# Laura Bates brands surge in deep-fake porn in UK schools a public health crisis



The surge in deep-fake pornography within British schools has transformed a troubling trend into what experts are calling a 'public health crisis'. Misogyny researcher Laura Bates, who founded the Everyday Sexism Project and authored the recent book *The New Age of Sexism: How the AI Revolution is Reinventing Misogyny*, has emerged as a leading voice in highlighting the grave implications of AI technology on the lives of young women. Bates has labelled the current state of sexual violence in schools as a 'national emergency', stressing the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to combat this alarming development.

At the Hay Festival in Wales, Bates articulated her concerns in a discussion with BBC journalist Samira Ahmed, illuminating how deep-fake pornography proliferates through easily accessible, often free online platforms. These AI-driven technologies enable users to create explicit images using just a single photo – typically gathered from the social media profiles of victims. The ease of this process has alarming implications, as the virtual manipulation of images can have devastating consequences for the targeted individuals.

Bates referenced a notable case from 2023 in Almendralejo, Spain, where several girls aged 11 to 17 became victims of this disturbing trend. Their images circulated on social media, creating severe, lasting impacts on their lives. "In the years since this incident, we’ve seen a significant number of these cases cropping up across schools in the UK. It’s just that we’re not really talking about it yet,” Bates remarked, emphasising the pressing need for awareness and intervention.

As the technology continues to evolve, and with images of faces widely available on social media platforms, preventing the creation of these harmful videos becomes increasingly challenging. Bates highlights the false sense of security provided by privacy settings on social media, noting that even private accounts can be compromised by trusted classmates who could manipulate their peers’ images at will. Consequently, the responsibility for safeguarding young girls from these insidious manifestations of misogyny falls not just on schools but also on policymakers and society at large.

She argues for a public health approach to this crisis, calling for statutory guidance that would empower educational institutions to effectively combat these threats. Bates insists, "This is a crisis; it is a public health crisis and it needs a public health programme." This points to a critical gap in both legislation and educational curriculum regarding the ethical use of AI technology.

The UK government is beginning to respond to such concerns, implementing new regulations aimed at combating the creation and distribution of AI-generated child sexual abuse images. Proposed laws would criminalise not just possession of instructional materials but also target those operating websites distributing such content, with penalties extending to three years in prison.

While these initiatives mark a proactive approach, experts argue that they must be part of a broader strategy addressing the underlying societal misogyny that enables such abuse. A recent report from Internet Matters estimated that around half a million teenagers in the UK have encountered AI-generated nude deepfakes, a statistic that underscores the scale of the issue. The report advocates for urgent government action to prohibit predatory 'nudifying' apps and suggests curriculum reforms to educate young people on identifying deepfakes and engaging with AI responsibly.

