

# St Patrick's RC High School

## A National Teaching School



## Anti-Sexting Policy

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**Date of Next Review:** June 2019

**Prepared By:** Mr A Campbell

**Committee:** Pupil Welfare

**Reviewed on:** 01.05.2019

**Reviewed by:** Mr A Campbell

**Next review:** Summer 2019/2020

**Signed:** ..... (Chair)

# St Patrick's RC High School

## School Mission Statement

Our outstanding school community is guided by the gospel values of: love, forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, integrity, humility and truth. Faith and worship are lived, taught and celebrated. We recognise the importance of service to others and the opportunity to be witnesses to Christ in our community.

All are unique and strive for personal growth. We celebrate the pursuit of academic excellence, applaud ambition and value the achievements of all. Our pupils are expected to achieve their best and use their learning to make a difference in the world they live in.

## School British Values Statement

St Patrick's teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour. Teachers do this by not undermining fundamental British values and ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.

## Anti-Sexting Policy

**Definition:** the term 'sexting' is a derivation of 'texting' but relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content. It is officially known as 'Youth Produced Sexual Imagery'. These are created and sent via electronic communication devices such as mobile telephones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers. They are often 'shared' via social networking sites and instant messaging services. It is an offence to possess, distribute, show and make indecent images of children. The sexual offences Act 2003 (England and Wales) defines a child, for the purposes of indecent images, as anyone under the age of 18.

**Aim:** St Patrick's RC High School will not tolerate 'sexting', it is inappropriate and illegal amongst young people and can have extremely damaging and long-lasting consequences. This policy has been created in order to provide a guide for parents, staff and pupils as to how the school will proceed and what steps will be taken should an incident of sexting be reported or suspected.

### Legal Implications for pupils

Sexting potentially breaches several civil laws concerned with the creation, possession and distribution of child pornography and indecent images. These are images which show partial (where breasts or genitals are exposed) or full nudity and/or feature sexual acts being performed. It is illegal for pupils to make and/or share images such as these, even if they are images of themselves, which have been taken personally or with consent. Pupils who engage in sexting (to any extent) are at risk of receiving a police caution and/or being placed on a register for sexual offenders for a period of several years (which can have serious ramifications in adulthood with regards to employment, travel etc). Sexting can also (in some cases) be viewed as a crime under the Malicious Communications Act.

### School policies

Sexting is therefore identified as unacceptable behaviour and the possession of pornography is prohibited in school. The misuse of IT, such as sexting, inappropriate comments on social networking, being the object of cyber-bullying and online grooming are all potential welfare concerns and identified as such in our Safeguarding Policy.

## **Our duty**

As staff, we have a responsibility to work with parents and carers in ensuring that all pupils are fully aware of the dangers and possible repercussions of sexting. In school, this information will be communicated to pupils through vertical tutoring, in assemblies and through parental information.

Sexting incidents are often complicated as they potentially involve a large number of pupils and those involved could be victims or perpetrators or both. Depending on the specific circumstances and gravity, the incident will be investigated on the discipline-safeguarding continuum:

### **If an incident of sexting is reported or suspected at St Patrick's RC High School:**

- If "sexting" is reported by the victim or deemed to be a Child Protection matter, then it must be treated as a disclosure of a Child Protection matter and referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Miss R Hart) who will report the incident to the BRIDGE .
- Parents and carers will be notified and the incident will be reported to the BRIDGE team or the police, as appropriate.
- Pupils will be sanctioned in accordance with our Behaviour Policy. Sexting is a serious offence and dependent on motive, intent, pressure or coercion, those involved may be issued with fixed term or, in extreme cases, even permanent exclusion. Pupils may also be required to attend workshops to ensure that they understand legality, consequences and to work through specific scenarios.
- Pupils may also be subject to interview by the Police and confiscation of their electronic devices.

### **Guidance for staff if you suspect that an offence has been committed:**

- If you suspect that "sexting" has taken place or you become aware of indecent images circulating in school or a pupil refers an incident of "sexting" to you, then you must refer it straight away to the relevant Head of House or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Miss Hart or Mrs Gardiner), who are authorised by the Headteacher to investigate such matters.
- Although all staff are by law permitted to search pupils without their consent if they have a reasonable suspicion that they may have prohibited items in their possession, such as pornography, you may put yourself at risk of allegations by attempting to deal with this issue or by viewing indecent images yourself, so this is an investigation that should be carried out by the Head of House or Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- **DO NOT** search, copy, print images that do come to your attention. Switch off or put in flight mode so phone cannot be remotely wiped, secure phone and seek advice. Staff do not want to inadvertently implicate themselves simply by viewing such material.
- If you are in any doubt whatsoever, seek immediate advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Miss Hart) and refer the issue on.