



Alderman Peel High School

Learning to make the difference

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Dear parent / carer /student

We have recently been made aware of a small number of students who have, while at home, taken indecent photographs of themselves and sent them to others via social media sites. These pictures have then been shared with others. We have therefore liaised with the police who have taken the phones from these children to conduct an investigation.

Students have all previously been informed, through lessons, of the dangers of doing this but as this has happened at home I felt I needed to make all parents and carers aware and inform you all of the legal situation.

Please see below information and advice.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Ogle

Principal

Sexting

What is sexting?

Sexting means sending indecent images (pictures and/or videos) of yourself or others or sending sexually explicit messages. Sexting is commonly known as “trading nudes”, “dirties” or “pic for pic”.

Sexting can happen on any electronic device that allows sharing of media and messages including smartphones, tablets, laptops or mobiles.

What does the law say?

In the UK the age of consent for sexual intercourse is 16. However, it is an offence to make, distribute, possess or show any indecent images of anyone aged under 18, even if the content was created with the consent of that young person. The law is contained in **section 1**

Protection of Children Act 1978.

Examples include:

- a child (under 18) sharing a sexual image with their peer (also under 18);
- a child (under 18) sharing a sexual image created by another child with a peer or an adult;
- a child (under 18) in possession of a sexual image created by a child (under 18).

“Indecent” means, for example:

- naked pictures;
- topless pictures of a girl;
- pictures of genitals;
- sex acts including masturbation; and
- sexual pictures in underwear.

The police have said that sexting by children will primarily be considered as a safeguarding issue. The police must, by law, record all sexting incidents on their crime system.

What can a school do if sexting has occurred?

The government has issued statutory guidance to schools on **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016** which states that all incidents of sexting should be referred to the designated safeguarding lead. **As a school we will ALWAYS contact the police to inform them of incidents of sexting and also Children’s Services if the child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.**

The government has also produced Departmental Advice on **Searching, Screening and Confiscation 2015** which states that schools have the power to search pupils for devices.

What should I do if my child has been involved in sexting?

If you find out that your child has been sexting, you can contact the **Internet Watch Foundation**, who can search for explicit images or videos of your child and remove them. It would also be advisable to have an honest conversation with your child about the incident, to find out what led to it and how can it be avoided in the future.

Some of the reasons for sexting are:

- peer pressure;
 - feeling pressured to sext as a way of proving their sexuality;
 - as a result of harassment, threats or blackmail;
 - seeking someone's approval;
 - long distance/ online relationships, where there is a desire to have a sexual relationship;
 - confidence in their looks, which they want to share with other people.
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Tips for parents

- Discuss with your child the consequences of sexting.
- Monitor your child's online presence, especially social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter.
- Explain that the images can land in the wrong hands, and warn them against online predators.
- Encourage your child to open up about receiving or sending provocative images without your supervision.
- Remind you child that there are essential and personal information that they should never share online such as address, photos and video footage.
- Set clear rules about what the can and cannot do with their electronic devices.