



Safeguarding Newsletter

Issue 17 - October 2026

Safeguarding at Pate's

We pride ourselves on facilitating and maintaining an "open" and "safe" culture of safeguarding at Pate's.

This is so we can work together to keep children safe in school, at home and in the wider community. Therefore, every half-term we produce a newsletter with key safeguarding information and advice on the current topics which we have covered with students in school.

Further information regarding our Safeguarding Team and processes can be found on [our school website](#).

We are aware that, as parents and carers, you may sometimes wish to raise safeguarding concerns. If you would like to discuss a confidential safeguarding concern, please email the safeguarding team directly at dsl@patesgs.org.

Transitions to a New Year

The start of a new school year can be exciting, but it can also be incredibly demanding for young people. As they settle into new routines, teachers, classrooms, friendship groups and expectations, many children are working hard every day to process large amounts of new information while adapting to unfamiliar challenges. For some, this can be exhausting.

Children may seem more tired, irritable, emotional or withdrawn than usual. During this period of adjustment, one of the most valuable things parents and carers can offer is patience, reassurance and understanding. Rather than expecting children to immediately perform at their best academically, socially or in co-curricular activities, it is important to recognise that settling in takes time.

childline

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME
childline.org.uk | 0800 1111

Sexual Exploitation > 'Sextortion'



Sextortion = Financially motivated sexual extortion. Threatening to release a sexually explicit or indecent image unless the victim complies with their (usually financial) demands.

There have been a number of incidents this term already where children have reported having their WhatsApp chats and social media accounts hacked, being bombarded with images of a sexual nature, and being victims of 'sextortion'.

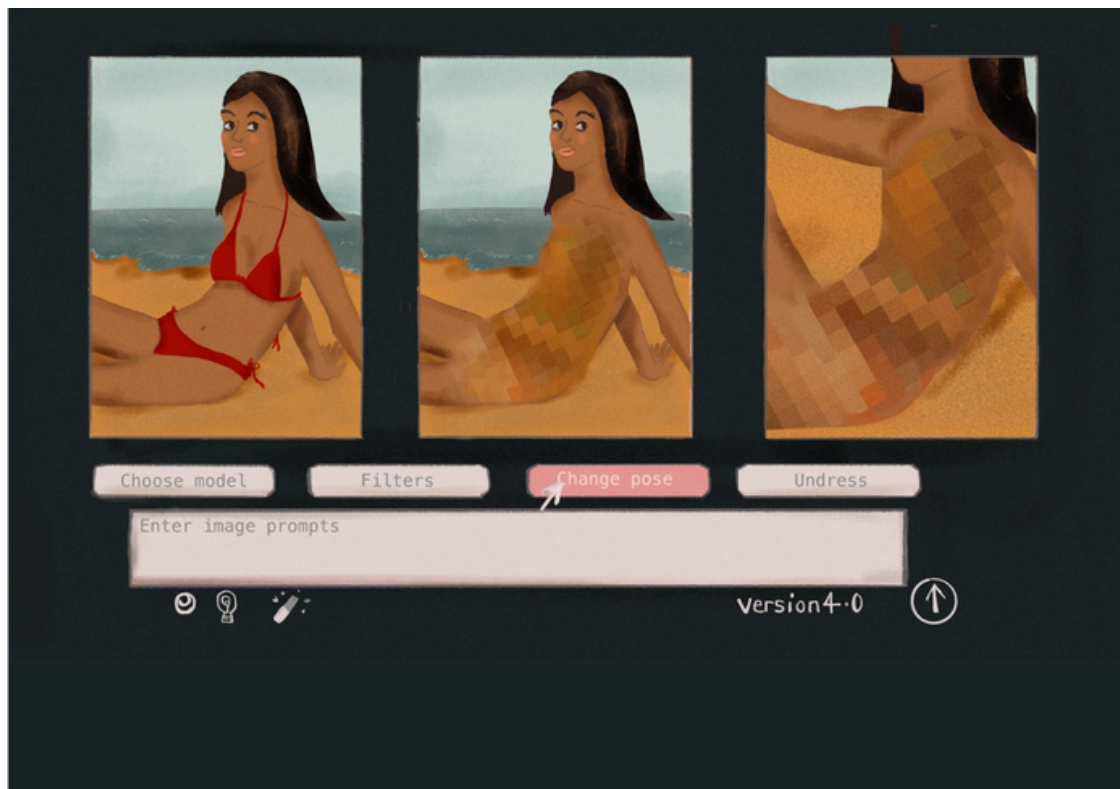
The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has reported that more AI-generated child sexual abuse images were identified in the first six months of 2026 than during the whole of 2025.

IWF urges EU action as more AI child sexual abuse images found.

Where Pate's students have been victims and paid money, criminals are more likely to target our student body.

