

Provision and leadership, including examples of strong and effective practice

The culture of safeguarding in schools

In many schools, leaders and pastoral staff promote and maintain a strong culture of safeguarding and wellbeing. In these schools staff feel well supported and are confident that the systems in place help safeguard all members of the school community. In the majority of cases, the school's mission statement strongly emphasises the central importance of values such as respect and kindness. Policies, procedures and guidance for staff and pupils link clearly to aims and objectives, which ensure that wellbeing is at the forefront of the school's work. In nearly all schools, staff receive regular safeguarding training and safe recruitment procedures are sound.

Overall, a culture of respect is also a common feature in schools of religious character. In one faith school, there is a particularly strong focus on personal dignity and respect for one another which is always underpinned by Catholic catechisms. In meetings with inspectors in one independent faith school, nearly all staff indicated that they share the school's values of being a caring, respectful Christian community which describes itself as a family. In a very few cases, faith schools do not give a balanced response when pupils discuss their sexuality. For example, they do not provide LGBTQ+ pupils with appropriate support and understanding when they question or declare their sexuality.

All schools have a safeguarding policy in place, and, in nearly all cases, schools fulfil the statutory requirement to complete an annual review and update of the policy. Overall, policies are appropriate and serve as clear, comprehensive guidance to school staff on how to recognise and respond to abuse, bullying and harassment. In the best safeguarding policies, there is reference to a wide range of types of bullying and harassment, including substantial detail about peer-on-peer sexual harassment. There is reference to the nine protected characteristics and a clear commitment to supporting equality and diversity. In these safeguarding policies, there is also a valuable section on how the school and its staff should work proactively to ensure that all their pupils are safe from harm. In a very few schools, the safeguarding policy is inadequate and unfit for purpose.

In many schools, there is a strong team approach to safeguarding. Leaders prioritise wellbeing and ensure that there are enough pastoral and support staff employed to discharge their safeguarding duties. They provide suitable guidance and training to ensure that staff at all levels understand their responsibilities in safeguarding children. In all the cases shared with inspectors, schools had dealt well with issues, making appropriate referrals to involve external agencies such as children's services or the police. There was evidence also of schools providing suitable interventions to help perpetrators realise the seriousness of their actions and implementing beneficial support for victims.

Strategic team approach to safeguarding

In the summer term 2021, one senior leadership team made a strategic decision in response to the issues raised through the Everyone's Invited website. This led to the appointment of a non-teaching 'Corporate Wellbeing Lead' and five 'PSE Champions'. Together, they have created a new relationships and sexuality policy and have planned a series of whole-school training events throughout the 2021-2022 academic year.

In nearly all the schools we visited, staff know what to do if they have any concern about a pupil and talk confidently about their ability to identify signs of abuse. They have a clear and accurate understanding of what constitutes significant harm in terms of safeguarding children. Staff tell us that they understand how harmful sexual behaviour is also considered a safeguarding issue and that they would report concerns about this in the same way. However, in many schools, teachers and to a lesser degree senior leaders and support staff are not fully aware of the full prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in their school as reported to us by their pupils and therefore are not aware that it is a substantial problem. This is because, although prevalent in school life and outside of school, pupils do not systematically report peer-on-peer sexual harassment to school staff.

Schools have a statutory requirement to have a named designated safeguarding person (DSP) to oversee safeguarding and child protection. Across most schools we visited, the quality of the work of the DSP in responding to safeguarding concerns is a strength. They often are experienced leaders who fulfil their responsibilities well. They are usually well trained, often by relevant external

statutory agencies and are very knowledgeable about the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures \(2020\)](#). They usually receive beneficial support from a suitably trained deputy DSP and a team of trained pastoral or wellbeing leaders and support staff. In many schools, there is a strong team approach to dealing with safeguarding matters and this means that pupils and staff have a secure understanding of whom they can turn to for support.

Whilst it is evident that DSPs across most schools provide strong, reactive support to safeguarding concerns, they rarely fulfil a proactive role. In the majority of schools, the DSP has other roles including teaching commitments, which make it impossible for them to do more than respond to concerns when they arise. The time allocation to fulfil the role of DSP is dependent on the school's financial and human resources.

In a few schools, leaders have implemented well-considered processes to gather information directly from pupils and respond to any emerging trends or pupils' wishes to discuss particular topics. For example, in one school there are discrete boxes for pupils to share any wellbeing concerns placed near water coolers. In another school, there is a 'PSE Suggestion Box' placed in every classroom for pupils to offer ideas on themes for discussion or for assemblies.

