



July 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

As more young people have smartphones and use a range of social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat and Twitter, the dangers of getting involved in risky behaviours is multiplied. You may be aware of a trend in young people 'sexting' images to each other. Recently we have become aware of a number of cases, outside of the school environment, where inappropriate images have been passed between young people some of which could lead to prosecution; this has involved both girls and boys.

It is therefore important that young people and parents/carers understand the risks involved. Once an image is sent to another person the sender loses control of who else the image is seen by or where it is stored. There is a potentially devastating long term effect on the young person who lose control of these images as they get passed around the web.

You need to be aware that young people involved in showing, sharing and possessing pictures of a sexual nature may be committing a criminal offence. Specifically, crimes involving indecent photographs of a person under 18 years of age fall under Section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978, Section 160 Criminal Justice Act 1988 and Section 62 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. Under this legislation it is a crime to:

- take an indecent photograph or allow an indecent photograph to be taken
- make an indecent photograph (this includes downloading or opening an image that has been sent via email)
- distribute or show such an image
- possess with the intention of distributing images

Unfortunately, cases have shown that parents are often unaware of the extent to which their child is using social media. Apps are available to conceal such use and some children do open more than one social media account. Whilst we would not wish to foster mistrust, a healthy level of curiosity by parents is advised. We would recommend having an open and honest discussion about the risks involved in using mobile devices to send pictures to other people. A few simple steps by you can help keep them safe and give young people the awareness to know what to do if they feel uncomfortable about anything they encounter while on the internet. Whilst young people may appear confident in their use of the internet, they may underestimate the potential risks present and fail to recognise early warning signs.

If you do not wish for your child to be able to access any inappropriate content online, please ensure that their computers, laptops and other devices with internet access are all fitted with parental controls. As a **minimum**, please set parental controls on your search engines, YouTube account and the mobile phone your child uses. For example, Apple devices allow parents to apply filters to ensure inappropriate content cannot be explored. Internet and mobile phone service providers will also often have the ability to apply filters.

If you are at all concerned that your child has been involved in or subjected to sexting, report your concerns to the police. Clearly we do not want young people from our community to be at risk of distributing or receiving indecent image or engaging in criminal activity; the consequences could be far reaching. Parental involvement is crucial in keeping our young people safe.

If you have any concerns there are a wealth of resources available on line. A good place to start is [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk).

Yours sincerely

**Mrs H Jones**  
**Designated Safeguarding Lead**

