

A Practical Guide to Safer School Photography

How to celebrate school life while reducing unnecessary online risk.

Schools use photography to celebrate achievement, show learning in action and build strong relationships with families. However, advances in AI and growing concerns around children's privacy mean it is worth thinking carefully about what each image reveals before it is published.



Share the achievement, activity or atmosphere.



Not more personal information than the story requires.

Safer ways to photograph school life



Avoid: close-up, face-forward pupil photos



Use: over-the-shoulder learning shots



Use: hands-on activity photos



Use: wider shots where children are not clearly identifiable



Avoid: named or highly identifiable celebration portraits



Use: staff-led content and school environment shots



Prioritise

- Photos from behind
- Over-the-shoulder classroom shots
- Hands-on learning and practical activities
- Displays, books and pupil work
- School environments and wider scenes
- Staff-led content
- Graphics and text-based celebration posts



Avoid, where possible

- Clearly identifiable, face-forward pupil images
- Close-up portraits where they are not necessary
- Images that combine a pupil's face and name
- Public-facing content that creates unnecessary risk



Before you hit publish



Check permissions and the child's wishes



Look for names, screens, paperwork and background details



Ask whether a less identifiable image could tell the same story



The safer-school photography checklist

Use this before publishing images on websites, newsletters or social media.

Before publishing, check:



Permission

Is every pupil covered by the school's current permissions process?



Pupil voice

Has the child had an appropriate opportunity to express their wishes?



Names

Are names visible on certificates, books, badges, screens or displays?



Background

Does the image reveal medical, safeguarding, timetable or location information?



Necessity

Could the same story be told with a less identifiable image?



Longevity

Would this still feel appropriate if viewed years from now?



Caption

Does the caption reveal more than the photograph itself?



Storage

Is the original being handled, approved and deleted securely?

Good image choices

- Over-the-shoulder learning
- Hands completing activities
- Wide classroom or playground scenes
- Books, displays and pupil work
- Staff-led content
- Graphic-led celebration posts

Take extra care with

- Named certificates or trophies
- Screens, registers and paperwork
- Medical or support information
- Sports kits carrying surnames
- Captions identifying individual pupils