

Full findings from pupil focus group activities

Methodology

We visited a broad range of schools with secondary aged pupils across Wales. We ensured that we included a broad and comprehensive sample of schools in terms of size, geographical context, socio-economic context and language medium. We visited a proportionate amount of faith schools to the percentage of secondary schools in Wales that are classed as a faith school.

Inspectors did not share with schools why they had been selected but gave clear assurance that our role was not an investigatory one. We also gave assurance to headteachers that we would not be naming schools in the report and that all findings from interviews, document scrutiny, focus groups and questionnaires would be anonymised. This is because of the sensitive nature of the topic and in order to protect schools, staff and pupils.

School visits included the following activities:

- Initial and final meetings with the headteacher
- Meetings with the senior leader responsible for wellbeing and with the designated safeguarding lead
- Meeting with the school leader responsible for Personal and Social Education, Relationships and Sexuality Education and/or Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning Experience
- Meeting with a group of teachers
- Meeting with a group of teaching support staff
- Mostly single sex pupil focus groups for two separate year groups in every school (Years 8-13)
- Pupil questionnaire
- Scrutiny of relevant school documents to include bullying reports, a sample of PSE schemes of work, a sample of whole school/year assembly presentations

We also offered the possibility of holding specific focus group sessions or meetings with active and well-established school LGBTQ+ groups if schools so

wished.

During our visits to school, we conducted focus group activities and worked with pupils from Year 8 to Year 13 across 35 schools. We nominated two different year groups in each school and randomly selected 6 girls and 6 boys in each year group. We shared these names with school leaders around a week before the school visits and asked them to check for suitability in terms of emotional resilience and vulnerability. We selected extra pupils to replace any child that the school considered too vulnerable to take part. We asked schools to meet with the selected pupils and ask each one to invite a friend. The friend could be of any gender. Many pupils chose to bring a friend of the same gender, which meant that we had groups of mainly boys and mainly girls. The few mixed groups worked just as well as single sex groups. We also invited schools that had an active and well-established pupil or pupil/staff LGBTQ+ group to ask them if they wanted to take part in a specific focus group. In total, we saw 6 LGBTQ+ groups.

Each selected pupil and their friend was given a pre-visit information sheet and schools corresponded with parents on our behalf. Parents were given the opportunity to opt their child out of the focus group activity. Only a very few parents chose to opt out.

Inspectors and pupils worked from paper booklets. The focus group activities were a blend of oral discussions and writing activities. This decision was to enable pupils who wanted to talk to do so at the same time as allowing quieter, less confident or more introvert pupils to write down their thoughts. All the contributions by pupils were anonymous. Visiting inspectors did not ask them for their names nor the name of their school on the booklet. At the end of the sessions, pupils were asked to complete an anonymous online questionnaire.

In all activities, inspectors ensured they did not ask leading questions, nor did they offer model answers in activities/tasks. They encouraged pupils to think for themselves and there was no pressure on pupils to complete all or even any of the activities if they didn't wish to do so. At the start of the sessions, inspectors made clear to pupils that they had a right to leave at any point and they then modelled consent throughout the sessions.

We wish to acknowledge the guidance and support Professor EJ Renold, Cardiff University gave prior to and during the co-creation of the focus group booklet. We are grateful to Professor Renold for her permission to publish the tutor focus

booklet with these supporting resources for school use.

Support Clouds



At the start of the pupil focus group sessions, inspectors spoke about sources of support and exemplified who they personally turned to for support. They mentioned who featured in their 'support cloud'. Pupils were then asked to list who they could turn to for support if they were worried, unhappy, afraid or had negative feelings. They were told that this could also include a hypothetical possibility or previous experience of peer-on-peer sexual harassment.

Most pupils mentioned three or more different sources of support. Most boys and girls mentioned friends in their support cloud. Girls mostly named around 4 or 5 of their personal friends while boys named one or maybe two. A few girls noted that they would 'only turn to their friends as they wouldn't trust anyone else'. Many pupils mentioned parents or family members and grandparents were mentioned often. More boys mentioned their parents than girls, particularly their mother.

A majority of the boys mentioned a named, trusted teacher. In contrast only a few girls said they would go to teachers for support. A few pupils overall mentioned wellbeing support staff and, in many schools, these tended to be the same members of staff named several times.

Only a very few pupils – less than 10% – mentioned outside support services such as Childline, NSPCC and the police. In a few schools, pupils did not show any awareness of external agencies that would be able to listen to them and help. Only a very few faith school pupils said they would turn to their church or a

religious figure for help. A minority of pupils in independent boarding schools said they would talk to their houseparent.

A few pupils, mostly girls said they would keep worries and feelings to themselves, some of these saying they would **“talk to themselves”**. One pupil said that **“I would talk to myself because no one listens”**. A very few pupils said they did not want to speak to anyone or could not speak to anyone else about this topic and would **“internalise”** it. One pupil said, **“the best thing I can do is pretend like I’m fine because there’s people out there that aren’t as fortunate as me so feel like I’m being ungrateful when I feel down or sad”**. One girl said, **“I genuinely have no idea, I would be too scared to, I think”**. A small minority said they would also turn to their pets for support.

Many LGBTQ+ pupils noted that they would talk to themselves as they are anxious about talking about their feelings around gender and sexuality with others. This is often done by sending messages to themselves. One pupil said, **“I don’t open up to anyone because I feel stupid and I’m bothering them”** and another **“I feel anxious about telling people about how I feel”**. The general feeling with this group of pupils was that many of the pupils disliked **“opening up to anyone”**. Around half of the older LGBTQ+ pupils said they would turn to their girlfriend or boyfriend as they were the only ones that understood what was going on as it was happening to them as well. Only a very few said that they would turn to an organisation such as ChildLine – and this was only if the situation **“got serious”**. In one school, nearly all of the LGBTQ+ pupils said they would turn to a certain member of staff – the same person was named each time.

Visual images

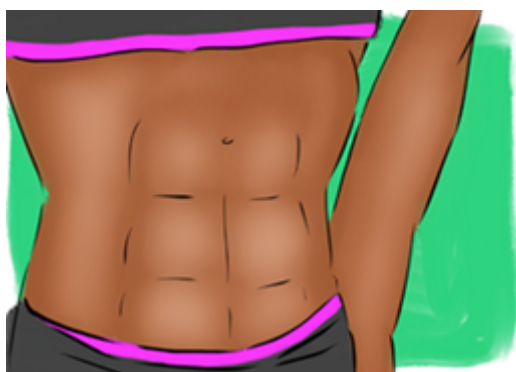
In this activity, pupils were asked to look at a series of eight images. These images were a muscular torso or ‘six pack’, a mobile phone, a skirt, a games console, a school corridor, school toilets, a school bus and some painted lips. Inspectors did not refer directly to peer-on-peer sexual harassment, but asked pupils to firstly consider possible scenarios that could arise related to these images. Secondly, pupils were asked to consider how young people might deal with any issues and where they would go to for support.

