



SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

SEXTORTION

What is Sextortion?

'Sextortion' is the short name for '**financially motivated sexual extortion**'. It is a type of online blackmail where criminals threaten to share sexual pictures, videos, or information about you. They may be trying to take money from you or forcing you to do something else you don't want to.

Recognising the warning signs of sextortion in children

Signs that an online predator is scamming or targeting your child can include:

- finding pornography on your child's computer
- your child receiving phone calls from people you do not know
- your child calling numbers you do not recognise
- your child spending a large amount of time on the internet
- your child receiving gifts or mail from people you do not know
- your child changing the screen or turning the computer off when you enter the room
- your child becoming withdrawn or displaying behavioural problems. This includes unexplained increase in levels of fear, anxiety or anger
- a drop in your child's school performance or grades
- self-harming ideations or actions
- unexplained sense of urgency to leave home or meet someone.

All age groups and genders are being targeted, but a large proportion of cases have involved male victims aged between 14-18. Ninety one per cent of victims in UK sextortion cases dealt with by the Internet Watch Foundation in 2023 were male .

Sextortion is:

when someone is forced to pay money (or vouchers, gift cards etc.) after an offender has threatened to release nude or semi-nude photos of them

How can I protect my child from sextortion?

Such incidents will horrify most parents. But as tempting as it is to try and restrict internet usage or access to specific sites, creating an atmosphere at home of honesty and mutual trust will be more effective in the long run.

Parents and carers need to first understand the dangers themselves, and then share their insight in a non-judgemental way with their children. Two-way communication is essential. Youngsters need to feel like they can come to their parents for help if they get embroiled in a sextortion case.

If that's the case, here's a short list of best practice steps to work through with your child:

- **Don't pay, do stop contact and block:** you may be tempted to pay, but there is no guarantee that this will stop the threats. As the offender's motive is to get money, once you have shown you can pay, they will likely ask for more and blackmail may continue. If you have paid, don't panic but don't pay anything more. Help your child to stop all communication with the offender and block them on any accounts that they have been contacted on.
- **Avoid deleting anything:** try not to delete anything that could be used as evidence such as messages, images, telephone numbers, and bank account details.
- Report to the police or CEOP: call 101 or 999 if there is an immediate risk of harm to your child. Or you can use the [CEOP Safety Centre](#) to report any online blackmail attempts.

If this happens
to you:

Don't pay

Do stop contact

Block



If this happens
to you:

Avoid deleting

anything that

could be used as evidence

Prevention is better than cure

To help protect your child, chat to them about the danger and about the simple steps they can take to keep clear of it. They include basics like:

- Stay cautious online: people are not always who they say they are
- Set your social media accounts to private
- Don't send any videos or pictures to someone you haven't met in real life
- Never share intimate photos or videos of yourself or anyone else – you have no control over what happens with the images or videos afterwards
- Ignore messages from strangers and be wary of anyone wanting to move the conversation to another platform – such efforts also happen to be one of the [warning signs of a romance scam](#)
- Come to me whenever you think you've been targeted by an online predator

At the same time, it's never a bad time to consider reminding them of the importance of using [strong and unique passwords](#), using reputable security software, and avoiding to click on links or download attachments in unsolicited messages.

Mental Health in Young People

Mental health is about **how we think, feel and act**. Just like physical health: everybody has it and we need to take care of it. Our mental health is on a spectrum, and can range from good to poor.

Good mental health can help you to think positively, feel confident and act calmly.

If you have poor mental health, you might find that the way you're thinking, feeling or acting becomes difficult to cope with. You might not enjoy things you used to like doing. You might feel sad or angry for a longer time than usual. Or you might feel like you can't control how you feel or behave.

Supporting your child's Mental Health

One in four people experience a mental health problem every year. Everyone needs help from time to time to deal with the stresses of modern life and the pandemic added an extra source of anxiety to children's lives. It is now more important than ever that we support young people's mental health and help them to develop the resilience and resources to keep themselves mentally healthy.



