

WHOLE SCHOOL ANTI-CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY INCLUDING YOUTH PRODUCED SEXUAL IMAGERY POLICY

Please also refer to: Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying including Anti-Cyber-Bullying Policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and Procedures, Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use of Technology Policy for Students, Attendance Policy, Missing Student Policy, Permanent Exclusion & Required Removal Policy
NB. Whole School Policies include Early Years

1 Context

This policy sets out our strategy for preventing, identifying and appropriately managing Child-on-Child abuse.

This policy applies to all Governors and staff, including volunteers and contractors, and students. It is reviewed annually, and updated in the interim, to ensure that it addresses the risks to which students are/or may be exposed. A number of staff are involved in each review.

As a School we avoid using the term 'victim' and/or 'perpetrator'. This is because our School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in allegations of, or concerns about Child-on-Child abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused and those who are alleged to have abused their peers, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter.

In this policy, we refer to students, who at New Hall, may be aged up to 19. The terms 'child' and 'children' refer to persons aged under 18.

There may be some additional considerations in relation to a student aged 18 or over in terms of how local agencies and/or partners respond. For example, the School's response to incidents involving the exchange of youth produced sexual imagery will need to differ depending on the age of the students involved. There is also likely to be a more significant criminal justice response in relation to any student responsible for abuse who is aged 18 or over.

This policy is compliant with the statutory guidance on Child-on-Child abuse as set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (DfE, 2025).

This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Southend Essex & Thurrock Safeguarding & Child Protection procedures* (SET), the Local Safeguarding Partners Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance. If relevant to the concerns/allegations raised, this Policy should be read in conjunction with the DfE's advice on *Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges* (December 2017).

2 The School's responsibilities

New Hall School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students, so that they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Child-on-Child abuse of any kind is unacceptable at our School. Students who suffer from Child-on-Child abuse can talk to a member of staff at New Hall, secure in the knowledge that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively, together with external agencies as required.

The Governors, Senior Leadership Team, and all staff and volunteers at New Hall School (the School) are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of Child-on-Child abuse (as defined below) that involves/affects our students.

3 Understanding Child-on-Child abuse

3.1 What is Child-on-Child abuse?

For these purposes, Child-on-Child abuse is any form of physical, sexual or emotional abuse and coercive control, exercised within student relationships (both intimate and non-intimate). It may also include financial abuse.

Child-on-Child abuse can take various forms, including the perpetration or threat of:

- bullying (including cyberbullying)
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexting (also known as youth-produced sexual imagery, including 'nudes' or requests/demands for 'nudes')
- sexual comments, remarks, 'jokes' /banter (in person or online), which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse/disrespectful behaviour, and which may constitute sexual harassment
- production or distribution of pornographic material
- upskirting, which involves taking a picture under a person's clothing, with or without them knowing. This may be for the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or to cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- coercing/grooming someone into sexual/abusive behaviour, which may include targeting people in a vulnerable state (e.g. if they are inebriated; significantly younger)
- initiation/hazing-type violence and rituals
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault

Any response to Child-on-Child abuse needs to consider the range of possible types of Child-on-Child abuse set out above and to capture the context of students' experiences. This can be done by adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that our response to incidents of Child-on-Child abuse takes into account any potential complexity. For example, we recognise that as children enter adolescence they spend increasing amounts of time outside of the home in public environments (including on the internet) within which they may experience abuse. (*See Contextual Safeguarding in the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and Procedures*).

4 How prevalent is Child-on-Child Abuse?

Child-on-Child abuse is a common form of abuse affecting children in the UK.

5 How can a student who is being abused by their peers be identified?

All staff should be alert to the well-being of students and to signs of abuse. Any concerns about Child-on-Child abuse should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). Staff should be mindful of the fact that the way/s in which students will disclose or present with behaviour/s as a result of their experiences will differ.