A few schools have trained older pupils as mentors to support pupils and act as a 'go-between' if they have particular worries and do not feel ready to speak to staff. Pupil mentors are available to pupils in designated areas such as the school library or canteen during breaks. One school organises regular 'Rainbow Days' where LGBTQ+ staff and pupils organise presentations in virtual assemblies during form time which are followed by class discussions on diversity issues. Another school has a 'Rainbow Group', which is a sub-committee of the School Council, focusing on inclusion and diversity matters. A LGBTQ+ club in one school acts as a reference group, advising staff on diversity issues and providing guidance on the correct use of terms.

One Church in Wales school works to ensure that the whole school community, including feeder primary schools, understands their values and ethos that diversity is normal, welcome and to be celebrated.

A culture of respect

One school actively promotes its strong culture of respect through its transition work with Year 5 and Year 6 pupils in its feeder schools. The school links Bible and Gospel values, especially the importance of how you treat others into its transition activities. In addition, the school promotes respect through daily form prayers, collective worship and special presentations. A Christian ethos permeates all of the school's PSE work and there is a strong sense of value in diversity. LGBTQ+ pupils in the sixth form have had beneficial training from Hafan Cymru's Spectrum Team and organise informative and supportive assemblies for every year group. The Spectrum project is fully funded by the Welsh Government to deliver sessions on healthy relationships and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) to primary and secondary schools.

Since the publication of the testimonies on the Everyone's Invited website, a few schools have reviewed their policies and procedures for safeguarding. One school changed the name of its 'Behaviour Policy' to a 'Relationships Policy' and made suitable adaptations to highlight acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and attitudes. One school conducted a safeguarding audit with the support of a local authority officer to look for evidence of proactive work around peer-on-peer sexual harassment. This process helped the school identify strengths and key areas for further development. A few of the schools named in Everyone's Invited have initiated their own pupil questionnaire and are now working with external partners and experts to plan changes to their provision.

A swift response to emerging issues

In response to Everyone's Invited and Sarah Everard's murder, one school worked swiftly to plan consultation activities with pupils across the whole age range. They worked with external partners to create pupil questionnaires and to organise focussed discussion groups. Leaders are now planning support and suitable lessons in response to emerging and underlying issues that have come to light following consultation with their pupils.

In most schools, there are effective systems and processes for staff to record concerns and actions. Many schools use a commercial online management

information system to record incidents, concerns or referrals to external statutory agencies. Generally, staff use such systems regularly and well, and leaders respond swiftly and suitably to new information about individual incidents. There is variation in the nature of concerns that are logged by staff on these systems. A few schools use the digital system to record every behaviour incident or when pupils display negative attitudes towards their work. This is usually because support and wellbeing staff have access to the system and are expected to respond to teacher concerns. In other schools, the information management system is used purely for safeguarding and wellbeing concerns.

Overall, schools also use digital and online systems well to log incidences of bullying and harassment but do not consistently do so against the relevant protected characteristic(s). Records of bullying incidents recorded by schools generally outline the nature of the incident and conversations between the victims, perpetrators, school staff and parents. They usually provide a narrative of how these issues have developed and were resolved. However, too often, records do not include the outcomes or success of actions taken. These factors prevent schools from having an accurate picture of the impact of their work or the extent of bullying and harassment that relates to different categories, such as sexual harassment.

While it is possible to use digital and online management information systems for analysis purposes, such as to identify trends in behaviour, only a few schools do this. In these schools, leaders identify patterns in the behaviour and attitudes of individuals or groups of pupils and make effective use of this information to plan interventions or staff training.

Care, support and guidance

One of the main challenges associated with peer-on-peer sexual harassment is that young people do not tell teachers or school leaders about it when it happens. There is significant polarisation between what pupils say about the prevalence of sexual harassment and what teachers believe is the case.

In many schools, teachers have less awareness of the prevalence of incidences of peer-on-peer harassment than support staff. In interviews with teachers in these schools, none could recall a specific case, stating that they thought peer-on-peer harassment was not a major issue in their school. When speaking with support

assistants and non-teaching wellbeing staff from these same schools, they often had a slightly different account. In many cases, they were able to describe at least one incident of sexual harassment that they had dealt with themselves or had been involved in supporting pupils.

Nearly all senior leaders described one or two incidences that they had experienced in recent times. These tended to be linked to pupils sharing nude images and where pupils' parents or somebody from outside the school had alerted them to the incident.

Intervention for perpetrators of peer sexual harassment

One school works with external agencies to support pupils who have been involved in incidents of sexual harassment towards peers. The school has forged a relationship with the Rape and Sexual Assault Support Centre (RASASC). In one case, RASASC support workers came into the school to work with groups of key stage 4 pupils who had been involved in inappropriate sexualised behaviours. Further to this work, RASASC counsellors continued to work with a few individuals who required more intense guidance and support.