Pupils were asked to select two or three images. Although a range of images

were selected across schools, most pupils chose images linked to sending online messages, photos or texts and body image/body shaming. The most selected images amongst both boys and girls were the body image and the mobile phone. Many of them also chose the skirt image. More boys than girls selected the games console whilst more girls chose the lips image. A small minority selected the school corridor image but only a few selected the school toilets. In nearly all schools, pupils did not select the image of the school bus.

Generally, there was a difference between what the older pupils and younger pupils were saying. The older pupils generally framed their response more in terms that reflect what they know and what they have experienced over time whereas the youngest pupils, those in Year 8, wrote more about what they thought might be the case. Also, the older the pupils were, the more clearly they expressed things incidents of sexual harassment, whilst for many of the younger pupils (Year 8 and the majority of Year 9) it was more about bullying in general. This is to be expected due to age, experience and degree of maturity. However, it does emphasise how quickly young people's experience of sexual harassment changes with puberty.

The 'six-pack' body



The types of harassment mentioned mostly involved 'fat shaming', unwanted touching, the sexualisation or objectification of the body - both for boys and girls - and issues around fitness. The 'six pack' image also triggered a number of comments around cat-calling, name calling and public body shaming.

Many pupils spoke about peer pressure and expectations about the way they should look and consequent body shaming and bullying if their bodies do not conform with a certain image of beauty or fitness. Generally, boys and girls said that anyone can be subject to body shaming at any time and that it has a

negative effect on self-esteem and their sense of worthiness.

Girls spoke about the issues and anxieties of being too skinny or too fat and that the image represented how girls feel about their bodies. Many commented about how peer pressure and comments from other girls about body image would make them feel inadequate and unattractive. Girls mentioned words such as 'cow' or fatty' and hurtful remarks such as **“starve yourself”** or **“hide your stretch marks”**. A high proportion of girls stated that this would result in girls dieting to lose weight so that they looked like their slimmer peers. A few described this as looking **“prettier and sexier”**. Fewer girls identified issues around direct sexual harassment from boys about body image. One pupil said, **“Schools should teach pupils, particularly girls that they are not objects and that boys should respect them”**.

A few girls spoke about pressure from television, celebrities and social media and how seeing **“the perfect female body”** may lead to girls developing eating disorders. A few mentioned that women are susceptible to receiving negative comments if they have a muscular body, **“strong women are shamed more than they are praised”**. Older pupils felt that girls are more likely to suffer harassment if they show bodies that look very toned.

Pupils understand that finding other pupils attractive is healthy and natural. However, many boys felt that girls are pressured to look good for them. They blamed other girls for this and describe the 'cat-calling' culture amongst girls that exists in school and online. A substantial number of boys were of the view that all the girls wanted a boyfriend and therefore they are prepared to alter the way they look to achieve this. One group of boys discussed the prevalence of boys judging and ranking girls' bodies and making comparisons between them based on the body shape, size or perceived level of sexiness. They agreed that they were **“guilty of staring”** at girls but they didn't perceive this as sexual harassment but rather normal boy behaviour. Many boys were of the view that when girls show any parts of their body, by wearing short or revealing clothes, they are sending out messages to boys that they are seeking sexual attention. They said it was because girls wanted attention, they want the boys to cat call them or they want to be touched.

Sixth form girls said that, too often, women feel the need to look good to mainly attract men and make themselves feel good. However, they were of the view that there was a conflict between looking too sporty or masculine and too curvy or fat. They spoke about the shallow choices that boys tend to make based on looks

alone. A few older girls were upset that most girls their age are content to be attractive to boys for their body and not for who they really are.

Pupils who chose to take part in the LGBTQ+ group sessions wrote about the issues of being **“too fat or too skinny”**. Most felt that the image represents sexualising the body - with many referencing girl body image rather than that of the boys. A few mentioned personal experiences of verbal homophobic harassment because of their body shape, for example being called a **“fat lezzie”**, even though they are not overweight. A few noted that heterosexual boys would tease members of the LGBT+ club saying they **“fancy”** them and want to **“bang them”**. Most felt that only a few teachers would do anything about it if they heard pupils using homophobic slurs against them but said that they would talk to someone they trusted or to someone within the LGBT+ group for support.

In terms of types of support needed to deal with these issues, girls called for more opportunities in school to talk about body-shaming. Most pupils said they wanted more opportunities for discussion in school to stop cat calling and to consider the impact of peers making negative comments about body sizes and shapes. They felt that schools could do something to stop this by enabling more group discussions. Pupils also mentioned that having regular discussions about consent in lessons would be beneficial so that boys and girls respected each other more. Girls felt that this would mean that boys understood better what girls mean when they say ‘no’. One girl said, **“there are boundaries that boys don’t understand. This is wrong.”**

Another said that they would feel good if a boy said they had a nice body but would not be comfortable if they started touching or groping them. She explained that **“some boys will say you look nice and then they will expect you to kiss them”**.

The mobile phone



Boys and girls offered comprehensive responses to the mobile phone image and the possible scenarios associated with it. Generally, all girls' responses were very similar to each other as were boys' views of the problems associated with the phone. Nearly all of the commentary was about problems and negative experiences and only a handful of pupils chose to write about the benefits of having a mobile phone and the pleasure it gave them.

There were five main themes associated with the mobile phone as identified by the pupils. These were:

- peer pressure to have a high number of online 'friends', 'likes' and comments on profiles
- online bullying, posting hurtful comments about peers, in particular comments about appearance
- sexual objectification of photos of girls by boys
- asking for, sending and sharing nude or semi-nude photographs
- catfishing, unsolicited friend requests or demands for nude photos by strangers or those with a fake social media profile
- Negative attitudes towards female characters and/or when girls play digital games

Despite the fact that young people highly value their mobile phones they explained clearly the problems associated with them and how these can impact negatively on mental health. From their comments, it was clear that young people feel there is pressure to post popular comments regularly and to be 'liked' on social media. There was clear evidence of teenagers spending a lot of their time on social media posting and generating support.