Signs that a student may be suffering from Child-on-Child abuse can overlap with those indicating other types of abuse (*see Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy & Procedures for indicators of abuse*). These can include:

- (a) failing to attend School, disengaging from classes or struggling to carry out School related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected
- (b) physical injuries
- (c) experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing
- (d) becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much
- (e) broader changes in behaviour, including alcohol or substance misuse
- (f) changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the student's age
- (g) abusive behaviour towards others

Abuse affects students differently. The above list is by no means exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse.

The power dynamic that can exist between students is very important when identifying and responding to their behaviour: in all cases of Child-on-Child abuse, a power imbalance will exist within the relationship. This inequality will not necessarily be the result of an age gap between the student responsible for the abuse and the student being abused. It may, for example, be the result of their relative social or economic status. Equally, while students who abuse may have power over those who they are abusing, they may be simultaneously powerless to others.

Research suggests that Child-on-Child abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure may also be different.

6 How can the School raise awareness of and prevent Child-on-Child abuse?

The principle aim is to foster the conditions in which our students can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships, at School and as they continue in life. We work to a culture in which the voice of our students is central and where students feel able to share their concerns openly, knowing that they will be listened to, and that they will not be judged.

6.1 School environment

The School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of Child-on-Child abuse.

6.2 Students

We use PSHEE to help our pupils understand, in an age-appropriate way, what harmful sexual behaviour is, including by peers. We teach them the knowledge they need to recognise and report abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. We also teach them about the importance of making sensible decisions to stay safe (including online), whilst being clear that if a student is abused, it is never their fault.

We help our students to develop the skills to understand:

- what constitutes harmful sexual behaviour
- that such behaviour is not acceptable
- the possible reasons for such behaviour, and vulnerability of perpetrators
- that they must tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable – and must tell a trusted adult if they witness such behaviour towards others

We understand our students may not always feel comfortable talking to adults about Child-on-Child sexual abuse. To help them, we will encourage them to share their thoughts and opinions, respond to their concerns, and respect and listen to them. We want our students to feel confident that any concerns they raise will be responded to appropriately.

6.3 Parents and carers

It is important that parents and carers understand what is meant by harmful sexual behaviour, and reinforce key messages from School at home. We work in partnership with parents to support our students and want to help them keep their child/ren safe. Parents and carers should understand:

- the nature of harmful sexual behaviour
- the effects of harmful sexual behaviour
- the likely indicators that such behaviour may be taking place
- what to do if it is suspected that peer on peer sexual abuse has occurred

Further information to support parents and carers in relation to harmful sexual behaviour is available online, including on the NSPCC and Lucy Faithfull Foundation websites.

6.4 Staff

Our staff undertake annual safeguarding training where the different types of abuse and neglect are discussed; this includes information about harmful sexual behaviour and our expectations for staff vigilance about this and other potential types of abuse. Staff also receive updates on safeguarding issues throughout the School year, including about the nature and prevalence of harmful sexual behaviour, where appropriate. Importantly, the training also ensures that our staff know what to do if they receive a report that harmful sexual behaviour may have occurred, including how to support the student/s involved.

It is essential that all concerns/allegations of Child-on-Child abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our School environment.

The wellbeing of our students is always central to our response to an allegation or incident of harmful sexual behaviour. Any student reporting a concern will be treated respectfully. We will reassure them that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe; no student will be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse or made to feel ashamed.

Our staff will never promise confidentiality to a student, as the concern will need to be shared further. The Lead DSL/DDSL will need to be informed as soon as possible of any incident and the details may also need to be shared with Children's Social Care/the police and other specialist agencies. We have in place effective working relationships with our safeguarding partners, which are essential to ensuring that concerns are appropriately managed.

We will explain next steps to the student so they understand what will happen, including who will be informed. Where the student already has Social Care involvement, such as a Looked After Child, a Child In Need or a child with a Child Protection Plan, we will inform the child's Social Worker and work in partnership with them as appropriate.

Whilst we establish the facts of the case and start the process of liaising with other agencies as appropriate, we will consider how best to keep any students involved at a reasonable distance apart on School premises, and where applicable, on transport to and from the School.

Where an incident includes an online element, we will always work in accordance with appropriate guidance, taking advice from other partners as necessary. Our staff will not view an indecent image of a student unless necessary, nor forward it for any reason.