As awareness grows around the implications of AI within educational contexts, more conversations are needed to address the ethical considerations of technology and the protection of youth. Bates’ alarm call signifies not just a reaction to the current crisis but also an urgent plea for a concerted effort to reshape how education systems approach both technology and interpersonal ethics. This is not merely an issue of school safety but a reflection of larger societal attitudes that must be confronted if meaningful progress is to occur.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/lifestyle/rise-deep-fake-porn-schools-35324429), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/mar/07/laura-bates-for-teenage-girls-escaping-harassment-revenge-porn-and-deepfake-porn-is-impossible)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/lifestyle/rise-deep-fake-porn-schools-35324429), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/feb/01/ai-tools-used-for-child-sexual-abuse-images-targeted-in-home-office-crackdown), [[5]](https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2024/09/ai-generated-csam-crisis/680034/?utm_source=apple_news)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/09/spain-sentences-15-school-children-over-ai-generated-naked-images), [[6]](https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/press-release/internet-matters-calls-for-government-to-take-urgent-action-as-new-report-estimates-half-a-million-uk-teenagers-have-encountered-ai-generated-nude-deepfakes/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/concerns-rise-uk-school-pupils-exploit-ai-create-indecent-imagery-fellow-students-1721840)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/lifestyle/rise-deep-fake-porn-schools-35324429> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/feb/01/ai-tools-used-for-child-sexual-abuse-images-targeted-in-home-office-crackdown> - The UK Home Office is implementing new laws to combat the creation and distribution of AI-generated child sexual abuse images. These measures include making it illegal to possess manuals that instruct on using AI tools for such purposes, with potential prison sentences of up to three years. The crackdown also targets individuals running or moderating websites that share these images or related advice. The initiative responds to a significant increase in AI-generated child sexual abuse imagery, with reports rising from 51 cases in 2023 to 245 in the following year. The government acknowledges the need to address the misuse of AI technology in this context and is taking steps to protect children from exploitation.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/09/spain-sentences-15-school-children-over-ai-generated-naked-images> - In July 2024, a court in Almendralejo, Spain, sentenced 15 schoolchildren to a year's probation for creating and distributing AI-generated images of their female peers. The case highlighted the misuse of deepfake technology among minors and sparked discussions on the harmful applications of AI in generating explicit content. The images were circulated via WhatsApp, leading to significant concern among parents and educators. This incident underscores the global challenge of addressing AI-generated explicit imagery among young people and the need for effective measures to prevent such misuse.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/mar/07/laura-bates-for-teenage-girls-escaping-harassment-revenge-porn-and-deepfake-porn-is-impossible> - Misogyny expert Laura Bates has described sexual violence in schools as a 'national emergency', particularly due to the accessibility of deepfake pornography websites. In her book, 'The New Age of Sexism: How the AI Revolution is Reinventing Misogyny', Bates discusses how AI technology enables the creation of explicit images of individuals using only a single photograph, often sourced from social media profiles. She highlights the ease with which these images can be produced and shared, posing significant risks to young girls. Bates calls for a public health programme to address this issue and urges policymakers and educators to take responsibility in tackling the problem from its roots.
5. <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2024/09/ai-generated-csam-crisis/680034/?utm_source=apple_news> - High schools are increasingly facing the creation and distribution of sexually explicit deepfake images generated by AI. A report from the Center for Democracy and Technology indicates that 15% of high school students have encountered deepfakes depicting peers in sexually explicit contexts. The ease of creating and sharing such content, combined with the prevalence of social media and encrypted messaging apps, contributes to this crisis. Efforts to combat the issue include voluntary commitments from tech companies to prevent the generation of child sexual abuse material, but challenges remain in policing and intervention. Schools are urged to enhance policies and education to protect students effectively.
6. <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/press-release/internet-matters-calls-for-government-to-take-urgent-action-as-new-report-estimates-half-a-million-uk-teenagers-have-encountered-ai-generated-nude-deepfakes/> - A report by Internet Matters estimates that approximately half a million UK teenagers have encountered AI-generated nude deepfakes. The study reveals that 13% of teenagers have experienced such content, leading to widespread concern among parents and educators. The report calls for the government to introduce new legislation to tackle the growth of generative AI fake nudes of young people, particularly girls, by banning 'nudifying' apps. It also recommends reforms to the school curriculum to include teaching children how to identify deepfakes and use AI technology responsibly. The findings highlight the urgent need for action to protect children from the harmful effects of AI-generated explicit imagery.
7. <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/concerns-rise-uk-school-pupils-exploit-ai-create-indecent-imagery-fellow-students-1721840> - Reports have emerged of children in British schools using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to create indecent imagery of their peers. The misuse of technology has raised concerns among parents, educators, and authorities, prompting a closer examination of the ethical implications surrounding AI access and its potential repercussions on child safety. The incidents involve students using readily available AI software to manipulate images of their classmates in inappropriate and explicit ways. The ease with which these tools can be accessed and utilised has raised questions about the responsibility of schools and parents in educating young individuals about the ethical use of technology.