“You are made to feel like you have to post to please people and get likes. There is pressure to post 24/7.”

They felt that this, together with their experiences of online bullying and harassment, impacted on their mental health and harmed their self-esteem and confidence. Most of the girls described the main problem with mobile phones as one of young people comparing physical looks with others.

Many young people mentioned receiving inappropriate messages and general bullying around this. For example, many described how girls can receive negative comments from other girls because they have shared a nice photo of themselves. A minority of girls mentioned the pressure to conform with certain expectations about shape and looks where attractive young girls regularly post pictures of themselves expecting others to make complimentary comments about them and the way they looked. In a few instances, there is more targeted bullying between girls where they spread rumours about girls' sexual activity, dare them to have sex or to send photos of themselves in their underwear, then share these photos around and call them names such as **“slag”** and **“slut”**.

“There is a lot of bullying on social media. People pick on other people because of looks. This could mentally impact people, especially if someone calls you a whore or a slag.”

A minority of girls were concerned about the effects of online bullying, saying that this could lead to anxiety, depression and body dysmorphia which could also lead to eating disorders and self-hatred. A very few talked about female friends who had experience of some of these issues.

Boys also talked widely about online bullying and peer pressure. They mentioned the pressure to be popular on social media and needing to gain 'likes' and 'followers'. Whilst admitting to doing this themselves, many realised that being in

contact with strangers could lead to issues. Many boys' responses were around sending and receiving vulgar comments and texts from other boys, often related to body shaming or making fun of other boys' posts. Younger boys in Year 8 and a few in Year 9 associated this image with general bullying and saying nasty things to each other, not necessarily about their sexuality, gender or the way they looked. They were aware of how a phone or social media can be used to sexually harass others, but many had not come across any examples themselves.

In terms of sexting, sexualisation of peers and sending nude photographs, nearly all pupils from Year 10 onwards identified common issues. It is evident that pressure to share nude photographs, the loss of control over images once they have been shared and young people being made to feel guilty when they don't send photos is commonplace. Most girls identified boys asking for nude photographs of them as a regular occurrence and spoke about the constant pressure from boys to send photographs. **"it is a daily occurrence - it is very common"**. A few of the older girls stated that they felt they had no choice but to comply.

"Boys ask for nudes or keep spamming your phone."

Most girls knew of the dangers of agreeing to send photos via text, especially when they or their friends were wearing bikinis. They were very aware that the threat of anyone sharing them further afield was very real. A few girls said that they have received messages asking for photos of themselves naked - generally from boyfriends, who they all said ended the relationship straight after. All girls said that it is only boys who ask for nude photos but a few of them blamed girls for complying **"just to please boys and to be more liked or loved"**. In a few focus groups, girls said that boys often posted on social media that they have had sex with them when this isn't true - often making stories up and boasting about sexual exploits.

More than half of the boys spoke about being personally involved in sexual harassment of peers, for example harassing girls with nude images of strangers or other inappropriate photos or videos. Boys also talked about the pressure by other boys to send nudes or sexual content unwillingly. Many boys spoke about the prevalence of boys sharing nude photographs of girls amongst their friends and boasting about the number of nude photographs they had in their possession. In the majority of cases, boys acknowledged that this was wrong and disrespectful. A few boys felt that sending or receiving rude messages was equally as bad, because those boys who received them would nearly always

share them with their friends, even though they knew they should report them or delete the message. In some focus groups, many boys said that they have sent their male and female friends sexual comments in texts, saying this is common and only a bit of fun, **“everyone expects it”**.

“We will often send comments to each other slagging girls or boys off because of what they look like or they will say that they have had sex with them when this is not true.”

A minority of older boys said that porn is shared around as **“boys want to impress their friends”**. A few boys said that they had been sent pornographic or rude photos but not of girls they know. When asked if they thought this was acceptable – a minority commented that it was **“ok as long as you don’t know the girls in the pictures”**.

Overall, only a few LGBTQ+ pupils said they had personal experience of sexting, but many had heard of pupils being asked to send nude photos of themselves to girl/boyfriends. A few said that members of the LGBTQ+ community have more respect for each other than other young people.

“We are more private, and we look after each other because no-one else does. We talk about it in the LGBTQ+ club. Nothing really happens after, but we get to talk about it.”

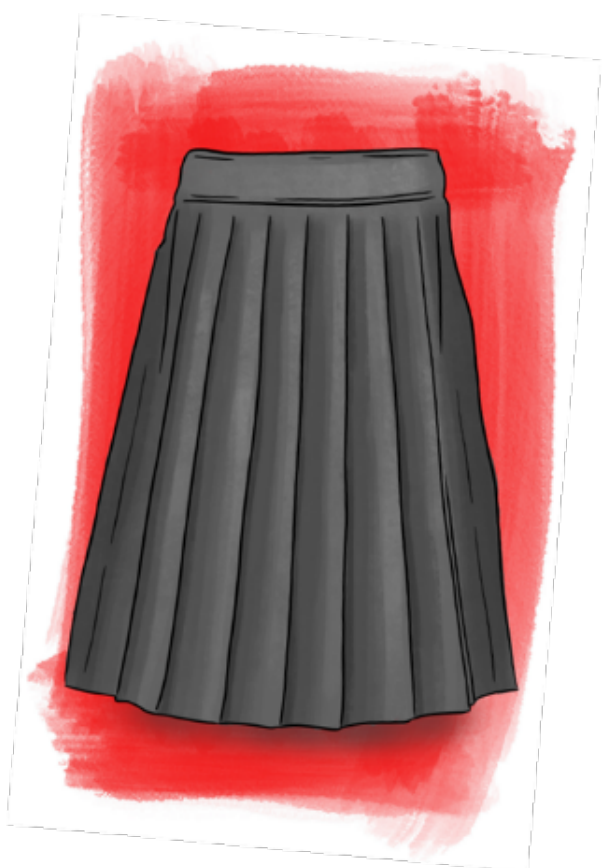
When inspectors discussed sources of support for online sexual harassment, sexting and issues around sending nude photographs, pupils typically said they would reach out to their friends. A few noted that they have had some teacher-led activities to highlight the dangers of sexting and have been encouraged to report any incidents to their head of year. Whilst many pupils understood the need to report any activity of peer-on-peer sexual harassment on social media, they did not typically state that they would tell their teachers.

