

## **Sexting guidance: an overview**

Disclaimer: This document has been designed to give all teaching and non-teaching staff a brief overview of what sexting is, and how incidents involving sexting should be handled.

**Designated Safeguarding Leads should read and refer to the UKCCIS guidance: Sexting in schools and colleges; responding to incidents and safeguarding young people.**

**All** incidents of sexting should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and dealt in line with your school's safeguarding policies. The DSL should be familiar with the full sexting guidance and should **not** refer to this document instead of the full guidance when responding to and handling incidents of sexting.

### **What is Sexting?**

There are many definitions of what sexting is.

In the latest advice, sexting is defined as the production and/or sharing of sexual *images* (photos and videos) of and by young people who are under the age of 18. This definition solely focuses on *imagery* rather than text, so is also referred to as **Youth Produced Sexual Imagery**.

### **The Law**

The official advice is not designed to criminalise children, but to make clear how to appropriately and effectively deal with incidents that involve youth produced sexual imagery. The complexity in responding to such incidents lies in the legal implications of creating, sharing or possessing 'indecent' images of people who are under the age of 18, as:

- 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.

Imagery which contains a naked young person, and/or a topless girl are considered indecent. Further examples of indecent images would contain: overtly sexual images of young people and/or in their underwear, displays of genitals and/or sex acts, including masturbation.

### **How to handle incidents involving sexting**

When an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery comes to your attention:

- **Report it to your DSL immediately.**
- **Never** view, download or share the imagery yourself as this is **illegal**.
- **Do not** delete the imagery.
- **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.

If any incidents which you suspect involve sexting come to your attention, report to your DSL. Your school's safeguarding policies should outline codes of practice that should be adhered to when such instances arise.