) if the image has been sent to another child, think about contacting their school to discuss the situation and make sure that it's not circulated
- (iii) if the image was requested by an adult, contact the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), as this is grooming which is illegal
- (iv) encourage them to delete images from their social media accounts if they've have uploaded the image themselves
- (v) If they're sharing an image which somebody else uploaded, consider asking that person to delete it
- (vi) if the image or video was shared over the web, don't comment on it or share it as this may mean the image is seen more widely

Lost control of a sexual image:

- (i) Ask them to get in touch with Childline. Together, Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) will try to get the image removed. Alternatively you can make a report direct to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF).
- (ii) Childline is a confidential service, but to make a report on a child's behalf to the IWF they'll need to confirm who the child is and their date of birth. You'll need to provide Childline or IWF with a link to the image. However, after you've have sent the link don't keep a copy of the image for evidence as it's illegal to share or store child abuse images

Been sent a sexual image:

- (i) ask them if they know the person who sent it and their age
- (ii) if the image was sent by another young person you may want to help the child to speak to the sender in order to stop future messages. If the child agrees, you could also help them to block the sender on social media
- (iii) look at Net Aware for information and advice about this or contact the O2 and NSPCC online safety helpline on 0800 800 5002
- (iv) if the image was sent by an adult, contact CEOP, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, as this may be part of the grooming process.

In all the above cases the DSL MUST be contacted who may then contact the Safeguarding Hub.

Make sure the child is supported

- (i) In school, the DSL's, form teachers. Personal development tutors and care staff are the more obvious adult support for children who are affected by sexting.
- (ii) Remind the child they can also contact Childline at any time if they want to talk to someone about how they're feeling.
- (iii) At home and if the child agrees, you should inform their school. The school can keep an eye on the situation and help stop images or videos being circulated. They can also offer support to any other children that have been affected.

Further advice and support for parents.

If you're concerned that your child needs more support or if you're worried they're behaving in a sexually inappropriate way, you can also speak to your GP or you may have community based services available to you.

If you have any concerns about child sexual exploitation or grooming, contact the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP).

Remember you can contact the NSPCC helpline 24 hours a day to speak with a counsellor if you're worried about a child or need further advice on keeping children safe.

This policy was reviewed and updated in June 2018 and will be reviewed in August 2019 or sooner if new legislation applies.

N A Rice MA
School Proprietor