Most pupils refer to problems with ‘catfishing’ where pupils create fake accounts to send unsolicited images and harass other pupils. Pupils stated that catfishing was a common problem and was usually older men targeting young girls – a substantial number of girls said that they had been targeted. A minority of girls noted that they had received inappropriate pictures and texts from strangers and

not from peers. They referred to these as unwanted and upsetting.

It is clear that the majority of young people knew how to identify fake accounts and felt able to block them. Most young people understood the term 'grooming' and said they would report it if it happened to them. Many wrote about the dangers of meeting people they don't know, especially if they have been asked to send photos of themselves. They said that they would not 'friend' anyone on social media that they didn't know. Older girls talked of receiving messages from unknown men and boys on Instagram asking them to send images of themselves, **"begging us for nudes"**. When asked about what they would do in these situations and whom they would turn to for support, many pupils said they would 'block' the perpetrator, report the matter to a friend, teacher or parent or ask the police for help.

The skirt



Many pupils selected the skirt image and associated it with issues about the size of school skirts, lifting girls' skirts up and the sexualisation of girls and women because of the clothes they choose to wear. Nearly all girls identified with issues around school skirts and many boys were

aware of problems associated with them.

Many girls wrote about the length and fit of school skirts and how they can be criticised by peers if the skirt is too long or too short. They explained that they are bullied by other girls if their skirts are too long and sexually harassed by boys if they are too short. They also noted that they are called names by girls as well as boys if their skirts are too tight.

“If your skirt is too short you are a slag or a slut. If your skirt is too long you are boring or frigid. If you are wearing a skirt, boys will use that as a way of consent - you are asking for it.”

Another pupil said,

“If your skirt is too short you are being deliberately provocative, if it’s too long you are a goody-two-shoes.”

In one boys’ focus group, many agreed that the skirt in the image was so long any girl wearing it would be bullied. A few younger girls said that if girls wore a long skirt like the one in the image, they would get bullied but if they wore a skirt that was too short, they **“would be called rude names”**. In one focus group, Year 8 boys said that if girls wore longer skirts, then they wouldn’t be **“tempting the boys to look”**.

Lifting up skirts was mentioned by many girls and the majority of boys. Many of the girls seemed to have had a few experience of this problem during their time in school, blaming boys for **“always pulling up girls”** skirts or looking up their skirts when they sit down’. However, a few girls noted that girls who wear short skirts **“make it easy for boys to look up them”**. A few girls also said that boys will touch their bums if they wear tight skirts to see if they are wearing any underwear and that girls tend to wear shorts under their skirts. Other girls said they wore tight skirts to make it more difficult for the boys to lift them up. They expressed annoyance that teachers tell them off for wearing tight skirts but don’t tell the boys to stop groping and catcalling. In one school, all girls noted that they wear shorts under their skirts to stop boys looking up them.

We visited a very few schools where girls have to wear a regulation school skirt of

a certain fit and length. Girls in these schools said that the boys will try to look up their skirts or pull them down and felt that girls should be allowed to wear trousers if they so wished and that this would be a better solution than wearing shorts underneath **“because it gets hot in the summer”**. One girl said that her primary school also had a ‘skirts only’ policy for girls and that she hated the way that she looked in a skirt and was miserable there.

Younger pupils in Year 8 and a few in Year 9 didn’t feel the issue of lifting up skirts was a serious one. In one school, girls said that younger boys always try to lift girls’ skirts up as they run by but dismissed this as boys being **“just a nuisance”** and **“there’s nothing sexual involved”**. Younger boys commented that they have seen older boys lift skirts and put their hands up them and said they thought this was **“for fun”**. In a minority of focus groups, boys discussed incidents where they have lifted skirts because they have been dared by their peers to do it and earn social approval for doing so.

There is a substantial debate about girls’ choice of clothes and how other girls and boys perceive this. Several girls mentioned peer pressure to roll up their school skirt to look better, and of then being sexualised by both boys and girls. Girls reported that the shortness of the skirt attracts comments, ‘banter’ and attention from boys, but a few boys feel that the shorter the girl’s skirt, the more they are allowed to comment or act as they think that this is what girls want. In one LGBTQ+ group, nearly all noted that **“popular girls will roll up their skirts to attract boys but then complain if they get touched or if people start calling them slag”**. A few believed that girls deliberately roll their skirts up to get a girlfriend or a boyfriend. In a Year 9 girls’ focus group in one school, many believed that girls in their year try to sexualise themselves and get into trouble.

“They’re trying to get attention from boys and impress the girls.”

A few girls talked about pressure from other females to wear shorter skirts. These girls said they didn’t like wearing short skirts, but all their friends do so they copy them. They describe how they feel anxious if they follow the trend but also about anxieties they will experience if they don’t. Very few boys showed any empathy towards girls because of this conflict they may experience. In a few sixth form groups, older boys did discuss the issue of objectifying girls and societal blaming of women for their choice of clothing. They agreed that this was wrong and

needed addressing.

“Men believe if girls are wearing revealing clothing, they deserve what happens to them. We should teach men to control themselves.”

A majority of girls told us that teachers say short skirts are distracting and inappropriate. They maintained that skirt length **“should be a personal choice and not dictated by the actions of boys”**.

“Teachers pick on girls for skirt shape and length because boys can’t control themselves. Teach boys to be respectful not change what a girl wears.”

A minority of pupils identified telling their parents and getting help from teachers as potential support. They also felt that explicit teaching on this subject in lessons by teachers and by the school police officer would be particularly helpful.

The games controller



More boys than girls selected the games controller and had more to say about the problems associated with online games. In a few schools, none of the girls chose this image in any of the focus groups. Girls who spoke about this mostly identified the problem around inappropriate games that often shame women. Girls spoke about the sexist portrayal of women in some games where girls are treated in a derogatory and sexualised manner. Girls said that a few boys simulate this tone in the way they speak to girls during online games. One girl said, **“boys treat women differently because games**

portray women as being inferior to men”.

A few girls noted that as soon as boys hear a girl’s voice online, during a game, boys always try to sexualise them. They feel that gaming is known as a **“boys’ thing”** so, if a girl plays, people assume she wants boys’ attention. Girls also talked of graphic violence and inappropriate language in the games that boys tend to play. Boys talked of potential sexual harassment and bullying towards girls whilst playing games online, such as sexist assumptions that, because they are a girl, they are automatically a weak player and sexualising someone because of their voice in a games voice chat.