7.1 Recording

It is essential that information relating to allegations about harmful sexual behaviour are recorded, as with any other child protection concern and in line with our *Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy*. The record may form part of a statutory assessment by Children's Social Care or by another agency.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of harmful sexual behaviour or noticing signs or indicators of this, will record it as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen, giving the date, time and location. The facts will be recorded on MyConcern as the student presents them. The Lead DSL/DDSL, will then decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

If a student is at immediate risk of harm, staff will speak with the Lead DSL/DDSL first, and deal with recording as soon as possible afterwards. All related concerns, discussions, decisions, and reasons for decisions will be dated and signed and will include the action taken.

7.2 Investigation

The Lead DSL/or DDSL will be responsible for leading investigations, and for liaising with other agencies as appropriate, for example Children's Social Care and the police. They will also be the main point of contact for parents and carers. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure there are accurate records of each stage of the investigation and that any supporting information is included in the Child Protection files.

7.3 Risk assessment

We will consider any risks following a report of harmful sexual behaviour, considering all students involved in an incident. We will also consider all other students at our School and take any actions that may be appropriate to protect them. Risks will be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and fit for purpose. Where appropriate, the affected student/s and their parents and carers will be invited to contribute to the completion and review of any subsequent risk assessment.

8 Guiding principles

The safety of our students is paramount. We will use a proportionate approach, basing our actions on the principle that harmful sexual behaviour is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. All concerns will be considered carefully on a case-by-case basis.

Our approach will help us to ensure that all students are protected and supported appropriately. The following principles will guide us:

- the wishes of the student in terms of how they want to proceed – the 'victim' will be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered
- the nature of the alleged incident/s, including whether a crime may have been committed
- the ages and developmental stages of all students involved
- consideration of any power imbalance between the students – for example, is the alleged 'perpetrator' significantly older, more mature, or more confident/does the 'victim' have a disability or learning difficulty
- consideration of whether the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse
- consideration of any ongoing risks to the 'victim', other students, or staff
- consideration of any other related issues and wider context

8.1 Supporting the student who has allegedly experienced harmful sexual behaviour

We will assess what short-term and long-term support a student may need to help them manage the immediate aftermath of an incident, and to recover from what they have experienced. The student's existing support network will be central to this work; we will work with other partners as appropriate and in accordance with the student's wishes and, wherever appropriate, in discussion with parents/carers.

We will consider what is necessary to support the student straightaway, for example by making adaptations to their timetable and in-school support and taking steps to protect them from attention or peer pressure they may experience due to making a report. We will also ensure there is regular review of arrangements to be confident they meet the needs of all involved.

It may be necessary to make requests for support to mental health and wellbeing services or for therapeutic intervention. We may also need to link with other agencies to remove inappropriate material from the Internet, such as the Internet Watch Foundation.

8.2 Supporting the student who has allegedly displayed harmful sexual behaviour

We have a duty of care to all students and we will support students who have displayed abusive or harmful sexual behaviour. Some students may not realise they have behaved abusively. We will consider appropriate sanctions using our behaviour policy, and work with the student and their support network to consider measures that may help to address their behaviour.

9 Investigation Outcomes

Our investigation of an allegation or incident as set out in this policy will enable us to determine the outcome, working with our safeguarding partners as appropriate. We will always seek to ensure that the outcome of an investigation is appropriate and proportionate to the circumstances in relation to the report. Various options are open to us, as set out below:

9.1 Manage internally

In some cases, for example, one-off incidents, we may take the view that the student concerned is not in need of early help or statutory intervention. In these cases, we will follow our other School policies in addressing matters, for example our Behaviour/Anti-Bullying policies.

We will also consider what support the student involved may need going forward - for example, pastoral support, counselling services, and ensuring that there is a trusted adult for those affected to speak with if they wish to. We will also consider whether any intervention or support is required as part of a whole setting approach or with the wider school community.

9.2 Early help

Where statutory intervention is not required or agreed, we may use early help instead. This means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a student's life. We will work with parents and carers and other relevant partners when following this approach, which can be particularly useful in addressing non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation.