Another school has involved a team of external agencies to support both victims and perpetrators of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. Leaders in this school found the Welsh Government guidance on sharing nudes to be particularly helpful in establishing a planned team response. Colleagues from the local authority children's services, the Barnardo's 'Taith' harmful sexual behaviour service and the police worked with pupils.

Many schools have implemented a restorative approach to behavioural problems, bullying and harassment displayed by pupils. Often, external partners such as youth workers, school police officers and the local police community support officer (PCSO) support schools through restorative justice sessions and are involved in individual behaviour plans for perpetrators. Schools value the support they receive from these professionals and say they would benefit from having more such resource if this were possible. In a few schools, ex-police officers with vast experience in working with children and young people are employed to

support the wellbeing team.

Comprehensive work with external partners

In one school, staff have a holistic approach towards supporting their pupils' individual needs. This school works with a wide range of external agencies to remove any barriers to learning and wellbeing. As a result, there is comprehensive support for learners. The extended pastoral team includes:

- school pastoral staff – a team of 'pastoral guidance workers', pupil support officers, the transition co-ordinator and the attendance officer
- a specialist centre for emotional, behaviour and wellbeing support
- an extensive team of outside agencies – the school counsellor, youth service mentors, community hub staff (situated within the school building), support staff from the local authority education and engagement team, children's services support staff and the police community support officers

While teachers did not describe many incidents of peer-on-peer sexual harassment, they did speak at length about the impact of the pandemic and school closures on young people's attitudes, confidence and general mental health. Many feel that pupils are quieter, more introverted and less likely to come to speak with them than before the first lockdown period.

Generally, staff express concern about the normalisation of sexualised language and behaviours among children and young people in society, and the impact this is likely to have on their pupils' mental health and wellbeing. Nearly all agree that sexual harassment, homophobic and misogynistic attitudes are societal problems that are transferred to children and young people, often by parents and other influences. The new curriculum encourages schools to incorporate learning related to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Many schools educate children about the harmful effects of prejudice and the importance of diversity, but teachers feel that this should also be done at home. When asked about support needed to deal with issues around peer-on-peer sexual harassment, teachers voiced strongly the need for collaboration and co-operation with parents. They are clear that the monitoring of children's use of social media and

chat facilities is the responsibility of parents and carers. In most cases, school staff deal with incidences that have happened online in the evenings and during weekends, but which spill over into the school day. School leaders attribute the increasing prevalence of image-based sexual harassment to the use of social media platforms. Here it becomes more difficult to trace the origin of the sender. While schools understand the importance of referring serious concerns and individual cases to statutory agencies, they are often left to resolve everyday social media issues between peers themselves and on a daily basis. Nearly all school staff agree that it is important for parents to be aware, take responsibility and understand the scale of the problems. Nonetheless, they all also demonstrate a high degree of commitment to addressing peer-on-peer sexual harassment when they are made aware of it.

Following the publication of testimonies on the Everyone's Invited website, a few schools have made well-considered improvements to their provision for pupil support. They have implemented creative ways of gathering pupil views and introduced more opportunities for pupils to have general wellbeing conversations with staff.

The trusted adult

One school has implemented a 'Trusted Adult Scheme'. All pupils in the school choose their trusted adult from a member of the school staff. They can be teacher or a learning support assistant. The trusted adult has a role to support the learner's wellbeing and respond to any requests to talk or discuss any worries they may have. Learners recognise the value and importance of this scheme.

There is an emerging change in the provision for wellbeing support across secondary schools. An increasing number of schools now employ non-teaching staff as heads of year or as pastoral leads. In a few cases, these are well-trained, experienced family support workers, or from a social or youth work background. As they do not have a teaching commitment, they are able to respond to pupils' needs, communicate with families and attend external multi agency meetings during the school day without disrupting learning. In meetings with headteachers, many described how they would benefit from being able to employ more staff with experience of working with specialist agencies to respond to the increasing

amount of social and wellbeing issues that young people bring to school.

It is often the case that wellbeing support staff and pastoral leads have received purposeful training on peer issues, such as sexual harassment, but professional learning opportunities in this area for other teachers are less common. All teachers complete statutory safeguarding and Prevent training and a minority of teachers have now completed statutory VAWDASV training. However, in many schools, it is usually only support staff and the designated safeguarding leads that access specialist training directly. Whilst a few schools allocate time for trained staff to share their learning with teachers, this is not always the case. Schools who put the wellbeing of staff and pupils at the core of their work ensure that all their staff are trained in important issues that impact on pupils' wellbeing.