Criminals harass, abuse and pressurise young people into sending money, often via gift cards through apps like PaySafe and Steam. If a young person gives in once and sends a small amount, the harassment will continue and intensify and more money will be demanded.

The driving force for these criminals is accessing the money. They might use an explicit or AI generated picture as the initial method of blackmail, but the focus is on receiving the money.



What Parents Should Know:

KS3 (ages 11-14)

Children at this age are often:

- Exploring social media for the first time.
- Joining group chats independently.
- Playing online games with voice or text chat.
- Becoming curious about relationships and identity.

Key messages for young people

- ✓ Never share personal information with someone you only know online.
- ✓ Do not send photos you would not want shared publicly.
- ✓ Tell a trusted adult if anyone makes you feel uncomfortable online.
- ✓ Remember that people online may not be who they claim to be.

KS4 (ages 14-16)

Teenagers may:

- Form online relationships.
- Use multiple social media platforms.
- Experience pressure to share images.
- Be increasingly targeted by scammers and sextortion offenders

Key messages

- ✓ Once an image is shared, control over it can be lost.
- ✓ Anyone demanding money or images is committing abuse.
- ✓ Blocking and reporting is always the right thing to do.
- ✓ They will not be in trouble for seeking help.

KS5 (ages 16-18)

Older students often:

- Have greater independence online.
- Use dating apps and social media more extensively.
- Manage their own finances.
- Be specifically targeted by financial scams and sextortion networks.

Key messages

- ✓ Criminals often target older teenagers because they have access to money.
- ✓ AI technology can be used to create convincing fake images.
- ✓ Never send money to someone threatening to release images.
- ✓ Save evidence and report concerns immediately.



Practical Steps Parents & Carers Can Take

1. Keep Talking

Research consistently shows that children are more likely to seek help when they believe adults will respond calmly. Try asking:

- "What's your most used app at the moment?"
- "Who do you talk to online?"
- "Have you ever been contacted by someone you didn't know?"
- "What would you do if..."

2. Create a Family Agreement

Discuss boundaries around which apps can be used; privacy settings; Screen-free times; rules about sharing images; what to do if something goes wrong.

3. Check Privacy Settings Together

Review Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, WhatsApp, Discord and Gaming platforms.

Ensure accounts are private where appropriate and location sharing is turned off unless necessary.

4. Discuss AI

Children need to understand that:

- Images can now be edited or generated very realistically.
- Not everything online is genuine.
- Photos shared publicly may be misused by others.

5. Watch for Changes in Behaviour

Possible warning signs include but are limited to:

- Sudden withdrawal from friends or family.
- Anxiety about phones or messages.
- Reluctance to attend school.
- Requests for money without explanation.
- Distress after receiving online messages.

These signs do not automatically indicate online abuse but should prompt supportive conversations.

If Something Goes Wrong, Reassure First

Young people often fear losing access to devices or being blamed.

A helpful response is: "Thank you for telling me. You're not in trouble. We'll sort this out together."

Do

- ✓ Take screenshots of harassment and abusive language.
- ✓ Save usernames and account details.
- ✓ Block and report the account.
- ✓ Contact the police if there are threats, extortion or image-based abuse.
- ✓ Seek support from specialist organisations.

Do Not

- ✗ Pay money demanded by an offender.
- ✗ Delete evidence immediately.
- ✗ Continue communicating with the offender.



Sources of Support

Our Safeguarding email monitored all year. Contact us dsl@patesgs.org.

For All

CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)

Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) - Report child sexual abuse material found online.

Police - If there is immediate risk of harm, call **999**. For non-emergencies, dial **101**.

For Young People

Protecting children from child criminal exploitation | NSPCC Learning

InTER-ACT | Counselling | Let's Talk Well

The Mix

Childline | Free counselling service for kids and young people | Childline

Useful contacts for support - for 11-18 year olds | Mind

NSPCC Helpline - 0808 800 5000; www.nspcc.org.uk

For Parents and Carers

Parent and carer support and advice line | Let's Talk Well

Parent Talk | Action for Children | Action For Children

BAATN New Homepage 2026 - The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network

Home | Gingerbread

Bullying Advice For Parents & Carers | Help Stop Bullying

For Support with Mental Health

NHS 111 Mental Health line (18+)

Shout - The UK's free, confidential, 24/7 mental health text service. Text **SHOUT** to 85258

CALM I'm struggling | Campaign Against Living Miserably

Additional Support

At Pate's we have a zero-tolerance stance to any form of abuse.

Staff and students have been educated on the different types of abuse, spotting the signs in oneself, or a peer, and how to find pastoral support.

[Click here to view our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.](#)

[Click here to view our Early Help Offer.](#)

At Pate's, every member of staff is a pastoral member and students are encouraged to talk to any teacher who they trust.

