E-safety FAQ

A selection of member-submitted questions, answered by our online safety and safeguarding experts.

What does e-safety training look like?

Although there is no standardised e-safety training for schools, it is important that all staff can confidently implement the school's online safety policy.

Effective staff training will be relevant and progressive, meaning that it keeps in tune with the latest and most severe risks faced by pupils online.

Ofsted will look for evidence of e-safety training for all staff being given at least annually.

What should be included in our e-safety policy?

The policy should reflect how you take ownership of e-safety in your setting. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined, as well as the training provided for each member of staff.

It should set out how technology is integrated with teaching and learning, including an acceptable use policy for everyone in the school community to follow.

It should state how the school intends to use photographs and videos of pupils, for instance on the school website.

It must clearly explain the measures taken to prevent misuse of the internet in school and promote safer, more responsible online activity.

Is it illegal for pupils to view sexually explicit images and videos?

Only in certain cases. It is a criminal offence to view child pornography (one or more participant is under the age of 18), or what would be classed as extreme pornography (necrophilia, bestiality or extreme violence towards a person's genitalia).

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Do schools have a duty to inform parents if a pupil is sexting?

Sexting is a very serious issue. It must be handled sensitively, and in exact accordance with the school's child protection procedures. No two incidents will be the same, but schools should keep parents informed of how they respond.

Are staff breaking the law if they view an explicit image on a pupil's device when responding to a sexting incident?

Staff must take all precautions to avoid viewing the image themselves, and must never share it, save it or print it out as evidence.

If there is a clear reason to do so, a pupil's device may be searched by the school's headteacher, or a person authorised by them. This must be a member of the same sex, and a safeguarding lead must be present at all times. Only under these controlled conditions (as accurately described in the school's policy) can a search take place.

Should popular apps be banned in school?

Although they can be used inappropriately, there is no legal requirement for social messaging apps to be prohibited in schools. If you ban one, you would need to consider banning them all. For this reason, many schools will ban mobile phones during lesson time or for the entire school day.

What is the difference between bullying and trolling?

Bullying is something that is done on purpose, repeatedly, in order to cause harm or distress to another person. This can be verbally, physically or emotionally. Bullying can be of a racist, homophobic/transphobic, sexual or prejudice-based nature.

Trolling is the deliberate posting of inflammatory comments or messages to provoke an emotional response, often on social networks. Unlike bullies, 'trolls' do not always target a specific person.