

BRYANSTON

YOUTH INVOLVED SEXUAL IMAGERY POLICY

I General

Whilst some may refer to the issue as “sexting” there is no clear definition of “sexting”. Many professionals consider sexting to be “sending or posting sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobile devices or over the internet.” Yet, recent NSPCC research has revealed that when children are asked “What does sexting mean to you?” they are more likely to interpret sexting as “writing and sharing explicit messages with people they know.” Similarly, a recent Childline survey has revealed that many parents think of sexting as flirty or sexual text messages rather than images.

This policy only covers the involvement of children in sexual imagery. Creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of under-18s is illegal, classified as the taking, possession or distribution of indecent images of a minor under the Protection of Children Act 1978, updated in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. It presents a range of risks which need careful management.

This policy uses the phrase “youth involved sexual imagery”, instead of the term “sexting” or youth produced sexual imagery. (This is in accordance with the new advice *Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding children*, which has been published by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety.) Although the School recognises that the term “youth produced” is used in UKCCIS’s advice, it has chosen not to use this term which could be seen to place responsibility with the child who is taking and/or the subject of the image, without recognising the potential for coercion or threat in the production of that image.

2 What is youth involved sexual imagery?

“Youth involved sexual imagery” best describes the practice because:

- “Youth produced” includes children sharing images that they, or another child, have created of themselves.
- Although “sexual” is clearer than “indecent”, the DSL will nevertheless always need to use professional judgement when determining whether a photo is “sexual” or “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).

3 The following types of incidents are covered by this policy:

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

4 The following types of incidents are not covered by this policy:

- The sharing of sexual imagery of children by adults constitutes child sexual abuse and schools should always inform the police.
- Children sharing adult pornography or exchanging sexual texts which do not contain imagery.
- Sexual imagery downloaded from the internet by a child.
- Sexual imagery downloaded from the internet by a child and shared with a peer (also under the age of 18) or an adult.

Such incidents should be addressed with reference to the Bryanston School Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures, the Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy and the Digital Communications Policy.

5 Disclosure

Disclosure about youth involved sexual imagery can happen in a variety of ways. The child may inform a Teacher, Tutor, Matron, Housemaster/Housemistress or any member of the School staff. Alternatively, a friend or parent may inform someone at School or the Police may be informed directly. There is also a possibility that a member of staff may be made aware of an image in circulation by other students not involved in either the production or initial transfer, but who have become exposed to the imagery as a result of wider distribution.

All members of staff (including support staff) should be aware, recognise and refer any disclosure of incidents involving youth involved sexual imagery. This should be covered within staff training and within the Bryanston School's Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures.

Any direct disclosure by a child should be taken very seriously. A child who discloses they are the subject of sexual imagery is likely to be embarrassed and worried about the consequences. It is possible that disclosure in School is a last resort and they may have already tried to resolve the issue themselves.

6 Handling incidents

All incidents involving youth involved sexual imagery should be responded to in line with the Bryanston School Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures and Peer-on-Peer Abuse policy.

When an incident involving youth involved sexual imagery comes to a member of staff's attention:

- The incident should be referred to the DSL as soon as possible.
- The DSL should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate School staff.
- The DSL will follow the procedures and guidance set out in *Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding children*.
- It may be appropriate that there should be subsequent interviews with the children involved.
- 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 child at risk of harm.
- At any point in the process if there is a concern a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and/or the Police immediately.

7 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 generally (including online matters), through teaching and learning opportunities, via the PSRE programme, but also in other contexts (including assemblies and in house) and as referred to in the Bryanston School Digital Communications Policy.

This document should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Bryanston School Rules and Regulations
- Bryanston School Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures
- Bryanston School Behaviour Policy
- Bryanston School Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy
- Bryanston School Digital Communications Policy
- Bryanston School Anti-Bullying Policy
- Bryanston School Policy on Cyberbullying

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