Harmful behaviour Policy on a page

Cyberbullying and trolling

Trolling describes online, anti social behaviours where inflammatory messages are used to deliberately create conflict, hostility and bait others. Trolls provoke disruption by posting on social media platforms, forums and chat rooms and usually create fake profiles or steal the identify of others. This is a form of cyberaggression.

See also **cyberbullying** policy.

Sexual content including pornography

- Children under the age of 13 cannot legally consent to any form of offline or online sexual activity.
- The digital age of consent, that is consent to their data being processed is also age 13.

Children may actively search for pornography for reasons such as curiosity, responding to peer pressure, exploring their sexuality or seeking arousal. They could also come across it without any intention. Whilst it is not illegal to watch porn under the age of 18, it is illegal for someone to show or give access to anyone under the age of 16.

As with offline relationships, the online relationships children and young people build with others should be based on mutual respect, trust and healthy behaviours which is taught through the PSHE/SRE curriculum and wider opportunities in the curriculum.

Sexting

Sexting is a sexual message, photo or video sent to someone else and it is illegal to take, share or have sexual images of children under the age of 18.

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes

It is illegal to make, possess or share nude and semi-nude images, videos or livestreams of a child under the age of 18. This includes sending or posting nude or semi-nude images via social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or other online forums. It also includes sharing via offline devices e.g. Apple AirDrop. It is illegal to share an image or video of anyone over the age of 18 without their consent. This is known as Intimate Image Abuse (formerly 'revenge porn').

If a member of staff **suspects** that a device may content an indecent image (nude or semi nude) they **must not** view the image and must confiscate the device and report it immediately to a DSL. They must not make the child feel to blame or shame, not ask the child to delete it and do not view, copy, print, share or store the image as this is illegal.

See **nudes and semi-nudes sharing** policy

Online sexual abuse, exploitation and grooming

The online world makes it easier for adult offenders to make contact with and groom children. This may result in persuading or forcing children to send or post sexually explicit images or photos of themselves or others, take part in sexual activities via a digital device, have sexual conversations online and/or persuading a child to watch sexual content online and share themselves watching it or talk about what they thought.

See **sexual violence and sexual harassment** policy and the **child protection and safeguarding** policy.

Any staff member who is concerned about a child disclosing or being exposed to harmful behaviour must immediately report this to a DSL and ensure that this is recorded on CPOMS.

Policy document for: **Harmful behaviour**
Updated: Autumn 2025

This policy forms part of the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and online safety policy and gives specific school actions in relation to their context.

Linked guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education

Staff must remember contextual safeguarding. When considering safeguarding incident or behaviour concerns, all assessments must consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. This is an approach to understanding and responding to children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. This includes online abuse.

Cyberbullying and trolling

See the **cyber bullying policy**

'Trolling' describes online anti-social behaviours where inflammatory messages are used to deliberately create conflict, hostility and bait others. Trolls, the slang for people who takes this action, provoke disruption by posting on platforms, forums and chat rooms with the intention of causing harm through their inflammatory content. They usually create fake profiles on social media or may steal the identity of another person, in effect posing as them online.

Trolling is a form of cyberaggression, where trolls spread lies and misinformation, name-call with deliberate malicious intent. It is particularly effective on sites which are designed to keep their users anonymous.

Children are taught about cyber bullying and trolling as part of the PSHE/SRE curriculum, as well as through wider opportunities in the curriculum.

Sexual content
- Children under the age of 13 cannot legally consent to any form of offline or online sexual activity.
- The digital age of consent, that is consent to their data being processed is also age 13.

As with offline relationships, the online relationships children and young people build with others should be based on mutual respect, trust and healthy behaviours.

Pornography
Children may actively search for pornography online for a variety of reasons. They may be:
- Curious;
- Responding to peer pressure;
- Exploring their sexuality;
- Seeking arousal.

They may also stumble over pornographic content without such intention. Although it is not illegal to watch porn under the age of 18, it is illegal to for someone to show or give access to anyone under the age of 16.