Extensive training to support staff when dealing with sexual harassment

In one school, all the staff feel they are well supported to deal with incidents of sexual harassment. Leaders have provided training to all staff on LGBTQ+ matters and on sending and sharing nudes and have used external provision to support staff in holding informal discussions with pupils about healthy relationships. The annual safeguarding training for all staff includes sessions on domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation. In addition, the school has organised professional learning to all staff on the issue of consent. Teachers have used this learning to provide sessions for older pupils on how to stay safe when attending festivals.

Staff say that they have a strong understanding of the range of harmful sexual behaviours due to whole school training from an external agency on how to use an established assessment tool to identify the level of appropriateness or otherwise of sexual behaviour. They feel confident in using the school's protocol for dealing with a range of bullying and harassment and report that leaders respond well to any concerns they share.

Many support staff and teachers say that professional learning on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) has been particularly useful to them when dealing with issues associated with harmful sexual behaviours. Many local authorities

have provided education staff with beneficial professional learning in this area and ensured that schools are 'trauma-informed'. During the lockdown periods, many school staff accessed trauma-informed schools training either through their local education psychology service or through the regional consortia. The majority of school pastoral staff described how they use the useful skills they have acquired through this particular professional learning experience to deal with incidences of inappropriate sexual behaviour, for example when working with pupils with additional learning needs.

Interventions for pupils with additional learning needs

In one school, additional learning needs (ALN) staff were required to respond to a situation where a pupil with ALN started to display inappropriate sexual behaviour toward peers. The situation involved complaints by ALN pupils about another ALN pupils' inappropriate sexual comments and actions.

The ALN team used training they had received from an external agency on assessing pupils' sexual behaviour to adapt pupils' risk assessments. Staff also held sessions with the pupils individually and in small groups to respond to the situation. These sessions included a range of interventions, dependent on the pupils' needs, cognitive and verbal ability:

- use of sand tray therapy - a non-verbal method of therapy, which allows children to construct scenarios and solutions using miniature toys and sand
- individual sessions with pupils using trauma informed strategies to acknowledge pupils' thoughts, emotions and actions and share their anxieties
- use of picture 'emotion' cards to help pupils identify how they are feeling and to enable pupils with communication difficulties to share their anxieties
- [ELSA](#) sessions around safe space and other social skills
- Some pupil-friendly training on Autistic Spectrum Disorder for the rest of the class

It is clear from our work with pupils that they welcome any opportunity to talk in general about social issues and, in this case, peer-on-peer sexual harassment. Pupils were keen to engage with inspectors and valued the experience. Pupils (especially older pupils) say that they want schools to create opportunities to talk about relationships and sexuality in a safe, enabling environment. Pupils say that they don't currently talk much to their teachers about sexual harassment but feel that schools need to know how it impacts their wellbeing so that they can help them.

Safe spaces to talk

In one independent school, the curriculum provision for relationships and sexuality education is supplemented by 'Time to Chat' opportunities in the boarding houses. The pastoral team ensures that all boarders have structured, individual opportunities to discuss what they have covered in PSE lessons with boarding staff on a weekly basis. It also ensures that there are plenty of ad hoc discussions around general personal, social or educational matters of concern with boarding staff. Teaching and senior staff in this school feel that this is a strength of the boarding model in that it provides further opportunities for pupils to talk after school.

The curriculum

Time allocated for PSE

There is a variation in the time allocated for PSE across schools. However, overall, the average time for pupils in key stage 3 is one lesson per week. In a small minority of schools, pupils receive one lesson per fortnight. In a few schools, there are no timetabled PSE lessons at all. In these schools, topics are either featured in termly 'PSE days' or 'drop down days' where the normal timetable is suspended and replaced with presentations or workshops or are 'covered' during morning registration periods. In most schools, there is no designated time for discrete PSE lessons for pupils in key stages 4 and 5. This is because of the time pressures within the current curriculum. A few schools provide these pupils with a few sessions during Welsh Baccalaureate lessons and many use assemblies or planned 'skills' or 'wellbeing' days to deliver specific presentations on key

themes.

An increasing number of schools now deliver specific programmes that lead to external qualifications related to PSE themes. For example, a few schools deliver a BTEC level 1 and 2 programme on 'Personal Growth and Wellbeing'. This programme includes a few aspects of RSE such as sexual health and wellbeing. This is a course primarily designed for lower ability pupils and those displaying signs of disaffection with learning, often offered in lieu of an academic subject. A few schools are delivering it across the ability range in Year 11. The course is not designed for such delivery.

In around half of schools, leaders have developed the 'Health and Wellbeing' AOLE and adapted provision for either Year 7 or Year 8. Again, there is variation in the time allocated for health and wellbeing, ranging from two to eight lessons per week. The average allocation is around four lessons per week. Normally, health and wellbeing lessons incorporate physical education, food and nutrition and PSE lessons.

