

Al Islah Girls High School Sexting Policy

December 2016

Review Date December 2018

'Sexting' is an increasingly common activity among young people where they share inappropriate or explicit images online or through mobile phones.

Regrettably, there is a national concern related to young people (under the age of 18 years of age) engaging in sending/sharing inappropriate/indecent photographs of themselves or of other children via texts, SnapChat messages, Facebook, Instagram etc.

Definition

- The definition of sexting is 'images or videos generated by children under the age of 18 that are of a sexual nature or are considered to be indecent. These images may be shared between children and young people and/or adults via a mobile phone, webcam, handheld device or website'.

The Law

- The sharing of sexual videos and pictures of children under the age of 18, even if the child/young person shares an image of themselves, is 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 and Section 160 Criminal Justice Act 1988.

- 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/text/SnapChat etc.); distribute or show such an image; possess with the intention of distributing images; advertise and possess such images.

Young people may also call it:

Cybersex

Sending a nudie, picture or selfie

Trading nudes

Dirties

Pic for pic.

'Sexting' is often seen as flirting by children and young people who feel that it's a part of normal life

Dealing with sexting incidents at Al Islah

For Staff

When an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery comes to a school or college's attention:

- The incident should be referred to the DSL as soon as possible

Designated Safeguarding Team

In applying judgement to each sexting incident consider the following:

- Sexting among children and young people can be a common occurrence; where they often describe these incidents as 'mundane'.
- Children involved in sexting incidents, will be dealt with (by the police) as victims as opposed to perpetrators (unless there are mitigating circumstances).

- Record all incidents of sexting. This includes both the actions you did take together with the actions that you didn't take, together with justifications.
- Significant age difference between the sender/receiver involved.
- If there is any external coercion involved or encouragement beyond the sender/receiver.
- If you recognise the child as more vulnerable than is usual (ie at risk).
- If the image is of a severe or extreme nature.
- If the situation is not isolated and the image has been more widely distributed.
- If this is not the first time children have been involved in a sexting act.
- If other knowledge of either the sender/recipient may add cause for concern (ie difficult home circumstances).

Initial response

- The DSL should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate academy staff
- There should be subsequent interviews with the young people involved (if appropriate)
- 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 young person at risk of harm
- At any point in the process if there is a concern a young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately
- An immediate referral to police and/or children's social care¹⁶ should be made if at this initial stage:
- The incident involves an adult
- There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example owing to special educational needs)
- What you know about the imagery suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
- The imagery involves sexual acts and any student in the imagery is underage
- You have reason to believe a student or student is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of the imagery, for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming

If none of the above apply then a school may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care (a school can choose to escalate the incident at any time if further information/concerns come to light).

DSLs should always use their professional judgement in conjunction with their colleagues to assess incidents.

To be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding /CP Policy, Anti bullying policy and behaviour policy

DSL= designated safeguarding lead – Sameerah Master

Appendix

When deciding whether to involve the police and/or children's social care, consideration should be given to the following questions. Answering these questions will support the DSL in considering whether a young person is at risk of harm, in which case a referral will be appropriate, whether additional information or support is needed from other agencies or whether the academy can manage the incident and support the young people directly. **Do you have any concerns about the young person's vulnerability? Why this question?**

Consideration should be given to whether a young person's circumstances or background makes them additionally vulnerable. This could include being in care, having special educational needs or disability or having been a victim of abuse.

Where there are wider concerns about the care and welfare of a young person then consideration should be given to referring to children's social care.