9.3 Requests for support to Children's Social Care

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a request for support to Children's Social Care. We will generally inform parents and carers of this unless to do so may put a child at additional risk. We will seek advice from other partners on such matters.

If we make a request for support, Children's Social Care will consider whether the children involved need protection or other services. Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the school will work with Children's Social Care and other agencies as appropriate. Partnership working helps to ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the 'victim' and, where appropriate, the alleged 'perpetrator' and any other child that requires support.

In some cases, Children's Social Care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. If a statutory assessment is not considered appropriate by Children's Social Care, we will consider what other support may be required. We will make further requests for support to Children's Social Care if we consider that a child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm.

9.4 Reporting to the police

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, we will report it to the police. We will generally inform parents or carers about reports of sexual abuse, unless to do so may put a student at additional risk. We will seek advice from other partners in individual cases.

In circumstances where parents or carers have not been informed, we will ensure that we support the student in any decision we take. This is likely to be with the support of Children's Social Care and/or any appropriate specialist agencies.

Where we have made a report to the police, we will consult with them and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. We will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

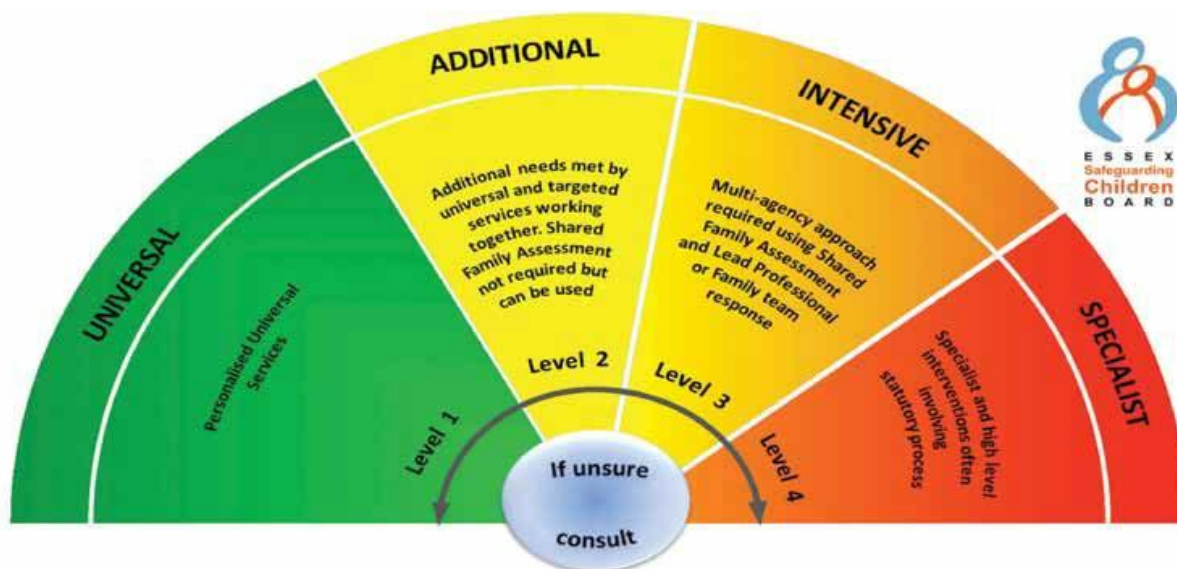
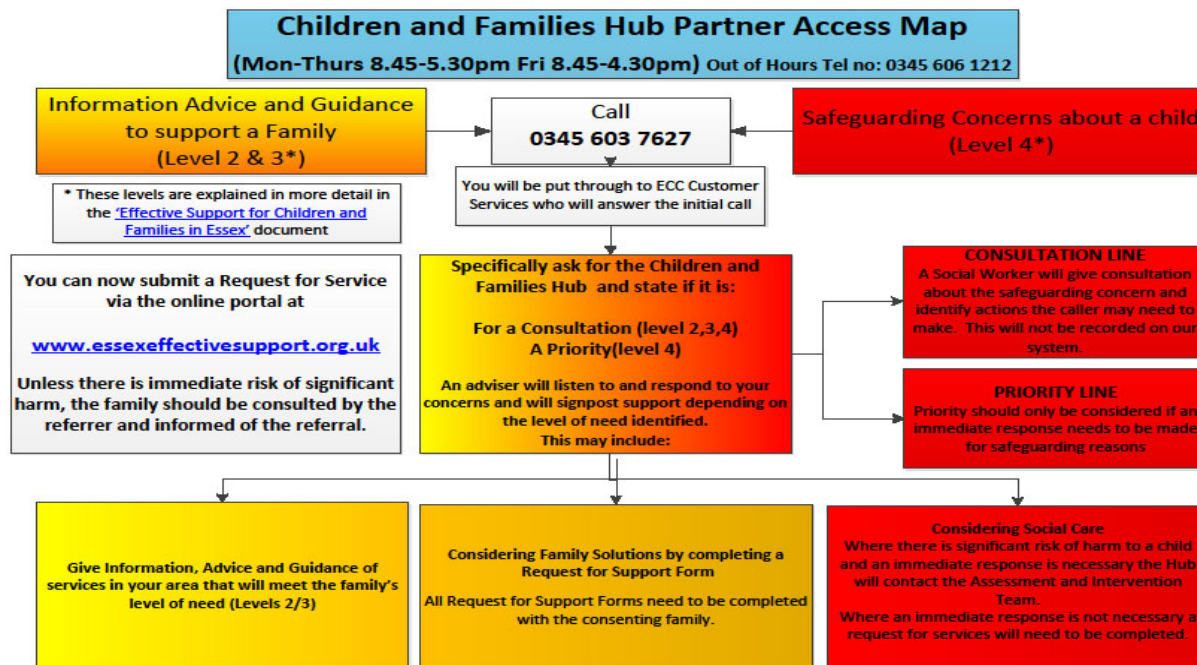
Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the police and other agencies as appropriate to support all students involved (including potential witnesses). This will help to ensure that any actions we take do not jeopardise a police investigation. Sometimes the police will decide that further action is not required. In these circumstances we will continue to engage with other agencies to support the students involved.

