

Online porn drove boy of 12 to rape girl, 9: He wanted to 'feel grown up' after viewing explicit images

- Schoolboy was copying acts he had watched online, court hears
- His lawyer warned that the case was just the 'tip of the iceberg', with many others going unreported
- Daily Mail has led a campaign calling for a default block on online porn which web users can opt out of

A boy of 12 who raped a nine-year-old girl after watching hard-core pornography online was spared jail yesterday as his lawyer warned of a generation of children growing up with a 'skewed view' on sex. The schoolboy, who is now 14, told police he had raped the little girl because he wanted to 'feel grown up' after watching porn online.

In a disturbing case that has raised fresh concerns about the sexualisation of children, the teenager had unrestricted access to the web and was able to freely look at sexually explicit material.



Attack: The boy, now aged 14, had unrestricted access to the internet and had watched the sex acts online (picture posed by model)

He then 'emulated' the graphic footage and attacked a neighbour's daughter, the High Court in Edinburgh heard.

Yesterday his lawyer warned the case was just the 'tip of the iceberg' and many other cases were going

unreported.

The Daily Mail has campaigned for an automatic block on online porn, calling for a consultation on the introduction of content filtering systems for internet accounts.

Sean Templeton, defending the boy, said: 'There is a real risk that young people are growing up with a skewed view of what sex is and sexual activity.

'This was an emulation of an adult act witnessed by him at this young age. He was afforded unfettered access to the internet and it has become apparent from a very young age, the age of 12, he was accessing hard-core pornography.'



Decision: Lady Smith opted not to jail the boy and sent him to a children's panel where he can be kept under continuing supervision

Mr Templeton said it was a great concern that children may be getting their sex education through internet pornography.

He warned: 'This is the tip of the iceberg. Many, many cases throughout the country may not be identified, not reported, not coming to anyone's attention.'

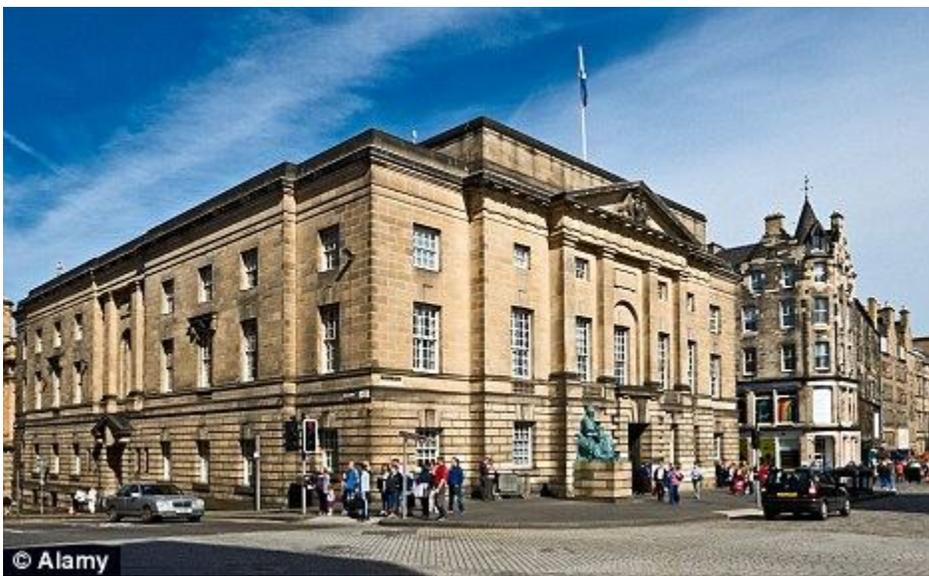
The shocking case, on the Isle of Skye in Scotland, only came to light when the young victim felt ill and told her mother she feared there was 'a baby in my tummy'.

Asked if something had happened to her, she became hysterical before revealing what the boy had done. Police discovered the girl had been sexually assaulted a number of times in a shed in the garden of her home between December 1, 2010 and January 31 2011.

The boy, who lived next door, also abused the girl in his bedroom in front of a 12-year-old friend.

When he was interviewed by police the boy pointed out the sites he had viewed and when asked why he had copied them, he answered 'temptation' and 'to feel grown up'.

He was later placed in a secure unit hundreds of miles away. Earlier this month the teenager stood shaking in the dock as he pleaded guilty to one charge of rape and two of sexual assault.



Sentencing: The boy, 12, was spared a jail term when he appeared before Edinburgh's High Court

The extraordinary case was heard in a closed courtroom with only relatives of the children and care workers present.

Judge Lady Smith said he should be given advice on handling relationships and sexual development rather than face jail. She handed him a four year supervision order to be carried out under the Children's Panel, which means he will be closely supervised by social workers until the age of 18.

She told the boy he was being given an opportunity to 'make something of yourself'.

Judge Lady Smith went on: 'You should not and must not regard pornography as any guide at all as to how to behave sexually. You should not have engaged in sexual activity of any sort with a nine-year-old girl or indeed any other young girl who, under our law, is not able to consent to it.'

The Daily Mail has led a campaign calling for greater curbs on access to online pornography.

The Government is to consider introducing web filters to make adults 'opt in' if they wish to view pornography on their computers.



David Cameron will consult on whether to introduce automatic filters – or a less stringent system where users would have to make an 'active choice' on whether to view explicit sites when they sign up with an internet service provider.

Last night Anne Houston, chief executive of the Children 1st charity, said the case illustrated the importance of the Mail's campaign.

She said: 'It's everyone's responsibility to protect children and young people from the potential risks. 'Internet providers play a huge role in supporting families to achieve this and we would support recent calls for them to block inappropriate websites unless an adult has legally opted in to view content.

'Although the internet puts lots of possibilities at children and young people's fingertips and provides

access to many positive activities and opportunities, children, young people and their families must be aware that even if it feels like a virtual world, the internet has real-life consequences.'