SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

WITH DR SANDRA WISEMAN

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Managing images in schools: What schools need to know

The increasing use of school websites, social media platforms and digital communication tools means schools are sharing more photographs and videos of pupils than ever before. While celebrating school life online can strengthen communication with families and communities, it also creates important safeguarding, privacy and data protection responsibilities.

Recent guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre highlights the growing need for schools to review how images and videos of children are captured, stored, shared and protected online. The guidance reflects wider safeguarding concerns linked to online misuse, image manipulation and the increasing risks associated with publicly accessible digital content.

Why this matters

Images shared online can be copied, altered, redistributed or used out of context without a school's knowledge. Emerging technologies, including AI image manipulation tools, have increased concerns about how children's images may be edited or repurposed in harmful ways. Guidance from the NSPCC Learning Hub warns that children's images may be used for grooming, exploitation or abusive content creation if appropriate safeguards are not in place.

Schools therefore need to view image management as both a safeguarding and data protection issue, rather than simply a communications matter.

Key considerations for schools

Review consent procedures

Schools should ensure image consent processes are clear, specific and regularly reviewed. Parents and carers need to understand:

- **how images will be used**
- **where they may appear**
- **who may be able to access them**
- **how long they will remain online**

Children's views should also be considered, particularly for older pupils. The ICO guidance on photographs in schools reminds schools that children's data requires particular protection under data protection legislation.

Limit identifiable information

The UK Safer Internet Centre recommends a "Names-No-Images/Images-No-Names" approach where possible. This means avoiding publishing a pupil's full name alongside a recognisable photograph in publicly accessible spaces.

Schools should also consider:

- **avoiding images showing school badges, addresses or location details**
- **removing metadata or geolocation information before uploading images**
- **using lower-resolution images to reduce misuse potential**
- **carefully reviewing background details in photographs**

Audit websites and social media

Schools are encouraged to regularly review existing online content and remove outdated or unnecessary pupil images. Older images can remain searchable online for years and may no longer reflect current consent arrangements. Where possible, schools may wish to:

- **use password-protected platforms for sharing images with families**
- **restrict public visibility of galleries**
- **strengthen social media privacy settings**
- **ensure staff understand reporting procedures if concerns arise**

Ensure staff training is up to date

Image sharing should form part of safeguarding and online safety training. Staff need to understand:

- **safer image-sharing practices**
- **the risks associated with AI manipulation**
- **expectations regarding personal devices**
- **procedures for storage and deletion**
- **appropriate use of school social media accounts**

The guidance emphasises that schools should ensure image use aligns with safeguarding, online safety and data protection policies.

Schools should consider whether every image shared publicly is necessary and whether safer alternatives exist. In some situations, generic photographs, images of activities rather than faces, or secure parent-only platforms may provide a more proportionate approach.

Read:
https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/image-guidance-for-education-settings

Strengthening cybersecurity in schools webinar - FREE

The South West Grid for Learning is hosting a free webinar on **Thursday 21st May from 2:00pm-3:00pm**, focusing on strengthening cybersecurity in education settings.

The session will explore key areas including multi-factor authentication (MFA), the use of VPNs and WhatsApp groups, cyber security leadership, and the new Department for Education Cyber Security Standards. Speakers include experts from Secure Schools and Smartdesc.

Schools interested in attending can book a place via the link below:
https://swgfl.org.uk/magazine/book-tickets-for-strengthening-cybersecurity-in-schools-webinar/

The South West Grid for learning:
https://swgfl.org.uk/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=23141484231&gbraid=0AAAAADoxb552L5JetVndO2BskOyPWc3ck&gclid=Cj0KCQjw_IXQBhCkARIsADqELbLjYC0_6QwXx8Z18L3LYQFcaW5wPJbG1OTbXTnUZAp7lc_tRaaeyCwaAiI4EALw_wcB

Fearless resources: What schools need to know

The Fearless service from Crimestoppers continues to provide a wide range of free safeguarding and prevention resources for schools and professionals working with children and young people. The materials are designed to support education settings in discussing crime, exploitation, reporting concerns and active bystander behaviours in a safe and age-appropriate way.

Fearless is the youth service of Crimestoppers UK and aims to empower young people to speak up about crime and harm anonymously. The service allows young people to share information without giving personal details and provides non-judgemental advice around crime and exploitation.

Resources available for schools

The Fearless professionals' area includes free downloadable resources covering a range of safeguarding themes, including:

- **County Lines**
- **knife crime**
- **child criminal and financial exploitation**
- **child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour**
- **drugs and alcohol**
- **the bystander approach and myths around "snitching"**

Schools can also access:

- **classroom discussion activities**
- **lesson guides**
- **awareness posters**
- **scenario-based playing cards**
- **videos explaining how Fearless works**
- **workshops and professional training opportunities**

Many of the materials are designed to support discussion rather than simply deliver information, helping young people explore peer pressure, exploitation, reporting concerns and community safety.

Tackling barriers to reporting

A key theme within the Fearless resources is addressing the stigma associated with "grassing" or "snitching". The guidance encourages professionals to help young people understand the difference between reporting concerns to keep people safe and reporting someone maliciously. Research within the toolkit highlights that many young people:

- **fear repercussions if they report concerns**
- **worry about peer judgement**
- **distrust authorities**
- **are uncertain whether what they have seen is serious enough to report**
- **may disclose information indirectly through conversations or "gossip" rather than formal reporting**

The resources therefore encourage schools to promote trusted relationships, active bystander approaches and safe reporting pathways.

The guidance also reminds professionals that safeguarding disclosures may arise during classroom discussions and that schools must ensure concerns are managed through existing safeguarding procedures and DSL oversight.

Key questions schools may wish to consider

Schools may wish to reflect on:

- **Do pupils understand how to report concerns safely?**
- **Are children confident identifying trusted adults?**
- **Does the curriculum address exploitation, coercion and active bystander behaviour?**
- **Are staff confident discussing "snitching" culture and barriers to reporting?**
- **Are safeguarding discussions helping pupils recognise grooming and exploitation?**
- **Do pupils know how anonymous reporting services work?**

Read:
https://crimestoppers-uk.org/fearless/professionals/resources

Summer term 1 - 5-minute 'bitesize' and audio version safeguarding refresher videos

Identifying young carers in school -Tuesday 19th May

Please note that the S4S Safeguarding Office will be closed from **Friday 22nd May** and will reopen on **Monday 1st June 2026**. If you have an urgent safeguarding query during this period, please email **Lauren.Jones@services4schools.org.uk** or contact Lauren on **07908 530783.**

The 'Weekly Safeguarding Update' will resume on **Tuesday 2nd June** 2026.

Wishing you all a very happy and well-deserved half-term break.

Summer term 2 - 5-minute 'bitesize' and audio version safeguarding refresher videos

FGM - Tuesday 9th June
CCE and serious violence -Tuesday 16th June
CSE -Tuesday 23rd June
Domestic abuse - Tuesday 30th June
Radicalisaiton and extremism - Tuesday 7th July
Child abduction and community safety incidents - Tuesday 14th July

KCSIE 2026 - Date to be confirmed

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