The most common issues relating to the games controller, as identified by boys, were those of harassment by possible paedophiles or strangers contacting them, receiving inappropriate or sexual messages in the chat forum, or other boys patronising their ability as a player. One older boy wrote about the overall level of toxicity of language used in gaming forums, including the normalised use of terms such as ‘slut’ and ‘whore’ when referring to women.

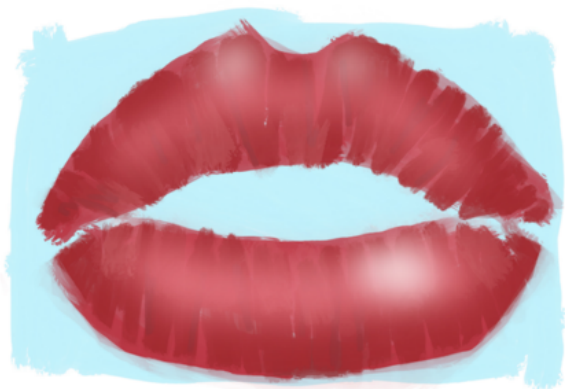
Many boys identified grooming by older people as a significant online risk. This includes unknown people contacting boys and sending ‘friend requests’. A minority of boys noted that random people often come online and that it is **“too easy to communicate with people you don’t know”** via online games. They added that this can lead quickly to misguided trust but that they knew to block them if they had suspicions or didn’t know who they really were. Nearly all were aware that they shouldn’t talk to people who they didn’t know online or accept friend requests from strangers. Most knew where to go to for support and how to report any suspicious profiles.

Younger boys talked of older boys harassing them in a game ‘voice chat’ and asking **“uncomfortable things”**. Most boys said that they had played games that they are legally too young to play. Older boys play these games and often the younger boys say they are pressurised into swearing and **“talking dirty”**. Many boys commented on issues around gaming where people made inappropriate sexual comments anonymously in ‘party chat rooms’.

Although boys openly admitted to playing games that they weren’t legally permitted to play, many suggested having tighter controls and better support for young people to stick to age guidelines as possible solutions to the problems arising from online gaming. They also suggested talking about problems with

parents, blocking unwanted contacts and reporting them to the gaming helpline.

The lips



The image of the lips generated comments about physical appearance, make-up and the issue of consent. In a very few cases, pupils identified general bullying and hurtful comments as main issues from the lips image. Only a minority of pupils selected the lips image to discuss and more girls than boys wrote comments.

Most girls mentioned peer pressure and negative comments around the wearing of make-up or not wearing make-up. They explained how girls can make hurtful comments about make-up use.

“Her friends loved her wearing make-up, but she still got people being mean - like saying she’s trying too hard.”

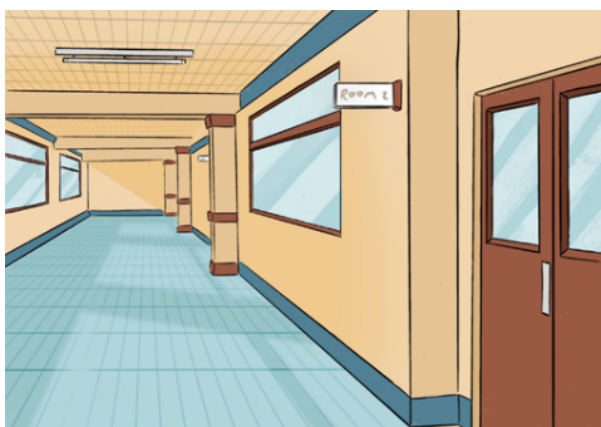
A few spoke about how girls’ low self-esteem about their looks, or issues with teenage acne or spots can lead them to use make up from a young age. They talked of how they **“hate the way they look”** and how upset they were because their schools disallowed make-up. This may lead to significant emotional problems for them. A few boys felt that this image was about wearing too much make-up and that girls who wore make up would be **“picked on and called names like slag”**.

The majority of girls saw the lips image as relating to feeling pressurised to have sexual relationships or being asked to do something you didn’t feel comfortable with. A few said, if you didn’t, the boy would **“get bored of you”** or **“gaslight you”**. Many boys felt that this related to boys trying to kiss girls when they didn’t

want to be kissed. They said, **“boys will always want to kiss the girls, but the girls don’t always want to do that”**. One boy explained that younger boys always want to go out with older girls because **“older girls like to kiss”**. A few boys thought this represented people being kissed without their consent or by an older man or woman. A few acknowledged that if someone wanted to kiss someone else and it wasn’t consensual, then this was sexual harassment.

When asked about what they would do in a situation where they didn’t consent to kissing, pupils mainly said they would tell their friends and possibly parents. Fewer pupils said that they would report this to a teacher. More pupils named Childline as a source of support for issues around consent than they did for any other scenario.

The school corridor



Generally, across all focus groups, only a few chose the scenario of the school corridor as a place for problems. In a majority of schools, no pupil discussed or wrote about serious issues relating to the school corridor. The most common themes were generalised bullying and name-calling, sexualised comments being made and homophobic bullying. A few of the older girls spoke about catcalling in the corridors.

Older pupils said that where there are larger groups of pupils congregating, it is easier for pupils to harass each other, adding that it is a **“good place because they’re crowded, and no one will see you”**. They described harassment from boys as ranging from calling out comments such as **“you’re gay”** or **“slag”** to purposefully bumping into girls and hitting other boys in the genital area.

A few pupils spoke about how people can be touched indecently on corridors and

one suggested there is a culture or a belief that it is only 'banter' and therefore should be accepted.

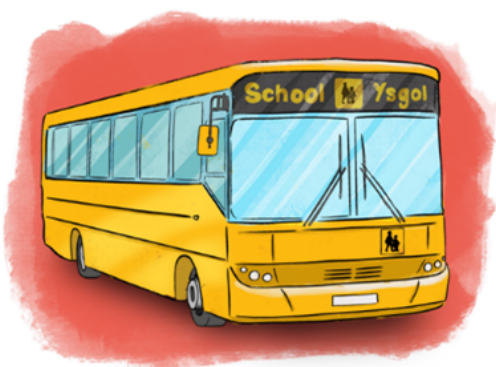
The school toilets



Only a very few pupils selected the image of the school toilets to discuss potential issues. There were a few common comments from the pupils. These were related to feeling uncomfortable or unsafe because of the possibility of someone looking over the top or under the bottom of toilet doors, fears of being filmed by peers and possible voyeurism from unknown adults. There were a few comments by concerned pupils about the quality of toilets and the prevalence of doors that didn't lock properly.

