



**Bishop Stopford's School**

**Parent/Carer Guidance**

**Understanding the Law: Indecent  
Images and Young People  
(Secondary School Guidance)**

# Introduction

Most young people use smartphones daily to communicate with their friends and family through apps where videos are easily shared. Sometimes this lead to the creation, sharing, or viewing of indecent images of themselves or other people including images made without consent.

This is often referred to as **'sexting'** or **'youth-produced sexual images'**

Even when young people see this behaviour as a joke, experiment, or part of social relationships, the law treats it very seriously.

This booklet will hopefully help you understand the law in regards to these situations, the risk for young people and how to start a conversation with your child to help them understand also.

# Understanding the Law

It is a criminal offence for children and young people to keep share indecent or sexual images of someone under 18, even if the photo is of themselves or someone who has consented, and even if the image was created by the child or young person/or using AI generated imagery.

Under UK law, anyone under the age of 18 is a *child for the purposes of offences involving indecent images*.

It is illegal to:

- Take an indecent image of a child
- Make or create an indecent image of a child (including selfies, AI-generated images, manipulated/edited images)
- Possess an indecent image of a child
- Share, send, forward, upload or show an indecent image of a child
- Distribute an image without consent (including threatening, pressuring, or coercing someone to make or send an image)

This applies even when the young person is making or sharing an image of themselves or of another young person.

Relevant Legislation & Guidance

[Protection of Children Act 1978](#)

[Sexual Offences Act 2003](#)

[Serious Crime Act 2015](#)

[Voyeurism \(Offences\) Act 2019](#) – covering covert photography and some non-consensual image creation

[Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) and Health Education](#)

The legal consequences for making indecent images without consent can be severe and long-lasting and could involve the young person committing multiple criminal offences.

Legal Consequences:

Criminal charges

Potential imprisonment

A criminal record that could affect future education and employment opportunities

Potential offences include:

Creation of indecent images of a child

Possession and distribution of illegal images

Voyeurism (if images are taken secretly)

Online harassment or malicious communications

Coercive or controlling behaviour (in cases involving pressure or threats)

Child sexual exploitation offences (if there is manipulation or power imbalance)

# Making indecent images without consent and the legal consequences

Young people may be exposed to harmful online content and conduct, including making, sending and receiving explicit images. Many young people have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks, and some young people, whilst at school, share indecent images consensually and non-consensually (often via large chat groups) and view and share pornography and other harmful content.

## Indecent images are:

- Nude or semi-nude images of a child
- Photos or videos showing sexual activity
- Images intended to be sexual or sexually suggestive
- AI-generated or digitally altered sexual images
- Screenshots, saved images, or cloud-stored files
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Making indecent images *without consent include:*

- Secretly taking sexual or nude photos of someone without their knowledge
- Using AI apps to produce fake sexual images of a classmate (“deepfakes”)
- Editing someone’s photo to make it look sexualised
- Coercing, pressuring, or manipulating someone into taking or sending an image
- Filming someone in a state of undress (e.g., in changing rooms or toilets)
- Sharing images of someone who sent them under trust

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## Legal Consequences:

- Criminal charges
- Potential imprisonment
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## Potential offences include:

- Creation of indecent images of a child
- Possession and distribution of illegal images
- Voyeurism (if images are taken secretly)
- Online harassment or malicious communications
- Coercive or controlling behaviour (in cases involving pressure or threats)
- Child sexual exploitation offences (if there is manipulation or power imbalance)

# What Parents Should Do If This Happens

If your child is *in* the image:

- Stay calm and reassure them.
- Do not screenshot or forward the image.
- Contact the school.
- Contact police if threats, coercion, or exploitation are involved.
- Use Childline's Report Remove or the IWF to request removal.

If your child has made or shared such an image:

- Remain calm—focus on safeguarding, not punishment.
- Encourage honesty about what happened.
- Contact the school so support can be put in place.
- Seek guidance if the behaviour was pressured, influenced by peers, or not fully understood.
- Ensure they understand the legal seriousness of non-consensual image creation.

## **Supporting your child at home:**

- Have calm, open conversations about consent and digital respect
- Discuss peer pressure, boundaries, and healthy relationships
- Teach them not to take or make images of others without permission
- Reinforce that coercion or manipulation is never acceptable
- Encourage them to tell a trusted adult if anything feels wrong

# Useful Support and resources

[ThinkUKnow](#) – Online safety advice

[Childline](#) – Report Remove

[Internet Watch Foundation \(IWF\)](#)

[NSPCC](#) – Online Safety

[Young Minds](#) – Mental health support

[Lucy Faithful Foundation / Stop It Now](#) – Support around child sexual abuse and it's prevention.

[National Crime Agency CEOP](#)—Child Exploitation and Online Protection

[Local Authority MASH](#) (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub): 0208 379 5555 / Out of office hours on 020 8379 1000 (select option 2 )