Increased curriculum time for health and wellbeing

One school has increased classroom-based health and wellbeing lessons for pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 from one lesson per week to three lessons. These sessions include age-appropriate coverage of healthy relationships and sexual behaviours as well as sessions on healthy living and positive mental health. Year 8 pupils find these sessions very useful and appreciate the opportunity to learn more and discuss these important issues.

Teacher experience

Schools who are now delivering health and wellbeing sessions rather than discrete PSE are beginning to use specific teachers to deliver lessons. These are typically physical education, food technology and drama teachers in the main although a very few schools have employed a dedicated teacher of health and wellbeing.

Middle leaders delivering PSE lessons

In one school, health and wellbeing sessions are delivered primarily by a dedicated and well-trained team. Nearly all are heads of year. In focus group sessions in this school, all pupils commented on how well these lessons are delivered. This arrangement allows heads of year to provide bespoke lessons on emerging matters which they identify through their pastoral work.

In many schools over time, teachers who have been delivering PSE are selected as they have space on their timetable. There are problems associated with this as there is variation in teachers' interest, skills and enthusiasm in delivering lessons on topics which are sometimes sensitive, difficult or unfamiliar. School leaders recognise that a few teachers are less comfortable than others in talking about particular issues and that most are not experts in dealing with difficult topics. Pupils in a minority of schools talk negatively about the level of expertise and interest of teachers who deliver PSE lessons. Generally, local authorities and regional consortia offer fewer professional learning opportunities and specific training for teaching PSE in recent years by compared to around five years ago.

Topics, themes and cumulative learning

The pandemic and periods of remote learning have impacted disproportionately on the availability and quality of PSE provision. Schools concede that there has been little direct teaching of PSE-related topics during the lockdown periods. Whilst the PSE curriculum in many schools is relevant and well-considered, the provision for RSE varies greatly.

In a minority of cases, within the PSE provision, leaders have carefully selected RSE topics to include age-appropriate activities which build on previous learning across key stage 3 and, in a few examples, across further key stages. These schools ensure that RSE is being delivered cumulatively or as a 'spiral curriculum' where there is an iterative revisiting of topics or subjects throughout a period of a child's education. This does not simply mean the repetition of a topic but rather a deepening of it or a building of knowledge from the previous learning. However, in too many schools, there is not enough consideration of the breadth and depth with which topics are covered as pupils progress through the school. In a few of these schools, pupils report that topics are often repeated at the same level of

depth. They cite lessons on drugs and alcohol as a typical example of this. This issue can lead to pupil disengagement with the sessions.

A well-planned spiral curriculum

One school provides a planned PSE curriculum that builds on pupils' previous learning across key stage 3 and supplements this learning with a calendar of activities for pupils in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. The school believes that this ensures that pupils' knowledge and understanding of important matters increases and deepens as they move up the school.

This planned personal and social education programme includes a range of age-appropriate healthy relationships topics at every stage, intended to support pupils' wellbeing and develop important personal and social skills.

In a few schools, leaders consult with pupils to identify the topics or themes they would like to cover in PSE sessions or in assemblies. One school adapts its PSE provision for the sixth form every year based on what pupils want to learn. Pupils in this school spoke at length about the relevance of their lessons and how they value opportunities to unpick issues that were important to them. In general, the key stage 4 pupils we spoke to have poor recall of learning experiences in PSE but nearly all spoke of useful presentations or lessons by the school police officer. They particularly remember lessons on online safety and the 'Risky Pics' lesson concerning sexting.

A whole-school approach to planning the PSE curriculum

Middle and senior leaders have worked with the student council and other pupil voice groups to review and improve PSE schemes of learning to include topics that pupils feel need better coverage. Leaders also use the School Health Research Network data to identify any specific concerns that need to be addressed through the PSE programme.

Leaders have listened to pupils and now use the same group of staff to deliver lessons. All teachers who deliver PSE are involved in planning and resourcing the provision and meet as a team to regularly review and develop their lessons. The PSE scheme of learning covers healthy relationships and issues around harmful sexual behaviours in an age-appropriate manner.

Faith schools

There is also inconsistency in the coverage of RSE across faith schools in Wales. The majority of faith schools provide comprehensive coverage of sexuality, health and relationships education with a balanced inclusion of heterosexual and homosexual sex education and information on contraception.

Faith school working in partnership

One faith school works with outside agencies such as the NSPCC to deliver lessons relating to harmful sexual behaviours and consent. The school recently invited transgender women to share their experiences with pupils. RSE is delivered in every year group. There is a graduated, thematic approach to lessons. This includes general healthy relationships in Year 7 and Year 8, thinking about sex in Year 9 and discussing consent in key stage 4 and sexual abuse in the sixth form. Overall, the PSE programme has a focus on RSE and, at every stage of learning, ensures that same sex relationships are covered as much as heterosexual relationships.

