

Guide to engaging with the media

eSafety Toolkit for Schools

Creating safer online environments



This resource provides guidance on engaging with the media following a serious online safety incident.

There may be media interest if a serious or critical online safety incident occurs at a school. Depending on the education sector, there may be specific procedures for schools engaging with the media. In this case, contact the relevant media unit/team in your education department/sector, or your school council/board for guidance.

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Considerations for engaging the media

As part of school planning processes, consider:	Yes	Comments
Do our media guidelines (provided by the education sector or otherwise) cover responding to media interest in an online safety incident?		
Do all staff members know and understand our school's media guidelines?		
Do we have a clear process for when the media contact the school, noting that media may contact the school or members of the school community in person, by email, phone or social media – or may try to contact students through their social media?		
Do all school community members, in particular front office staff, know what to do if approached by the media?		
Do we have an authorised media spokesperson as a central point to deal with requests? Should that person have media training?		
If contacted by the media after an online safety incident, consider:	Yes	Comments
Is engaging with the media in the best interests of the student/s involved?		
Have we considered the privacy of those involved?		
Have we considered any possible future legal issue or action (e.g. defamation or privacy) if we engage with the media?		
Has our school community (e.g. staff, parents/carers, students, school council/board) been briefed?		
Have we contacted the relevant media unit/team in the education department or sector, or the school council/board for guidance?		

If engaging with the media, have you:	Yes	Comments
contacted the media unit/team in the relevant education department, sector or school board for guidance?		
decided whether to either issue a statement or give an interview?		
asked the media outlet what the key questions will be, who else is being interviewed, and what the deadline is?		
asked whether the interview is live or pre-recorded and who the reporter or interviewer will be?		
collected and collated the facts in preparation?		
prepared key messages that sum up the story, what happened and what is being done about it? Ensure messages respect the privacy of everyone involved and it is approved for release by your school leadership team, council/board or education sector, as relevant.		
given clear, precise information? If unsure, say so, find the information and get back to the journalist.		
avoided labelling, stereotypes, sensationalist language or identifying anyone who may be involved?		
ensured that all school community members are informed that an item will be published, and what it covers?		
requested a copy of the interview prior to it being published or aired?		

Remember:

Regardless of whether a school decides to engage with the media, journalists may wait outside school grounds and try to interview staff, parents/carers and students to elicit a ‘story’ from the school. School community members should be made aware of this and advised about respecting and upholding the privacy, wellbeing, reputation and rights of the school community.

The media may choose to publish a story even if the school declines to comment. The media may also publish correspondence distributed to the school. Whether the school engages or not, support should be provided for the subject of the media’s interest. If incorrect or identifying information is reported, contact the education department, sector or school council/board to discuss.