



RAPID RESPONSE GUIDE

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For CSOs and NGOs: responding when anti-CSE materials appear in a school setting

This guide is for CSOs and NGOs that support CSE across schools and communities. Its purpose is to help you respond quickly and proportionately when anti-CSE material appears (a pamphlet at the school gate, a video, a social media post) without amplifying it or becoming the story yourselves.

It works alongside the **Claim-Buster Database** (which supplies the specific response to each claim) and the teacher and parent-meeting guides (which equip the school itself).

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Match the response to the reach and the risk, not to how alarming the material feels.

- Most anti-CSE material reaches a smaller audience than it appears to, and a loud public reaction is often what carries it further than it would have travelled on its own
- The default is to contain locally and support the school to lead.
- But silence is not always the safer choice. Where material is spreading quickly, naming individuals, or already in the public domain, not responding can let a false claim harden into accepted fact. It is not about responding or staying quiet, it is about determining what is the most strategic and locally trusted response that meets the actual reach.

STEP ONE: ASSESS

Establish the facts before deciding on any response:

What is it, and where is it

- Is this one school, or coordinated across several? A single item is a local matter; a pattern across schools signals an organised campaign and a different response.

How is it spreading?

- Is it circulating offline (pamphlets, community meetings) or online (posts, video, messaging groups)? The channel determines the response.

Who is named?

- A teacher, the school, or your organisation? If a person is named, protecting them comes first.



How far has it actually travelled?

- Before responding, estimate how far the material has actually travelled. A pamphlet seen by thirty parents does not need a press release. Deal with it at the level it exists at. Over-responding hands the material an audience it never had.

Tip: Resist the reflex to issue an immediate public rebuttal. Reacting fast and loud is not always best and can turn a minor matter into a major one.

STEP TWO: AGREE ON A COORDINATION AND RESPONSE PLAN

Before anything goes out, have a discussion and a plan, especially where more than one organisation is involved.

Who leads

- Name a single response lead so the response is owned, not improvised by whoever saw the material first.
- The **most locally trusted voice available**, the school, the PTA, or a respected local leader, should carry it publicly wherever possible, with your organisation supporting rather than fronting. An external NGO leading the response is exactly what opposition messaging predicts, and it undercuts the message that CSE is nationally owned.
- Where the school genuinely cannot lead, for example where a teacher is named, or the school itself is the target, the plan should route elsewhere, but the aim remains to keep a **local, trusted voice at the front**.

What is said

- Agree **one response** and **use it everywhere**.
- A single, consistent reply across every school, partner, and channel is one of the most important things you can achieve.
- Fragmented or contradictory replies, by contrast, make CSE look uncertain and hand the opposition an opening.
- **Lead with the shared value** behind the concern before any facts. Where you need the wording for a specific claim, refer to the [Claims-Buster Database](#) rather than drafting fresh.

How it goes out, and who is informed

- Decide the **messenger and channel**, and where practical **inform partners** before a response goes out, not after, so no one is caught unaware or contradicts it.

When to escalate

Not everything can or should be handled locally. It is helpful to think through before things escalate. It can be helpful to consider escalating (and having an escalation plan) when:

- **Anyone is threatened or intimidated:** Safety comes first. Support the affected person to report it to school leadership and, where necessary, local authorities. No one should face a threat to their safety alone.
- **It stops being a single incident:** If the same material is appearing across several schools, treat it as an organised pattern rather than isolated events, and coordinate a consistent response with your partners and allies.
- **It moves beyond your reach:** If there is significant media attention, or political involvement, don't respond ad hoc. Briefly pause and take it to senior leadership and trusted partners to decide the approach, rather than reacting alone.

Tip: Prepare before you need to. Knowing your partners, your lead, and where the resources are, ahead of time, is what makes a calm, proportionate response possible when something actually appears.

STEP THREE: NAVIGATING THE ONLINE WORLDS

Think before you share

- Ask what you are actually trying to achieve, and who has already seen it.
- Sharing, quoting, or reposting the material to debunk it almost always reaches more people than the original did, including many who would never have seen it otherwise.
- Engagement of any kind (even critical replies, screenshots reposted, "can you believe this") tells the platform the content is interesting and pushes it to more feeds.

Judge by reach, not by how you feel

- A post with a handful of views usually fades faster if left alone than if you draw a crowd to it. The louder the reaction, the longer it lives.

Respond around it, not to it

- Where a response is needed, put accurate, positive information out through your own and the school's channels rather than replying to or quoting the original post. Answer the underlying worry parents have, without repeating the claim or linking to it. This reaches the same audience without feeding the original.

Screenshot and log, don't reshare

- Capture the material for your record (Step Four) rather than resharing it, so there is a trail without adding to its spread. Note where it appeared and roughly how far it had travelled.

STEP FOUR: LOG EVERY INCIDENT.

- Keep a shared record of what circulated, where, when, through which channel, and how it was handled. This does three things: supports follow-up, lets you tell isolated items apart from an organised pattern over time, and feeds new claims and framings back into the Claim-Buster Database so the whole network stays current.

Example of incident log template:

What was circulated	When was it shared	Where was it shared (if offline)	Through which online channels (if online)	Action taken/how it was handled.

A note on safeguarding

If any material, conversation, or response surfaces a child-protection concern (abuse, coercion, or violence) it stops being a communications matter. It must go through the school's child-protection procedure or the relevant national authorities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

(click on the image to access)