The proposed RSE curriculum and the draft statutory RSE guidance raise a conflict for a few faith schools, in particular Catholic schools. A very few Catholic schools have worked well to adapt their dedicated learning programmes to include lessons on sex, sexuality and healthy relationships in a manner that embraces diversity.

A blended approach in the delivery of RSE in a Catholic school

One school is working on creating a blended but holistic approach to

relationships and sexuality education to incorporate Catholic values into the health and wellbeing AOLE. Although the school uses a Catholic specific PSE programme, it supplements this with lessons and presentations around the importance of individuality and healthy relationships. This is helping the school to develop an open culture where pupils can discuss issues safely with staff.

A few Catholic schools use established learning programmes for PSE where the faith's values and beliefs are central to the curriculum. Although these programmes include relevant and important topics, the Catholic faith and beliefs dominate the teaching of a few topics such as safe sex and contraception. This may conflict with the school's desire to be inclusive at times and may result in considerable challenge for governors and the diocese when leaders propose any policy changes. As such, a few schools do not currently cover same sex issues in their curricula, nor is the support for LGBTQ+ pupils as strong as that seen in other schools.

Assemblies and presentations

In a few schools, PSE does not have a prominent enough place in the curriculum and the only provision for PSE is through assemblies or form time. However, nearly all schools ensure that values led assemblies take place regularly, with coverage of a range of appropriate themes. Many schools have had to cease holding physical whole-school or year assemblies since the start of the pandemic due to social distancing limitations. Despite this, they have still managed to produce and broadcast high quality assemblies digitally during this time.

Under usual circumstances, many schools have a comprehensive programme of planned assemblies, which cover national celebrations and a broad range of PSE topics such as respect, good behaviour and positive attitudes. In the majority of schools, assemblies often cover equality and diversity, consent, LGBTQ+ issues and mental health awareness. These assemblies are sometimes delivered by external speakers and experts. Generally, pupils place a high value on presentations from external speakers and have good recall of them as positive experiences. However, in general, schools do not make enough use of these presentations to engage pupils in further learning. In nearly all situations, following presentations and well-crafted assemblies, the normal timetable resumes leaving pupils and teachers with limited opportunity to discuss topics further. Older pupils complain that they are given strong messages about sensitive and difficult issues at the start of the school day and are then expected

to go to normal lessons without any opportunity for reflection or discussion about these themes.

'Drop down' days

Schools who do not provide regular, timetabled PSE lessons organise termly PSE days, usually for one key stage at a time. This is largely due to the pressure on curriculum time at key stage 4. They provide a blended programme of events with some lessons delivered by school staff and others by external specialists. The planning for such days is time consuming and challenging as leaders have to rely on the availability of presenters, avoid clashes with external assessments and ensure that teachers are available to deliver lessons. Due to being limited to a very few days to cover the whole PSE curriculum, it is inevitable that the coverage of certain themes can only be light. This prevents the cumulative learning experience for pupils. Also, it presents further difficulties for pupils who are required to change and adapt to a particular focus from one hour to the next, again with limited time and opportunity to reflect on learning. For example, a typical pupil will experience sessions on substance misuse, positive mental health, healthy eating, career choices and diversity all in one day. This type of learning experience may be challenging for pupils because the content of the day is so varied, and the nature of these days means that there is little time for reflection, and it is difficult to develop a depth of understanding over time.

Use of external agencies

All schools value their collaboration with external agencies to support their PSE provision. This is particularly true of the work with the School Police Officer and, where available, local authority youth workers.

In all schools, the whole school community speak highly of the work of the School Police Officer, not only their delivery of the Wales Police Schools Programme but about their supportive school policing initiative as School Beat officers. As well as delivering lessons and presentations to pupils, they often work directly on a one-to-one basis with perpetrators and their families in cases where pupils find themselves in breach of the law. School leaders speak of the importance of ensuring pupils who cross the line are not demonised by their mistakes, and the need to acknowledge human frailty and offer forgiveness. They acknowledge the difficulty in balancing out their provision when there are incidences of peer sexual harassment, by both supporting the rights of the victim but also providing guidance for the perpetrator. The support of School Beat officers in restorative

justice sessions is welcomed by schools.

