

SAFEGUARDING UPDATE



St Cuthbert's
ROMAN CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

APRIL 2022

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Last year OFSTED completed its own investigation into sexual harassment in schools and colleges - a large scale review of safeguarding in respect of this one issue.

After speaking to over 900 pupils, it became clear to OFSTED that there is a significant issue with sexual harassment in education and the associated gender violence consequences.



Here is the link to OFSTED's report:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>

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New contact

The new co-ordinator for Hull Safer Schools Partnership & linked PCSOs for every school and college is:

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WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sexual harassment in general is any unwanted sexual attention online and offline that can cause physical, emotional/mental, psychological or economic harm to the victim.



CAN THIS HAPPEN IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL?

Research suggests that more than a third of sexual abuse reported by any age children is perpetrated by their peers (Peer on Peer Sexual Abuse) - with girls being the victim in the majority of cases. Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any sex.

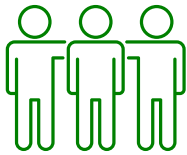
It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. It is important that we teach all children (boys and girls), of all ages, what is acceptable interaction and what is not, and then what they must do if any unwanted sexual attention happens to them.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO TEACH CHILDREN APPROPRIATE INTERACTION?

Boys and girls mix in every social environment, at every age and many children will never experience sexism, harassment or abuse based on gender.

To ensure that our youngest children know how to keep themselves safe we must encourage an open honesty about their experiences so that they know it is always safe to disclose to a trusted adult.

Parents and staff should make sure they model the best ways of showing respect between the genders and challenge any attempt by family members, friends, other parents, and organisations to undermine that work.



HOW TO PREVENT AND PROTECT FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN SCHOOL

Much of OFSTED's data comes from Secondary School settings but as a Primary School, we must be very proactive in creating an environment that teaches boys and girls how to behave respectfully towards each other, and how to respect personal/physical boundaries set.

We must make sure all our young people (boys and girls) are prepared for the wider world of secondary school and employment.

We should not frighten children but should develop age-appropriate awareness and understanding of the dignity of the person and how to respect self, thereby giving skills to respect others.

If children understand their own bodies, the terminology to use, why other words are not appropriate, they will speak more knowledgeably and respectfully to each other.

WHAT IS NOT OK AT OUR SCHOOL?

- Gender based stereotyping which can lead boys often to believe themselves superior, stronger, more able, more important than girls (even factoring in biological differences - guess what girls can play football and boys can cook, both are genderless activities)
- Banter or inappropriate jokes that normalise a diminished role for girls and women or take away their power, independence and respect (it's only funny if everyone is happy with the joke and that joke does not demean)
- Name calling that is gender or sexual orientation derogatory. Use of the term "Comments on appearance that draw attention to size, body parts, attractiveness"
- Sexual comments, obscene gestures, using obscenities (most swear words are sexual in their origin)
- Upskirting (covert photos under clothing), sharing photos, drawing inappropriate images, sexting
- Pulling or removing clothes to reveal the child's body Deliberately touching any part of each other's body without consent - this includes touching another child's genitals (this does not include developmental exploring of their body)
- Crowding and intimidating to isolate children in a way that makes them uncomfortable
- Coercion/threats to make a child do something they are not comfortable with
- Using "gay" as an insult. Linked to this is "Victim blaming"

Legally...

Sexual harassment is illegal and whoever commits these acts can be prosecuted. If a child is over the age of 10 (the age of accountability) then they will be held responsible under the law, possibly leaving that young person with a permanent criminal record. Laws in place to protect victims include: The Sexual Offences Act, The Misuse of Telecommunications Act, The Malicious Communications Act, The Equality Act. Any form of sexual, emotional, physical or malicious assault could lead to criminal proceedings.

The Law about CONSENT

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are likely to be complex and require difficult professional decisions to be made, often quickly and under pressure. Some situations are clear:

A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any form of sexual activity

The age of consent in the UK is 16

Prevention

We need to address the culture of sexual harassment and teach our children about healthy relationships, respectful behaviour, gender roles, stereotyping and equality, body confidence and self-esteem, prejudiced behaviour. It is important that they know that sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong and will not be tolerated. Finally, our children must know who to tell and why, so that they can be protected from harm.

