

KCSiE 2026 and AI

What every member of staff needs to know about AI and safeguarding. **In force 1**

September 2026, replacing KCSiE 2025. Applies to schools and colleges in England. From 1 September everyone in the building is required to read Part One of KCSiE, so this briefing is for everyone, teaching and support staff alike.

THE HEADLINE CHANGE

AI is now inside statutory safeguarding guidance, rather than signposted alongside it.

Definitions

AI-generated images now sit inside the definition of nudes and semi-nudes.

Risk categories

Two of the four Cs on online safety risks have been rewritten to name AI.

Training

All staff need to understand how to use AI safely and educate students appropriately.

01 What has actually changed

Nudes and semi-nudes, including where generated by AI

“Nudes and semi-nudes may also be digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence, including what are sometimes described as ‘deepfakes’ or ‘deep nudes’.”

KCSiE 2026, PAGE 6

- **The context.** KCSiE has always covered nudes and semi-nudes as a form of child-on-child abuse. What is new in 2026 is a subsection bringing AI-generated images inside that definition.
- **What it establishes.** These images fall inside a key category of safeguarding harm rather than outside it. Every procedure that already applies, reporting, recording, support for the victim, response to the pupil who made it, applies here too. There is no new pathway.
- **Why “wholly generated” matters.** It covers the case where no original photograph of the child was ever altered at all.
- **The footnote to know.** The legal position is not new, but an updated footnote (page 126) reiterates that taking and sharing nude photographs of under-18s, including AI-generated ones, is a criminal offence.

The four Cs now reference AI

Two of the four online safety risk categories have been updated (pages 44 to 45).

- **Contact.** Now extends beyond harmful interaction with other users to “generative AI applications that simulate this”. In plain terms, companion chatbots and character apps: services where a student holds an ongoing conversation with an AI persona, often cast as a friend, partner or fictional character.
- **Conduct.** Now covers “making, sending and receiving explicit images, including those generated using AI and online bullying”, putting AI-generated images in the same category as real ones.
- **Content and commerce.** No AI update. Content remains exposure to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material; commerce remains gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and financial scams.

OFTEN REPORTED

“This is the first time KCSiE has mentioned AI.” It is not. KCSiE 2025 already pointed schools to the DfE’s *Generative AI: product safety expectations* and connected it to filtering and monitoring.

WHAT IS ACTUALLY NEW

AI-generated harm is treated as ordinary. It runs through the definitions, the risk categories and the training expectations, which is the change with real implications for policy, training and what we teach students.

02 What a deepfake is

Media that shows a real person doing or saying something they never did, created or altered by AI.

The person is real; the event is not. Deep nude is the term used when a photograph of a real person is altered to make them appear naked or partly naked.

Images

A real face placed onto another body, or a photograph altered so the person appears undressed. Quickest to make and easiest to share, so the form students are most likely to meet.

Video

A face and expressions mapped onto footage, with lip movement matched to speech.

Audio

A cloned voice reading anything typed into it, from a short sample of real speech. Also turns up in fraud and in impersonation of staff.

03 Why “but it isn’t a real image” misses the point

The harm is real

The distress and the loss of trust are the same as with a genuine image, and sometimes worse, because the victim cannot explain it away.

The child never took a photograph

Our usual first questions, where did it come from and did you share it, may simply not apply.

Sharing is instant

One image can reach a whole year group before a lesson ends, and it does not come back.

It can be a criminal offence

Making or sharing nude images of under-18s, including AI-generated ones, is a criminal offence.

04 If a student tells you about an image

DO

- Thank them and take it seriously
- Make clear it is not their fault
- Record what was said, in their words
- Report to the DSL straight away
- Tell them what happens next

DO NOT

- View, search for, forward or save the image, even if a pupil offers to show you
- Ask whether they took it or sent it first
- Say that it is not real, so it does not matter
- Promise to keep it to yourself
- Try to work out who made it. That is the DSL’s job

KEY TAKEAWAY

The guidance has caught up with something students already live with. Our job is not to become experts in the technology. It is to *know the risks, keep policies current, and make sure students stay safe and supported* in an AI world.

WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026**, especially Part One
gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2
- **Generative Artificial Intelligence in Education**, DfE
gov.uk/government/publications/generative-artificial-intelligence-in-education
- **Generative AI: product safety expectations**, DfE
gov.uk/government/publications/generative-ai-product-safety-expectations
- **Teens and Explicit Deepfakes in the Age of AI**, Common Sense Media, 2026
commonsensemedia.org/research/teens-and-explicit-deepfakes-in-the-age-of-ai