Across Wales, schools report that there is now limited support for sex education by the school nursing service. Understandably, during the pandemic, external agencies have not been able to visit schools due to COVID-19 restrictions, although some external providers have continued to support schools by delivering online lessons. In some areas, school nurses have had to return to work in hospital wards. Nearly all schools feel that the loss of the school nurse to support the roll out of sex education for different age groups is significant. Whilst a few schools have made their own provision, most have not succeeded in delivering sex education lessons to their pupils for the last two years. This is usually because leaders and teachers do not have enough confidence in delivering lessons that are normally delivered by specialist trained staff. It is clear from our discussions that older pupils are eager to have sex education and a majority say they have not received any at all during their time in secondary school. This includes 17 and 18-year-old pupils in the sixth form.

RSE in the wider curriculum

In a few schools, there is an attempt to consolidate pupils' learning of relationships and sexuality through the wider curriculum. For example, many language teachers and a few other subject teachers speak with pride about how they use texts, stimuli and life events to explore themes such as sexism and gender issues. In one school, sixth form art classes include thought-provoking sessions on women's rights, feminism and equality. A few pupils have then chosen the theme of violence against women as a starting point for their creations, focusing in particular on the tragic circumstances of Sarah Everard's murder. In another example, GCSE drama pupils are required to respond to stimuli produced by the examining board in order to create a devised piece of theatre. This year, this includes a picture entitled 'Girl Running'. In one school, this has led to robust discussions about the sexualising of women in society. Pupils value the opportunity to be part of open and often empowering discussions on a range of important issues in a safe environment. Doing this has resulted in drama pupils performing a devised piece based on domestic abuse.

Many English teachers deliberately select literature from the set texts list provided by the examination board which have strong themes that are reflective of societal issues such as misogyny, homophobia, revenge and abuse. The set texts list for A level English includes plays such as Tennessee Williams' 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and novels such as 'The Radicalisation of Bradley

Manning’ by Tim Price and Margaret Atwood’s ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’. English teachers told us that these are popular with sixth form pupils.

Equality and sexuality are common themes in selected poetry, especially work by Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes. At GCSE level, many pupils across Wales study the themes of companionship and loneliness in John Steinbeck’s novel, ‘Of Mice and Men’. This novel touches on the objectification of women in its depiction of the character ‘Curley’s Wife’, who remains nameless throughout the novel.

Pupils who study Welsh at GCSE level have opportunities to discuss themes such as body confidence and girls’ attempts to aesthetically please boys when they study the play ‘Waliau’ by Bedwyr Rees. This play portrays two girls and two boys in two changing rooms separated by both a literal and figurative wall.

Leadership

School leaders welcomed their school’s involvement in this thematic review despite the sensitivity around the issue. They all agreed with the need to explore the theme of peer-on-peer sexual harassment at a national level due to it being a societal problem that influences young people and naturally drifts into schools.

Generally, during the pandemic most schools have increased their focus on pupils’ emotional wellbeing after seeking the views of stakeholders in order to make improvements. For example, a few schools now allocate more time for the wellbeing check-in during morning form time so that pupils and teachers can engage in worthwhile conversation. Other schools have incorporated relaxation or mindfulness sessions into the school day to enable pupils and staff to relax and look after their mental health.

Developing the curriculum for RSE after lock-down

One school has worked to develop the PSE programme in light of the pandemic and the impact of pupils’ limited opportunities to see peers and school staff face-to-face for a lengthy period. Leaders have also considered key messages from the testimonies published on the ‘Everyone’s Invited’

website and from an internal audit of provision for RSE.

As a result of the above, the school has prepared lessons on new topics and themes for pupils across the school. These lessons include:

- the features of a 'good relationship' and diversity in Year 7
- inclusion and what constitutes bullying and what is banter in Year 8
- domestic abuse, sexting, LGBTQ+ issues and contraception in Year 9
- further development of gender issues, harassment and stalking in Year 10
- healthy sexual relationships, porn and sexual violence in Year 11 and in the sixth form

Common features in terms of strong leadership of wellbeing have emerged during this work:

- Effective leaders place a strong emphasis on recruiting high quality, resourceful and skilful staff.
- They also support and challenge their staff to develop creative ways to strengthen provision.
- They make effective use of monitoring systems and stakeholders' views to evaluate the quality of their work and to plan for improvement.

These strengths in leadership of wellbeing were evidenced in a minority of schools.

Productive use of stakeholder feedback

Leaders in one school created their own questionnaire for pupils about peer-on-peer sexual harassment following recent events. All pupils were given lessons on what constitutes sexual harassment before the questionnaire was made available. The questionnaire was left open for a longer than usual period of time to encourage pupils to respond. The school then evaluated the findings and used them to prepare an action

plan for addressing the issues raised.

