

SEXUAL HARASSMENT INFORMATION

Sexual Harassment and Abuse – the school's response

Following the Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, the school has taken the following action:

- Provided safeguarding training for all staff on these issues and the implications for schools
- Ensured that these issues are covered as part of education ie through the PSHE and Relationships, Sex and Health Education content
- Identifying the issues and why this needs change through assemblies and other work; this will include what this means for both school and society in terms of what is, and what is not, acceptable
- Ensuring staff know to challenge any breach of expectations
- Responding to any breach appropriately.

What else needs to be done?

We need to change the culture so that children will report incidents, whether these happen at school, travelling home, at parties or online. This means making sure our students know what is acceptable and what is not, and that we want to know when things aren't right.

What will the school do if a matter is reported?

This depends very much on what the incident is. The response to a sexual insult will be different to an incident of reported sexual assault. Some matters are so serious that police and social services must be involved. Others may be approached through explanation and education and a warning of what will happen if any repeat.

Will every incident face a serious sanction or exclusion?

No. Some will. Those that are most serious or where there are ongoing issues despite advice, guidance and warning will lead to serious sanctions including exclusion and that has always been the case.

How will the school judge when an individual discussion and warning is enough?

The school will take into account the following:

- The nature of the incident and the level of concern that it implies – serious incidents such as assaults would never fall into this category
- The impact on the individual or group as a result of the harassment ie their views on the incident
- Whether this is the first reported incident for the perpetrator and whether there is reason to believe that a discussion and warning should mean there is no repeat
- Whether the individual has had earlier input and explanation through the curriculum or other source

Why would we take this approach for some incidents?

Children make mistakes or don't always realise the implications of their behaviour. Talking this through and explaining on this individual basis and the context of the incident is important if we want children to learn. Where this achieves the desired outcome ie an understanding and reassurance that the lesson has been learnt, then a sanction would only be given when judged necessary to reinforce the seriousness of the incident, taking into account the factors above.

We also know that children reporting lower-level matters or one-off incidents want the matter to stop, and those involved to be corrected, but often don't favour what they see as excessive school reaction. Instead, they prefer that the perpetrator is educated rather than punished. We need to take this into account to encourage children to report matters so that we can resolve them.

Is it a problem in the school?

We have to assume that this is so widespread across the country that we must have children with similar experiences and concerns within the school. This means continuing to drive a positive and open safeguarding culture so that children know they can report these concerns and get the support they need.

Is it a problem outside school?

Yes. It is very likely that many of our students are subject to common experiences that could include: sexist name-calling, comments on another's body, unwanted touching whilst travelling or at parties, harmful behaviours in relationships, and/or online abuse including the publishing of videos or pictures.

Ofsted summarises the wider nature of this problem:

Schools and colleges cannot tackle sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online, on their own, and neither should they. For example, the prevalence of children and young people seeing explicit material they do not want to see and being pressured to send 'nudes' is a much wider problem than schools can address. While they can play their part, it is not only their responsibility to solve it. The government will need to tackle this issue through the Online Safety Bill, and other interventions.

What sort of things did the Ofsted review pick up as commonly experienced?

You can read the full report by going onto the tab 'Statutory' on the school website but commonly reported matters included:

Verbal comments or comments made on social media:

- Sexist name-calling
- Unwanted or inappropriate sexual comments
- Rumours about sexual activity

Physical contact:

- Unwanted touching eg in school, on the bus, walking home, at parties
- Sexual assault

Being pressured:

- Feeling pressured to do sexual things they did not want to do
- Being put under pressure to send sexual images of themselves

Social media incidents:

- Being sent unwanted sexual pictures
- Having pictures or nudes that they send being shared more widely without their knowledge or consent
- Being photographed or videoed without their knowledge or consent
- Having pictures or videos taken without their consent circulated on social media

What parents/carers can do?

We ask parents/carers to be aware of these issues and encourage your children to talk to you about any worries. We would also encourage them to report to us these concerns too.

Children can talk to any trusted member of staff. There are the Tutors and the Year Team, as well as our safeguarding team that may be a first port of call but all staff will report on, and take seriously, any safeguarding concerns and that includes sexual harassment or abuse.

Helpful links:

If you are concerned that your child may have experienced harmful sexual behaviour, or has acted in a way towards another young person that could be sexually harmful, you may find the following links helpful:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sex-relationships/sexual-behaviour-children/>

<https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/concerned-about-a-child-or-young-persons-sexual-behaviour/preventing-harmful-sexual-behaviour/>