Children need to be protected from accessing pornography as it presents unrealistic distorted images of sexual relationships, often portraying disturbing themes and attitudes e.g. misogyny, which is certainly not age appropriate. Viewing pornography may:

- Lead to unhealthy perceptions about body image and an unrealistic sense of what is normal;
- Affect their development' particularly if they are younger when they first view it;
- Affect their sexual identity;
- Distort their understanding and expectation of sex and relationships;
- Lead to them constructing inappropriate expectations of girls and women and to objectifying them;
- Pressure them, particularly girls, to live up to the portrayed unrealistic expectations of sex;
- Develop feelings of anxiety or depression;
- Result in signs of early sexualised behaviour;
- Lead to acting out adult sexual acts they've seen;
- Inappropriately shape boys attitudes about masculinity and sexuality

Children in our schools are taught about healthy, positive relationships and age/stage appropriate consent through PSHE/SRE curriculum.

Sexting

Sexting is when a sexual message, photo or video is sent to someone else. It could be a picture of the sender or sending pictures and videos of other people.

Sexting includes:
- Being partly or completely naked, or in underwear;
- Posing in a sexual position;
- Sending 'nudes' or 'dick pics';
- Talking about sexual things a person is doing or wants to do;
- Doing sexual things on a live stream.

The taking, sharing or having sexual images of children under the age of 18 is illegal.

Nude and semi-nude image sharing

See the **nudes and semi-nudes sharing** policy.

If an incident of indecent image sharing is shared by the pupil, then staff must

- Not respond in any way which may make the child feel blamed or shamed;
- Not ask the child to delete the image or take action to delete it;
- Explain to the child that this needs to be reported and that support will be offered;
- Do not view the image
- Confiscate the device and report the incident to the Head/DSL immediately
- Report the incident to a DSL immediately;
- If viewed, inform the DSL this has happened e.g. if a child shows you an image without detailing its content before sharing it;
- Be aware that the prosecution or criminalisation of children for taking indecent images of themselves and sharing them should be avoided where possible. Being prosecuted through the criminal justice system is likely to be upsetting and distressing for children and young people especially if they are convicted and punished. The label of sex offender that would be applied to

a child or young person convicted of such offences is regrettable, unjust and clearly detrimental to their future health and wellbeing

- **NB: professionals must not print, forward, distribute or save any images or content believed to be an indecent image unless Police advice has been given**.

Online sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and grooming

Online sexual abuse includes :

- Persuading or forcing a child to send or post sexually explicit images or videos of themselves or others;
- Persuading or forcing a child to take part in sexual activities via a digital device
- Having sexual conversations with a child by text or online;
- Persuading a child to watch sexual content online and share themselves watching it or what they thought about it

The online world makes it easier for adult offenders to make contact with and groom children. See also the **sexual violence and sexual harassment policy**.

Online grooming

Online grooming involves the use of the internet by someone to purposely build an online relationship with a child or young person. They build trust and then use this relationship to trick or pressure them into doing something sexual.

The 'groomer' uses this emotional connection to enable non-contact sexual abuse such as:

- Sexual conversations online or by text messages;
- Encouraging exposure or flashing intimate body parts;
- Making them masturbate whilst the groomer watches and/or records;
- The sending of naked images;
- Getting the victim to send sexual videos;
- Getting the victim to do something sexual live on webcam;
- Showing the victim pornography;
- Getting the victim to meet up with them in person.

Initial contact may begin through private direct messages however, first contact often occurs in public online spaces, such as games or chatrooms. Where contact begins publicly, the groomer will usually attempt to move the conversation to more private online spaces such as messaging apps or direct messages on social media. Groomers will skilfully target their victims by bombarding them with messages designed to get more personal information. They manipulate them into keeping communications secret. Victims are coerced into a seemingly caring close relationship which is false where the groomer is then able to initiate sexual online contact. This often results in blackmail e.g. if a child has sent a sexual image of themselves the groomer will get a them to perform further sexual acts by threatening to share the image.

If you want to report someone who is behaving suspiciously online towards a child, you should in an emergency contact the emergency services by calling 999, or otherwise make a report to *Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP)*. See www.ceop.gov.uk.

See **Child protection and safeguarding** policy. There is more information about grooming and its stages in the **CSE** and **CCE** policies.