



MISUSE OF CAMERA AND VIDEO PHONES BY PUPILS

Background

The EIS is concerned over reports of misuse of mobile phones with camera and video capabilities by pupils in schools.

Images of teachers and other pupils can be sent to other mobile phones or e-mail addresses and can be posted on the internet. There have also been reports of teachers being deliberately provoked to anger by pupils for the purpose of recording the reaction. Mobile phones with camera and video functions may be used as a means of bullying other pupils and harassing teachers, for example, in circumstances where images are taken without permission and are used to humiliate or intimidate.

As well as misuse of camera and video mobile phones the use of text messages as a tool for bullying is a practice that has been increasing and the advice in this leaflet should also assist in addressing this problem.

Policy

Local Authorities and schools will have policies on mobile phones currently in place. Camera and video phones pose a problem for schools and it is important that extant policies are reviewed to cover guidelines/prohibitions on these phones.

There are three options for a policy on mobile phones:

- (I) ban all mobile phones from schools.
- (II) ban all mobile phones with a camera/video function.

- (III) allow mobile phones to be brought into school under strict limitations on use, for example, requiring all phones to be turned-off during the pupil day and put away during lessons. It would be a misuse of a mobile phone to record staff or other pupils without permission.

Options (i) and (ii) may not gain parental support and, therefore, (iii) would be the most practicable.

Whichever option is adopted the policy should cover pupil discipline procedures and sanctions for breaches of the policy. Under option (iii) the sanctions would apply to using phones outwith permitted areas and times and recording staff and pupils without permission.

Policies should be explicit about the rights of staff to confiscate mobile phones where the policy is breached, the logging by schools of confiscated items, the return of confiscated items and deletion of images which are in breach of the policy. Good practice would be for confiscated phones to be held by the school office and return arranged by the Headteacher or other senior manager.

Advice to Members

The EIS advises that staff should be consulted in the formulation of the policy and that the policy's effectiveness should be assessed following implementation and revised in the light of experience.

The EIS recommends that parents should be informed of the terms of a policy and engaged to ensure their co-operation and effective implementation of the policy.

The EIS advises members not to agree to allow pupils to photograph them by camera phone.

If an EIS member is subject to any form of harassment from pupils, including the misuse of camera mobile phones to this purpose, he/she should immediately report the incident(s) to the Headteacher/Line Manager. Advice and support can also be obtained from the EIS Local Association Secretary.

