



PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES OF CHILDREN GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide schools with general guidance and examples of good practice on the appropriate use of photographic images of children. This includes still photography, video and digital images. When using such images schools need to have regard to the law whilst protecting the safety of children.

The Data Protection Act 1998 does not prevent individual parents or guardians from photographing or filming their children at school events. There is also an exemption with regard to media coverage and occasionally images of students may appear in local or national newspapers or on television.

Legislation gives people the right to privacy and schools must make every effort to respect this when taking and displaying images.

2 Good Practice

A common sense approach should be used with regard to the use of cameras/videos at school events, which include school performances, sports days, school trips and assemblies.

In trying to ensure that the use of photography and digital recording is safe, the following advice represents examples of good practice:

- Always ask parents or guardians to give permission for their child to be photographed whilst in school and/or involved in school activities. (See 3 below.)
- Reassure parents/guardians that photography/recording will only take place in designated and adequately supervised areas, i.e. not backstage at a production where children might be changing, or in changing rooms prior to a sporting event.
- Follow the commitment stated on the consent form.
- Advise parents if media coverage is expected.
- Ensure all children are appropriately dressed and suitably supervised.
- Avoid naming in full individual children.
- Avoid images of an individual child with no surrounding context.
- Avoid using images of a child who is considered or known to be vulnerable unless specific permission is given.
- Try to represent the diversity of the students in the school.
- Do not use images likely to cause distress or embarrassment to the child or parent/guardian.
- Be aware of children's safety and challenge and report any inappropriate photography or intrusive photography.
- Ask parents/guardians using a video camera not to obscure the view of others.
- Avoid using photographs of children after they have left the school.
- Review images regularly and delete/destroy any unwanted material.

3 Consent

Always obtain the permission of parents/guardians to use their child's image. Once obtained, permission could be valid for the whole time that the child is on roll at that particular school, or for a specified period. Such a consent form could be included in admission packs.

When a child attends secondary school, in addition to obtaining permission from parents/guardians, be aware that as a child matures s/he may object to the use of his/her image. If this is the case you should respect the rights of the individual.

It would be good practice to include information regarding the school's policy on the use of children's images in the school prospectus and that parents/guardians will be asked to give their consent to this when their child is admitted to school.

In cases where a parent/guardian does not agree to their child being photographed, staff must be informed and every effort made to comply with this wish. This can be very difficult to achieve on occasions, especially if the student is involved in a team sporting event. Parents/guardians may well accept an exception in such cases if a compromise can be agreed, e.g. not including names of the students.

4 Media Coverage

Images taken for the purpose of journalism are exempt from the Data Protection Act. However, those children whose parents/guardians have refused permission for their child's image to be used in such a way would need to be excluded from media coverage. In any event, to reduce the risk of images being used inappropriately, ensure that children are suitably dressed. For example, don't allow photographs of children in swimming costumes.

5 School Websites

We would recommend that schools avoid using personal information relating to an individual child or adult. Never include addresses, phone numbers or email addresses. Preferably, refer to children by their first names only.

The following website gives schools useful information on e-safety:

<http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=is>

7 Webcams

The use of webcams is covered by data protection requirements. The area where the webcam is being used must be clearly marked and people must be told of its existence and purpose. Parents/Guardians must give permission for their child to be involved in webcam use.

8 Children Photographing Each Other

There may be occasions, particularly on school trips, where children take inappropriate photographs of their friends. This should be discouraged and for this reason, the use mobile phones with cameras should not be permitted in changing rooms, toilets, etc.

9 Other Options

Look into the possibility of creating a school video of a particular performance or event and offering this for sale to parents/guardians.

Sets of digital photographs could be taken by the school and orders taken for copies.