At Sir Graham Balfour School we support students to have good mental health through our curriculum and support services. We believe it is important that they are aware of trusted resources and contacts if they need help. Families also play a vital role in supporting young peoples' mental health and we know that the best support happens when school, students and families communicate.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Everyone has mental health, like physical health, and we all have the ability to manage our mental health. Managing our own lifestyle to promote positive wellbeing is important. To give our students the best chance of achieving and maintaining good mental health, they should:

- Get regular and quality sleep
- Exercise daily (even for just 20 minutes)
- Eat a healthy diet
- Keep hydrated
- Get some sunshine (trickier in the UK at times)
- Keep technology interaction (particularly social media) to a healthy level
- Stop worrying about the things you can't control and focus on the things you can
- Surround yourself with good people and cut toxic people out of your life (This may well be some family and friends)
- Stop comparing yourself to other people, there will always be someone better at certain things and vice versa
- Being thankful for what you do have, rather than the things you don't (We have won the lottery by being born in this country)
- Practise mindfulness and breathing techniques, as they do work

Top tips to support children and young people

Be there to listen

Regularly ask how they're doing so they get used to talking about their feelings and know there's always someone to listen if they want it. Find out how to create a space where they will open up.

[How to start a conversation with your child](#)



Support them through difficulties

Pay attention to their emotions and behaviour, and try to help them work through difficulties. It's not always easy when faced with challenging behaviour, but try to help them understand what they're feeling and why.

[Help with difficult behaviour and emotions](#)



Stay involved in their life

Show interest in their life and the things important to them. It not only helps them value who they are but also makes it easier for you to spot problems and support them.



Encourage their interests

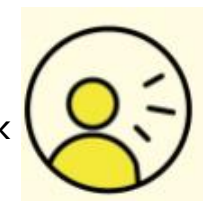
Being active or creative, learning new things and being a part of a team help connect us with others and are important ways we can all help our mental health. Support and encourage them to explore their interests, whatever they are.



Take what they say seriously

Listening to and valuing what they say, without judging their feelings, in turn makes them feel valued. Consider how to help them process and work through their emotions in a more constructive way.

[The Anna Freud Centre support guide](#)



Build positive routines

We know it still may not be easy, but try to reintroduce structure around regular routines, healthy eating and exercise. A good night's sleep is also really important – try to get them back into routines that fit with school or college.

[Sleep tips for children](#)



Bullying and Mental Health

According to the NSPCC, “Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It’s usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.”

Young people who have experienced bullying are more likely to develop an anxiety disorder or suffer from depression. The same applies to those that are isolated and have difficulties with friendships at school.

Fears and worries are a normal part of child development and the content of fears can change according to the individual’s developmental stage. Anxiety disorders occur when the intensity of the fear or worry is so high that it starts to impact on the child’s functioning and well-being. Depression affects just under 3% of children under the age of 13 and over 5% of 13-18-year olds. An estimated 20% will have had one depressive episode before the age of 18.

Bullying is an understandable reason for a child to feel sad or anxious but it need not mean they are suffering from anxiety or depression. However, regardless of the impact on the child, bullying in any form is never acceptable. Whether the bullying takes place at school, at home, online or somewhere else, it should be reported to the relevant authority and those responsible should be held to account.

When to seek help

If you notice any symptoms of depression or anxiety as a result of your child being bullied, and these persist or worsen, then you should refer to a professional. If left untreated, depression and anxiety can continue into adulthood and cause significant problems. Some children may be fearful to talk about being bullied. In some cases the bully might have threatened them with consequences if they speak out about the abuse. So as a parent, teacher or carer, it’s important for us to provide a safe, open and non-judgemental environment for the child to be able to discuss their concerns.

Reporting Concerns about unwanted touching or when something just does not feel right.




If your son/daughter ever says they are unhappy about a situation how another person has touched them when they did not want, asked them to send a nude picture or just when something just does not feel right. Please let them know that they must go and see Mrs Metcalfe or Mrs Norman as soon as possible.

If your child is experiencing any difficulties and does not know who to speak to regarding issues such as bullying or emotional wellbeing, or they have concerns about a friend; they can contact a member of the pastoral team for urgent help or by using the following email address:

help@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk

RELATIONSHIP, SEX EDUCATION TOPICS

SUMMER TERM 2024

Year 10	The risks associated with substance use.	
Year 9	Making decisions and managing peer pressure about films and online viewing. What is appropriate and	
Year 8	County Lines - the impact on young people, families and the community	
Year 7	Healthy relationships including sexuality and gender identity.	