10 Review

All child protection concerns are reviewed regularly, to ensure that actions are completed, and to consider whether the students involved need any further support. We will continue to work with parents and carers and other agencies as appropriate, and risk assessments will be reviewed and updated as required.

The NSPCC has set up a dedicated helpline 'Report Abuse in Education' to provide appropriate advice and support to victims of abuse and concerned adults, including onward action such as contacting the police if they wish to. The contact details are: Phone: 0800 136 663 or Email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Children and Families hub flow chart



YOUTH PRODUCED SEXUAL IMAGERY POLICY

Creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of under-18s is illegal, and therefore causes the greatest complexity for schools (amongst other agencies) when responding. 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 in this Appendix?

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

This advice does not cover:

- the sharing of sexual imagery of people under 18 by adults as this constitutes child sexual abuse and schools should always inform the police.
- young people under the age of 18 sharing adult pornography or exchanging sexual texts which don't contain imagery.

1 The Law

Much of the complexity in responding to youth produced sexual imagery is due to its legal status. Making, possessing and distributing any imagery of someone under 18 which is 'indecent' is illegal. This includes imagery of yourself if you are under 18. The relevant legislation is contained in the Protection of Children Act 1978 (England and Wales) as amended in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (England and Wales). Specifically:

- it is an offence to possess, distribute, show and make indecent images of children.
- the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (England and Wales) defines a child, for the purposes of indecent images, as anyone under the age of 18.

'Indecent' is not defined in legislation. When cases are prosecuted, the question of whether any photograph of a child is indecent is for a jury, magistrate or District Judge to decide based on what is the recognised standard of propriety. For most purposes, if imagery contains a naked young person, a topless girl, and/or displays genitals or sex acts, including masturbation, then it will be considered indecent. Indecent images may also include overtly sexual images of young people in their underwear.