Pupils identified telling parents and teachers and friends as ways to deal with these issues. A very few referred to their school's safeguarding team as they always had posters telling pupils about them on school toilet doors.

The school bus



Less than 5% of pupils chose to discuss the school bus. There was no common theme other than verbal bullying including

homophobic name-calling, more often from older pupils. A few commented on how it was easier to physically abuse peers on the school bus because of the lack of supervision.

They said that bus drivers would not be helpful in these situations but that adult witnesses on public buses might stop what was happening.

Generally, there was agreement from all pupils who discussed possible scenarios on school buses that they would tell teachers and their parents. Many said that schools should ban bullies from travelling on school transport.

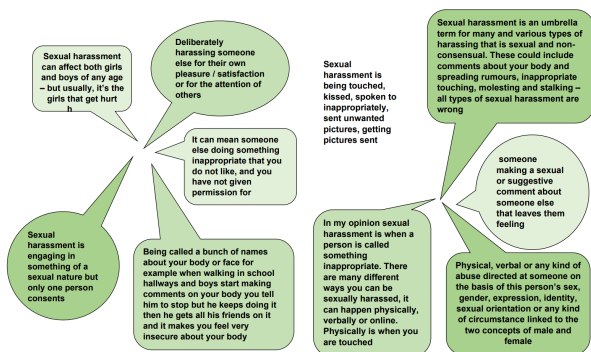
Blank page

We provided a blank page for any additional thoughts; a very small number of pupils used the blank page to highlight other forms of bullying or harassment. There were no common themes.

What is peer-on-peer sexual harassment?

Following a group discussion led by an inspector around the definition of peer-on-peer sexual harassment, pupils were asked to offer a written definition of their own. Most boys and girls had a clear understanding of what sexual harassment was. The majority referred to consent in determining whether behaviours are appropriate. Most pupils, especially girls, understood that peer-on-peer sexual harassment usually resulted in young people feeling uncomfortable, anxious or unhappy. Generally, girls wrote at length about the different types of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and their direct negative impact on victims. Boys also demonstrated understanding of the effects of sexual harassment, but they offered briefer responses.

Often, girls expressed feelings of unfairness and being subject to the whim of others. Their definitions included feeling objectified, judged and constrained and being treated with a lack of respect. Boys' views were less nuanced than the girls' and tended to focus on the most obvious aspects such as use of language and acts that constitute sexual harassment.



Sexual Harassment Jars

Inspectors asked pupils to consider the type or types of peer-on-peer sexual harassment most prevalent or likely to happen in their school. Pupils were also invited to state if there was little or no peer-on-peer sexual harassment going on. Across every school, the most common occurrences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment during schooldays were catcalling, making homophobic comments mainly towards boys, and comments about the body. In nearly all cases, the girls focused on what they were experiencing themselves and there were no comments or descriptions on what sexual harassment may be for the boys. Many boys believe that calling people names or sending rude messages around is just for fun and happens because of peer pressure – **“everyone likes a laugh and enjoys seeing other people feel uncomfortable”**.

The most common type of sexual harassment in school mentioned by both girls and boys was verbal sexual harassment such as name calling, making sexual comments, making sexist jokes or body shaming. Many girls commented on the prevalence of boys and other girls making comments about girls’ bodies and using inappropriate sexual language in relation to girls.

“Boys make rape jokes and make out that it’s funny. Also, boys make jokes about how they are going to use girls for their bodies.”

In a few mostly male focus groups, boys didn't feel that making sexual comments and name calling was an issue and that everyone should just **"get on with it and not be so touchy"**. However, when probed further, these boys were able to agree that this kind of behaviour was inappropriate and harmful to the victims.

Nearly all pupils commented on some degree of homophobic name calling in corridors in their schools, which often pupils and some teachers identify as **"just banter"**. Boys, in particular, said that boys were the main perpetrators of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic verbal abuse. Many LGBTQ+ pupils noted that homophobic bullying was happening all the time and that this was the most common type of harassment in school.

"Every time we walk down the corridor, someone will call names at us."

And,

"Pupils use sexual words to hurt pupils who are openly gay, such as gay, lezzie, minge muncher, cock gobbler or tranny."

A minority of boys highlighted mild physical assaults as a fairly regular occurrence. This touching is usually between boys and includes kicking in the private parts and twisting each other's nipples. Younger boys described how boys tend to make fun of each other in the changing rooms.

"Boys call each other fat and gay and make jokes in the changing room about the size of your willy."

Older boys also referred to inappropriate touching which could be seen as just 'banter' or messing about. In one school, many boys commented on a specific problem where peers deliberately forced open toilet doors.

Girls mentioned lifting up skirts and a small minority of girls also spoke about experiencing other physical assaults, such as bum slapping. This was mostly from boys, but girls were also named as perpetrators. A few girls also commented on inappropriate touching in school corridors.

“Boys walk behind and grab girls’ bums as a joke.”

Cat calling was also frequent among girls. Although a less frequent occurrence, both boys and girls mentioned sending or receiving unwanted images or videos via their phone during breaktimes.

In sixth form focus groups, a few older girls discussed their concerns that verbal sexual harassment during the school day would lead to more serious harassment and abuse as pupils get older. Many older girls believed sexting was one of the most common forms of harassment amongst secondary school pupils and say that assemblies were only paying lip service to a growing problem that schools cannot cope with.

I want my school to know that...

“I want my school to know that there is a lot more sexual harassment in this school than they think there is. The main victims are girls and LGBTQ+ pupils. This is mainly why many LGBTQ+ pupils don’t come to school because they don’t want to be victimised”

“We have had hardly any sexual health or sex education lessons, we had a few in science however, they were more about how the body works”

“I want my school to know that certain students are afraid to come forward to tell you what has happened as there isn’t enough done for them or they fear that you will overlook it”

“less worrying about the smallest things like ‘nail varnish’ and how the length of your skirt matters and worry about the people making homophobic and transphobic comments”

“Bullying and harassment – lessons on how to treat people and how women should be treated and BLM”

“I enjoy my PSE lessons and I’m very interested, but I think they should talk more about harassment and abuse”

“I would like to learn more about mental health and bullying and how it can affect people”

“I think we need more lessons on sexual health and on educating people on boundaries and why certain things are bad”

“I want my school to be more inclusive. Although it is a school, we need more representation of minority groups”

“I want to learn about how to behave and treat other people”

“Sex education, now please!”