Effective leaders generally employ a team of high-quality staff who add significant value to the provision for care, support and guidance. These leaders are willing to take risks, often employing non-teaching staff who have specialisms and experiences outside of education but in working with children and young people. One such school employs an ex-police officer and a social worker to complement the pastoral team. In another school, all heads of year are non-teaching support officers with significant social work or youth work background. They are particularly skilled in working with hard to reach families and external agencies and make beneficial use of this to support vulnerable pupils or those at risk of disaffection or of breaking the law.

In the most effective schools, senior leaders encourage development and creativity and have the same high expectations of middle leaders with responsibility for PSE as they do for those with responsibility for academic subjects. They allocate enough time for PSE co-ordinators to acquire professional learning and personal development. Due to curriculum constraints at key stages 4 and 5, there is little time available currently for PSE. In the schools with the best provision, leaders conduct regular curriculum audits to ensure they have a clear overview of where PSE topics feature across the curriculum. In addition, they encourage partnership work and participation from external agencies, such as theatre in education companies and expert groups in order to give learners valuable and important learning experiences. However, they do not over rely on these external partners to deliver PSE.

A comprehensive provision map

In one school, leaders have created a comprehensive provision map for personal and social education. The map includes details of where relationships and sexuality education features in relevant subject lessons, assemblies, dedicated workshops and PSE days. This allows leaders to have considerable first-hand knowledge of what is covered to ensure that provision remains current and also identify any gaps in provision.

In the best cases, leaders make productive use of both quantitative and

qualitative data, and stakeholder feedback to evaluate their work and to plan for improvement. They review their systems regularly to ensure they are fit for purpose and make productive use of the information within them to identify strengths and shortcomings in terms of evaluating the provision for wellbeing. The most effective leaders ensure that they have comprehensive and reliable systems to record incidences of poor behaviour and bullying and harassment that are understood and used by all staff. However, it is only in a very few schools that staff record incidences of bullying and harassment in a consistent manner, categorise them correctly or do so in sufficient detail. As a result, schools and local authorities do not always gain a true account of their prevalence.

In terms of shortcomings in leadership, inspectors also identified common themes in schools. The main weakness is the low level of awareness that leaders and staff generally have of incidences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment across their school. There is a stark polarisation between what pupils say is happening and what staff know. Only a minority of senior leaders told us that there was almost certainly a higher rate of incidents occurring across the school than came to their attention. In most schools, leaders reported on a small number of high-end incidents they had dealt with, and the quality and appropriateness of their response was usually good. However, in general, while most staff interviewed were of the opinion that peer-on-peer sexual harassment was not a problem in their school, their pupils painted a very different picture.

The support schools need

There is a clear and consistent message from all schools about the need for training and support. They also recognise the value of planning more curriculum time in future to provide opportunities for meaningful conversations with pupils about this issue and RSE in general.

Staff asked for guidance and clarity on what constitutes sexual harassment to enable a shared and coherent understanding across schools. They want whole school staff training for on LGBTQ+ issues, in particular how to talk to, support and address transitioning or transgender pupils. Staff feel that external agencies offer expertise on how to deliver difficult subjects within RSE and would like to see school staff develop this area of their work. Many feel that giving PSE and RSE more prominence in initial teacher education programmes would be highly

beneficial.

While a minority of school leaders are not aware of the vast range of resources available, others feel that there are too many toolkits and learning programmes. Looking for resources to support learning can be overwhelming when there are so many of them. Finding time to research, select and try out resources is very time consuming. Leaders are keen to have a recognised 'playlist' of resources that have met certain criteria, approved by a panel of experts as suitable, safe and age-appropriate for use with pupils. Leaders in independent schools expressed the importance of keeping them abreast of developments and including them in Wales and local authority-wide developments.

Schools see the rapid development of digital technology, together with a generational divide around understanding pupils' negative or harmful use of social media as a major hurdle. Breaking a societal culture where certain sexist, homophobic/biphobic/transphobic and harmful behaviour has become a norm is a huge challenge for schools. This challenge should not be underestimated. Schools are clear that the role of the parent in managing their children's internet use is integral to any plan of action. Schools would like to have a national media campaign to highlight the impact of harmful sexual behaviours and attitudes so that parents understand better what schools are trying to do. Schools hope that, in doing this, they will gain the support of parents in educating young people about diversity and the importance of healthy relationships.

Pastoral leaders see the proposed new RSE Statutory Guidance and Code as an important document that will enable and support a whole-school approach to provision. They value the involvement of experienced practitioners in its co-creation and have confidence that the age-appropriate content will ensure a comprehensive coverage of important issues. They see that increasing pupil voice and developing better engagement with parents will enable schools to provide what young people want in terms of discussion and learning. Schools noted the need for purposeful training by local authorities and, where relevant, the regional consortia to improve engagement with stakeholders about this topic, in particular the use of appropriate language and how to talk about sensitive issues with confidence and conviction.