2 Crime recording

Where the police are notified of incidents of youth produced sexual imagery they are obliged, under the Home Office Counting rules and National Crime Recording Standards, to record the incident on their crime systems. The incident will be listed as a 'crime' and the young person involved will be listed as a 'suspect.'

3 Handling incidents

All incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery should be responded to in line with the School's *Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy*.

When an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery comes to the School's attention, the following actions should be undertaken:

- The incident should be referred to the Lead DSL as soon as possible.
- The Lead DSL should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate School staff.
- There should be subsequent interviews with the young people involved (if appropriate).
- Parents should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm.
- At any point in the process if there is a concern a young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.

4 Disclosure

Disclosures about youth produced sexual imagery can happen in a variety of ways. The young person affected may inform a teacher, the Lead DSL in 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 School, or inform the police directly.

All members of staff (including support staff) are made aware of how to recognise and refer any disclosures of incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery.

5 Initial review meeting

The initial review meeting should consider the initial evidence and aim to establish the following:

- Is there an immediate risk to a young person or young people?
- Should a referral be made to the police and/or children's social care?
- Is it necessary to view the imagery in order to safeguard the young person? – in most cases, imagery should not be viewed

- What further information is required to decide on the best response?
- Has the imagery been shared widely and via what services and/or platforms? (This may be unknown)
- Should immediate action be taken to delete or remove images from devices or online services?
- What are the relevant facts about the young people involved which would influence risk assessment?
- Is there a need to contact another school, college, setting or individual?
- Should the School contact parents or carers of the students involved? (In most cases parents should be involved)

An immediate referral to police and/or children's social care should be made if at this initial stage any of the following are the case:

1. The incident involves an adult
2. There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to special educational needs)
3. What you know about the imagery suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
4. The imagery involves sexual acts and any pupil in the imagery is under 13
5. You have reason to believe a young person is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of the imagery, for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming

If none of the above applies, then the School may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care. The School can choose to escalate the incident at any time if further information/concerns come to light.

The decision to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care would be made in cases when the Lead DSL is confident that they have enough information to assess the risks to students involved and the risks can be managed within the School's pastoral support and disciplinary framework and, if appropriate, their local network of support.

The decision should be made by the Lead DSL and input from other members of staff if appropriate. The decision should be recorded in line with School policy.

The decision should be in line with the School's *Safeguarding & Child Protection procedures* and should be based on consideration of the best interests of the young people involved. This should take into account proportionality as well as the welfare and protection of the young people. The decision should be reviewed throughout the process of responding to the incident.

6 Assessing the risks

The circumstances of incidents can vary widely. If at the initial review stage, a decision has been made not to refer to police and/or children's social care, the Lead DSL should conduct a further review (including an interview with the young people involved) to establish the facts and assess the risks.

When assessing the risks, the following should be considered:

- Why was the imagery shared? Was the young person coerced or put under pressure to produce the imagery?
- Who has shared the imagery? Where has the imagery been shared? Was it shared and received with the knowledge of the pupil in the imagery?
- Are there any adults involved in the sharing of the imagery?
- What is the impact on the young people involved?
- Do the young people involved have additional vulnerabilities?
- Does the young person understand consent?
- Has the young person taken part in this kind of activity before?
- DSLs should always use their professional judgement in conjunction with their colleagues to assess incidents

7 Informing parents (or carers)

Parents (or carers) should be informed and involved in the process at an early stage unless informing the parent will put the young person at risk of harm. Any decision not to inform the parents would generally be made in conjunction with other services such as children's social care and/or the police, who would take the lead in deciding when the parents should be informed.

DSLs may work with the young people involved to decide on the best approach for informing parents. In some cases DSLs may work to support the young people to inform their parents themselves.

8 Reporting incidents to the police

If it is necessary to refer to the police, contact should be made through existing arrangements. This may be through a Safer Schools Officer (SSO), a PCSO, local neighbourhood police or by dialling 101.

Once a report is made to the police, the report must be recorded and the police will conduct an investigation. This may include seizure of devices and interviews with the young people involved.

9 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 *Acceptable Use of Technology Policy*.