“The school isn’t doing enough to educate boys - we NEED lessons about this”

“We absolutely need sex education”

In this activity, pupils were asked to consider messages that they wanted to relay to their school or their teachers. It is clear from pupils’ responses that many felt that schools underestimated the prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in the lives of young people. Pupils said that teachers did not understand the extent of the problem, in particular what was happening online.

“It is happening more than you think”.

Many pupils wanted the school to know that they enjoy or enjoyed personal and social education (PSE) lessons (enjoyed in the case of older pupils who do not have these lessons anymore). They felt that some of the content, such as lessons on substance misuse, was useful and important. However, most said that schools needed to spend more time educating pupils about respect, healthy relationships, harmful sexual behaviours and LGBTQ+ rights. Many commented on the need for time to discuss **“real life issues”** in school and that an occasional assembly about sexual harassment or another topic was **“usually not enough”**.

Many pupils across the age range wanted to tell their school that they had not had enough sex education nor lessons on homophobia and transphobia. Sixth form pupils, in particular, were eager to have more sex education. In a majority of schools, older pupils said they had had no sex education at all during their time in secondary school. Older pupils also said they would like to continue PSE lessons and discuss real life issues, relationships education and lessons on body positivity and maintaining romantic connections.

Girls wanted their school to know about the extent of verbal sexual harassment. In particular they felt that there was a lot of homophobic name-calling that affected pupils' mental and emotional health. They also felt that boys, in particular, often made inappropriate comments to girls, for example about their bodies, and that they needed to be educated to understand the harmful impact of their words. One pupil said, **“every time someone is called a horrible name their self-esteem goes lower and lower and it causes different types of anxiety”**.

Many boys said they wanted more PSE lessons.

“We need PSE to be compulsory throughout school life. You need it throughout your life and therefore we need more detail about everything. LGBT, sex education, sexual harassment, gender issues - we need more DETAIL about these subjects as well as mental health. Harassment happens due to lack of education.”

Around half of boys talked about issues in school toilets. Doors did not always lock properly and sometimes other boys deliberately opened doors when they were inside.

“I want my school to know that homophobia and nudes are very prominent and lots of toilets are unsuitable and unsafe.”

Overall, many LGBTQ+ pupils were angry or upset that their teachers do not respond when they hear homophobic names being called. In one school, a few said that they were targeted by Year 9 boys when they started in Year 7 - they were scared and didn't understand why they were being bullied. The boys would call them **“gay”** and they didn't understand what that meant at first. As they grew older, the name calling continued and they just learnt to ignore them.

Non-binary pupils wanted the school to make it clear to staff and pupils that if they changed their names, then everybody needed to know about it. They were upset that staff and pupils didn't call them by their chosen name or refer to them as 'she' or 'he' and not 'they/them'. This group of pupils felt strongly that school should deal with people who use the wrong pronouns and names, and this was

directed mainly at the teachers.

Many LGBTQ+ pupils felt that their schools didn't understand the extent of the homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying and wanted teachers to be educated on how to spot it and deal with it.

“Most teachers don't know about what goes on, but if they do, they do nothing.”

One pupil wanted his school to organise discussions with all year groups including teachers to educate the whole learning community about the harmful impact of this kind of bullying, adding,

“Kids tell me to kill myself cuz I'm in LGBTQ+ group.”

Personal and social education

In this activity, inspectors asked pupils for feedback on personal and social education (PSE) provision in their school. They enquired about the frequency of lessons, delivery and themes. Inspectors also discussed presentations in assemblies and pupils' experience of lessons and presentations by external speakers and agencies.

There is a significant difference between provision for PSE at key stage 3 and key stages 4 and 5. The majority of pupils who receive PSE lessons at key stage 3 have one lesson per week. Where schools run a two-week timetable, pupils have one PSE lesson per fortnight. In most schools, there are no direct PSE lessons for pupils from Year 10 onwards. This is usually because the time allocated for PSE is used to deliver Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) lessons. In the few schools who start the WBQ in Year 9, there is usually still an element of PSE coverage for these pupils.

Many secondary schools have now trialled elements of or implemented Curriculum for Wales in part for Year 7 and possibly Year 8 pupils. An increasing number of schools now incorporate physical education, food and nutrition and PSE under the 'Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning Experience' and provide

between 2 and 6 lessons of health and wellbeing per week to Year 7 or Year 8 pupils.

Pupils explained how, in a few cases, PSE lessons were delivered by experienced teachers with relevant knowledge and skills in the topics covered within PSE. When teachers from within the same department or AOLE delivered PSE, pupils said lessons were 'interesting and fun'. However, many pupils who received their PSE lessons from any subject teacher said that lessons were not always a positive experience and that **"you can tell if the teacher is interested in it or not"**.

The majority of pupils were negative about PSE lessons, though they valued the topics that should be covered through PSE. They either said that the topics they discussed were not relevant to them, the teachers delivering PSE were not enthusiastic enough about it or they did not have enough opportunities for discussion as they had to complete booklets. In a few schools, Year 11 pupils follow the SWEET programme or the Equality and Diversity programme and earn a level 2 qualification on completion. Pupils said that these courses do include some aspects of personal and social education and touch on issues around gender and sexual equality. However, they do not recall any specific input on healthy relationships, sexual harassment or harmful sexual behaviour.

"I think we need more lessons on sexual health and on educating people on boundaries and why certain things are bad. We have had hardly any sexual health or sex education lessons, we had a few in science however, they were more about how the body works."

In a few schools, pupils said that they **"talk about issues"** during registration periods and that this is useful. They said that relationships and bullying often came up in 'themes of the week' or 'thought for the day' sessions during morning registration. Due to the pandemic, many schools have not had physical year assemblies or whole-school assemblies for almost two years.

Most pupils commented that they liked it when external speakers came to give presentations in assembly. When asked about useful presentations and workshops, a high number of pupils couldn't recall any that they had received. However, nearly all pupils spoke about the importance of hearing **"real life stories from real people"** and agreed that the lessons and assemblies from the

school police officer were highly beneficial. In a later activity, most pupils said they wanted more of this kind of provision. A majority of pupils recall particular assemblies led by the school police officer on sexting and sending or sharing nude or inappropriate images. A few older pupils have seen a video on consensual sex, known as 'the tea video', but felt that **"just one assembly on this wasn't enough"**. Other pupils said that they had had **"good assemblies"** on the Pride movement and LGBTQ+ rights but that there had been no opportunity for further discussion about it in lessons afterwards. Pupils had been informed during the assembly that a 'Pride Wall' had been set up in a part of the school but they couldn't remember any discussions or talks on sexuality issues following this.

In a minority of schools, younger pupils talked positively about their PSE lessons, which are often called 'wellbeing' lessons or another name which sometimes reflects the positive, engaging nature of the lessons. Pupils spoke highly of opportunities to discuss healthy relationships, including how to communicate appropriately and respectfully with peers and issues around consent. Pupils also commented on how they sometimes had useful discussions around relationships in religious education lessons, especially attitudes towards women and girls in different cultures and faiths. In one school, all pupils speak very highly about the quality of sex education lessons they receive in Year 9. Pupils say lessons are delivered by an enthusiastic teacher who makes lessons worthwhile. Issues covered include sexual health and contraception, body image, consent, sharing images, healthy and unhealthy relationships, respect and impact of harmful sexual behaviours on mental and emotional health. Here are some of the things pupils in this school said:

"These sessions have been very helpful; they help us to know what to do and what not to do."

"The teacher really seems to know their stuff and feel comfortable talking to us."

"We have talked a little bit about gay relationships, and this is great."

"I'll never forget these lessons, they were fab."

In my school....

In this short activity, pupils were asked to listen to inspectors read out eight statements and consider whether these statements were true of their schools. They had the options of fully or partly agreeing or disagreeing with the statement by choosing 'yes', 'no', or 'maybe' for each one.

Statement	Most common answer across all schools
My school understands the size of the problem around sexual harassment	The most common answer was no
My school does a lot of things to try and stop all forms of sexual harassment from happening	The most common answer was no, although in a minority of schools there were more maybe replies to this statement
I have had useful discussions about sexual harassment in lessons but only about boys against girls	The most common answer was no
I have had useful discussions about sexual harassment in lessons, including homophobic sexual harassment	The most common answer was no
I have had helpful presentations about sexual harassment in assembly	The most common answer was maybe
I knew what sexual harassment was before this session	The most common answer was yes
My school tries hard to promote a culture where pupils respect each other	Maybe and yes were the most common answers
Young people have a teacher/member of staff they can talk to about sexual harassment	Nearly all pupils answered yes to this statement

Stop, Start, Continue

In the final focus group activity, pupils were asked to consider three things. They were:

- v. What would you like the school to stop doing?
- vi. What would you like the school to start doing?
- vii. What would you like the school to continue doing?

While responses naturally varied from school to school, there were many common features. Pupils were clear about what they felt was unhelpful and almost unanimous in what they felt schools are already doing that is worthwhile and what they think schools should start doing.



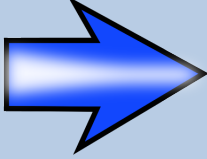
Key messages from pupils about the practices that they would like schools to **stop** include schools avoiding or ignoring issues of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. There were many comments about stopping schools accepting ingrained traditions of boys' making fun of each other, having sexist attitudes and making sexual references about girls. A minority of boys said that they wanted schools to stop thinking that only girls are victims of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. There was also a common theme of pupils wanting to stop the many similar or repeated PSE lessons they have had on the same theme, such as drug and alcohol misuse.

There was a common and clear appeal from pupils for schools to **start** providing sex education lessons. Many expressed their desire for more PSE lessons in general and for lessons on harmful sexual behaviours and their impact on pupils' mental health. A minority mentioned having regular pupils focus groups where pupils could be encouraged to express themselves openly. Most pupils from Year 10 onwards expressed the need for schools to provide better coverage on LGBTQ+ issues and for more support for this particular group of people.

Pupils were unanimous in their views that schools should **continue** with lessons and assemblies by the school police officer. In fact, no pupil in any school made any negative comment about the contribution of their particular 'PC' in the life of the school. It is evident that all pupils across all areas of Wales value this provision.

There was strong agreement by pupils that schools should continue to have external speakers and **“real life people who talk about real life problems”**. Many pupils commented on the need for schools to continue to provide the support they needed and to have the right staff to talk about problems with them. A minority of pupils said they wanted their schools to continue to talk about and

promote respect. These pupils were those who attended schools with a strong ethos of respect and diversity.

		
<p>“sweeping incidents under the rug!” “portraying boys as the only perpetrators” “avoiding the issue” “telling girls off for their skirts but not educating the boys” “letting people get away with it” “repeating lessons of drugs”</p>	<p>“paying attention to LGBTQ+ issues” “a pupil group to talk about these issues” “giving more PSE” “Sex education lessons” “teaching boys about toxic masculinity and promote a culture where it is eradicated” “having Pride celebrated” doing a lot more assemblies and having time to talk about it afterwards”</p>	<p>“talking about respect” “talking about it in assemblies” “having people to talk to in confidence” “lessons with the police” “getting people with real life problems to talk to us” “doing what you’re doing to support us” “encouraging debates and discussions about sexual harassment in lessons”</p>

Reflections

At the end of the focus group sessions, all pupils were invited to give feedback to the inspector about the session. Nearly all the responses were positive, with pupils saying that they had enjoyed the session and had particularly valued the opportunity to share their opinions and feelings. In many cases, pupils called for more opportunities like this session to discuss issues that affect their wellbeing and mental health.

Inspectors were overwhelmed with some of the responses from pupils and the level of appreciation they showed at being able to talk openly about the issue of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. Many pupils used the words ‘grateful’ and ‘thank you’ for the opportunity to be part of the discussions. A few older pupils reflected that the depth of detail in the discussion was not usual in PSE lessons they had attended. LGBTQ+ pupils, in particular, voiced their sincere appreciation for being able to be part of the piece of work.

Reflection Card

We would be very pleased to find out what you thought of the session and how useful it was to you. If you wish to, please write a reflection on the card. If you would like to speak to someone after this session, a teacher, a member of staff or someone else, please would you write

your name on the card so that we can help make that happen.

“I think that the session went well. The inspector was respectful of people’s views and if they felt uncomfortable”

“We learned more in this than in the past 7 years at school”

“I enjoyed working with Estyn in this and I hope my answers helped”

“Enjoyable”

“It made me reflect on how the school can be better at helping those experiencing sexual harassment”

“It hasn’t been invasive

“I feel that their session has been very useful for me and has given a chance to share my opinions on this topic”

“Informative”

“I feel that more of these kinds of workshops should happen as it gives pupils a choice on what to include in the curriculum”

“Useful”

“So grateful to be able to take part”

“Thank you”

I’d like to talk to

Name: