'We don't tell our teachers'– experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales

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This report considers the incidence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in the lives of secondary-aged young people and reviews the culture and processes that help protect and support young people in secondary schools in Wales. Sexual harassment occurs when a person engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of:

- violating someone's dignity; or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them

Sexual harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. In our work with pupils, we defined peer-on-peer sexual harassment as:

- making sexual comments, remarks, jokes either face-to face or online
- lifting up skirts or taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing
- making nasty comments about someone's body, gender, sexuality or looks to cause them humiliation, distress or alarm
- image-based abuse, such as sharing a nude/semi-nude photo or video without the consent of the person pictured
- sending unwanted sexual, explicit or pornographic photographs/videos to someone

The report was written in response to a request from the Minister for Education in June 2021. This review is of relevance to learners, parents and schools as well as to the Welsh Government, statutory services and third sector organisations directly involved with children and young people.

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Introduction

This report considers the incidence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in the lives of secondary-aged young people and reviews the culture and processes that help protect and support young people in secondary schools in Wales. Sexual harassment occurs when a person engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of:

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The report was written in response to a request from the Minister for Education in June 2021. This review is of relevance to learners, parents and schools as well as to the Welsh Government, statutory services and third sector organisations directly involved with children and young people.

The report includes a review of existing guidance and support for schools and other relevant agencies who work directly with children and young people. It highlights how effective schools develop and maintain a strong safeguarding culture that promotes respect and the importance of healthy, positive relationships. The report shares how strong leadership and proactive approaches encourage and empower pupils to trust their teachers, stand up to their peers, and report all forms of sexual harassment. This report also explains the

shortcomings which impact negatively on pupils' wellbeing.

The report highlights both effective practice and shortcomings seen by inspectors during school visits. The report will be of particular importance to schools as they prepare for their delivery of their Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning Experience (AOLE) as part of Curriculum for Wales. This is because relationships and sexuality education (RSE) will become a mandatory part of the curriculum for all pupils from the age of 3 in primary schools from September 2022 and for Years 7 and 8 in secondary schools, either from September 2022 or September 2023 If schools wish to delay its roll out.

The review focuses on secondary-aged pupils only. We visited 35 schools in total, of which 27 were maintained secondary schools, two were maintained all-age schools and six were independent schools. We were accompanied by inspectors from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to three of the independent schools with boarding provision.

We visited at least one secondary school in every local authority in Wales. Where a local authority had more than nine secondary schools, we visited a second school. In addition, we selected a proportionate number of schools named on the Everyone's Invited[1] website where pupils or former pupils have shared testimonies of personal experience of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. Our sample included Welsh-medium schools and faith schools.

The report summarises findings from pupil focus group activities. Inspectors had direct discussions with secondary-aged learners in interactive workshops. Pupils who took part in the workshops engaged in open discussions and completed a carefully planned work booklet about their experiences and understanding of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. Throughout this report, we have used direct quotes from pupils and, as a result, the report contains words and phrases that readers might find upsetting.

The report also provides a summary and analysis of a questionnaire that pupils were asked to complete as part of the focus group activities. Inspectors spoke to school staff about the provision for personal and social education (PSE), including relationships and sexuality education (RSE). We also asked staff about the nature and prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and how schools manage this.

We visited schools between 27 September and 8 October 2021. This was during a period of very high numbers of COVID-19 cases amongst school children and school staff across Wales. We had arranged to engage with 1,600 pupils through our visits but, due to the high number of absences, we worked with around 1,300 pupils. We are extremely grateful to school staff and pupils for their support and collaboration during a challenging time. All headteachers responded positively to our request for their school to take part in this work as they all agreed that dealing with peer-on-peer sexual harassment is an important issue.

We engaged with several relevant external stakeholders (please see Appendix 1). We also conducted interviews with officers from a minority of local authorities across Wales. We wish to acknowledge the 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 their permission to publish the tutor and pupil focus group booklets in this report for school use. We are also grateful to Professor Renold and colleagues from the Children's Commissioner's Office and NSPCC Wales for the bespoke training they provided to inspectors prior to conducting school visits.

We have published a [Supporting Resources](#) document alongside this report, which contains details of Welsh Government guidance, findings from research and useful resources for schools. In addition, the Supporting Resources includes the full findings of the pupil focus group activities, the full analysis of the pupil questionnaire and the pupil and tutor focus group booklets.

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[1] The website Everyone's Invited was also used to inform this report. This website was created as a safe space for people to discuss their experiences regarding rape culture and sexual violence. The website released the names of schools mentioned in the testimonies of survivors to expose the prevalence of rape culture.

Background

Background

Young people, the Welsh Government and many organisations have publicly shared their concern about the alleged prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among children and young people in Wales. Pupils tell us that this is happening face-to-face during school hours, but they also state that this is happening more online and after school.

Peer-on-peer sexual harassment, including online sexual harassment, is a societal issue that is also prevalent in adult life. The number of adults, in particular women, who have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space or online is extremely high, especially amongst 18 to 24-year-olds. A recent report on the 'Prevalence and reporting of sexual harassment in public places' by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for UN Women UK (2021) found that 71% of women of all ages in the UK have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space. As many as 86% of 18 to 24-year-old women said they have experienced sexual harassment. However, the number of women who reported the incident to the police is alarmingly low. The two main reasons women of all ages gave for not reporting incidents are:

I didn't think the incident was serious enough to report (55%) and

I didn't think reporting it would help' (45%) (APPG for UN Women UK, 2021, p.6).

However, 44% of women agreed that if reporting the incident would prevent it from happening again, they would be encouraged to report it.

Since June 2020, the anti-rape online community movement 'Everyone's Invited' (n.d.) has invited survivors of rape and sexual harassment to share their stories on the website with the aim of exposing rape culture through conversation, education, and support. Over 15,000 anonymous testimonies have been submitted and shared on the website. At the time of planning this work, the website included testimonies from pupils or ex-pupils about alleged peer-on-peer sexual harassment in 84 education providers in Wales. The schools named

include mainstream secondary and independent schools and a very few primary schools and further education colleges. The website also includes testimonies from pupils in providers of further and higher education in Wales.

Support for reform and change in attitudes towards sexual harassment and abuse, particularly towards girls and women, has grown considerably over the last three years through activities by organisations such as the 'Me Too' movement' (2021) (A social movement against sexual abuse and sexual harassment where individuals publicise allegations of sexual crimes. The movement's aim is to empower victims to break silence and gain empathy and solidarity from others.) However, research shows that, in many cases, both males and females who experience sexual harassment do not pursue their complaints through the courts.

Through our work with pupils during school visits, we see that a similar problem exists in secondary schools[1]. Pupils do not systematically tell their teachers about peer-on-peer sexual harassment. This is for a number of reasons:

- Young people feel that peer-on-peer sexual harassment has become normalised and almost expected.
- Their behaviours and attitudes are significantly influenced by what they see happening on social media.
- Children and young people turn more to the internet for support and guidance rather than talking with parents or other adults.
- Pupils say that teachers do not take peer-on-peer sexual harassment seriously enough.

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[1] Where secondary schools are referenced, we include secondary-aged school pupils in all-age schools.

Welsh Government policy and guidance

Within the **Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021**(Senedd Cymru, 2021), the Health and well-being Area of Learning and Experience (Area) will have equal status in law to five other areas of the curriculum (Languages,

Literacy and Communication, Mathematics and Numeracy, Science and Technology, Humanities, Expressive Arts). The Curriculum for Wales centres around 'The Four Purposes' or aims of the new curriculum. One of these four purposes under section 2(1) of the Act is 'to enable pupils and children to develop as healthy, confident individuals, ready to live fulfilling lives as members of society' (Welsh Government, 2020a). Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) will be a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales for pupils from the age of three onwards in primary schools as well as maintained nursery schools and non-maintained nursery settings from September 2022. Secondary schools who are ready to roll out Curriculum for Wales to pupils in Year 7 may do so from September 2022. However, RSE will not be mandatory until 2023 when it will apply to both Year 7 and Year 8 pupils in the first instance. The proposed draft RSE statutory guidance states:

> Schools and settings have an important role to play in creating safe and empowering environments that support learners' rights to enjoy fulfilling, healthy and safe relationships throughout their lives. This is critical to building a society which treats others with understanding and empathy, whatever their ethnicity; social economic background; disability; or sex, gender or sexuality.

In addition, Section 64 of the Curriculum and Assessment Act (Senedd Cymru, 2021) contains duties for all staff to develop knowledge and understanding of children's human rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The Welsh Government has published several relevant guidance documents to support schools in establishing a culture of safeguarding and in promoting the importance of healthy relationships and positive attitudes towards diversity, including:

Guidance for education settings on peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour (Welsh Government, 2020b)

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: Responding to incidents and safeguarding children and young people – Keeping safe online – Hwb (gov.wales) (Welsh Government, 2020c)

[Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: guidance for governors | GOV.WALES (2016)](#) (Welsh Government, 2016)

[Rights, respect, equality: Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools 2019](#) (Welsh Government, 2019a)

We have also published relevant reports on these themes. Specific Welsh Government departments and specialist support organisations have also created helpful resources for schools. A comprehensive list of relevant reports, guidance documents and resources are included in [Supporting Resources](#) document along with brief details of their content. These are all included to help schools plan and deliver both support and provision for promoting respect, positive relationships and diversity.

Main findings

Pupils

1. Around half of all pupils say they have personal experience of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and three quarters of all pupils report seeing other pupils experiencing this. Nearly all pupils understand how peer-on-peer sexual harassment can have a negative impact on young people's emotional and mental health.

2. A majority of female pupils (61%) report having personal experience of peer-on-peer harassment and many (82%) report seeing others experience it. This compares with a lower proportion of male pupils (29% and 71% respectively).

3. Peer-on-peer sexual harassment is more prevalent online and outside school than in school. Young people have substantial experience of harassment by their peers via the mobile phone, social media and gaming sites. This includes:

   - online bullying

   - posting hurtful comments especially about appearance

   - 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 girls in digital games

4. The most common forms of peer-on-peer sexual harassment during the school day are pupils catcalling and making hurtful comments, making homophobic comments (mainly towards boys), and comments about appearance.

5. Generally, pupils do not tell teachers when they experience sexual harassment. This is because it happens so regularly, they often either only tell a friend or keep it to themselves. They feel that it has become

normalised behaviour and say that teachers are not aware of the extent of the problem. In addition, pupils say teachers often dismiss incidences as trivial or encourage pupils to ignore them. Nearly half of pupils who said they had experienced sexual harassment from their peers report that they kept sexual harassment to themselves.

6. LGBTQ+ pupils have substantial personal experiences of verbal homophobic harassment, with many saying that homophobic bullying is happening all the time and that this is the most common type of harassment in their school.

7. Many pupils experience the negative impact of peer pressure around expectations of the way they should look and the consequent body shaming and bullying if their bodies do not conform with a certain image of beauty or fitness. Pupils report particular issues around the length and fit of the school skirt where girls are bullied by other girls if their skirts are too long and sexually harassed by boys if they are too short.

8. A minority of boys speak about being personally involved in sexually harassing their peers, including pressurising girls to send nude photographs. Although they acknowledge that it is wrong, many boys say that sharing nude photographs of girls amongst their friends and boasting about the number of nude photographs they have in their possession is commonplace.

9. Many pupils across the whole age range say they have not had enough sex and relationships education. Older pupils in many schools report that they have had no sex education at all and are very keen for more advice and guidance and opportunities to discuss sex and relationships in a safe and comfortable environment. Many pupils value well-delivered personal and social education lessons but they say that they do not have enough opportunities to discuss important issues such as respect, healthy relationships, harmful sexual behaviours and LGBTQ+ rights. Many say that they want to see more time given to discuss 'real life issues' in school.

10. Pupils speak highly about presentations by external speakers and experts about sex education and healthy relationships. They value having lessons from 'real life people who talk about real life problems' and want to see more of this type of learning.

Schools

1. In the most effective schools, leaders promote a strong ethos of respect in all areas of their work. They prioritise wellbeing and adopt a whole-school, proactive approach to promoting and celebrating diversity. In these schools, leaders employ high quality pastoral staff and set high expectations. 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.

2. In many schools, there is a strong team approach to safeguarding. Staff have regular and appropriate training, understand their responsibility with regard to safeguarding children and discharge their safeguarding duties well. Normally, leaders respond suitably to formal complaints by parents or pupils about peer-on-peer sexual harassment and make appropriate referrals to external agencies such as social services or the police. The majority of schools use a restorative approach to poor behaviour, bullying and known cases of harassment and use external agencies well to support their work. This usually includes providing suitable support such as counselling for victims.

3. There is a general inconsistency across school staff about their understanding of what constitutes peer-on-peer sexual harassment including wider issues relating to equality and diversity and how they impact on pupils.

4. Even within schools, there is inconsistency in the way in which teachers respond to incidences of sexual harassment. In the worst cases, teachers dismiss or ignore incidences of verbal sexual harassment by pupils towards their peers.

5. In most schools, leaders, teachers and support staff are unaware of the high prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment amongst young people because pupils do not systematically tell them about it. There is sharp polarisation between what pupils say is happening and what staff know. Sexual harassment is a societal problem that is not exclusive to education settings and schools often deal with problems that originate from outside of school. Generally, schools respond suitably when reacting to reported peer-on-peer sexual harassment but are not proactive enough in their approach to prevent it from taking place. Overall, schools do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to talk about peer-on-peer sexual harassment openly.

6. In most schools, there are suitable systems and processes for staff to record concerns and actions. Generally, staff use such systems regularly, and leaders respond swiftly to new information. Overall, schools use digital and

online systems well to log incidences of bullying and harassment. Records generally outline the nature of the incident and a narrative of how these issues have developed and are resolved.

7. Despite the fact that schools generally record behaviour and bullying incidents, they do not make productive use of the data and information available to them to categorise and analyse incidences of peer-on-peer bullying and harassment well enough or identify trends. This hinders schools from having an accurate picture of the extent of different types of bullying and harassment, such as sexual harassment. In many cases, schools do not systematically log incidences of sexual harassment and, often, their classification of 'bullying' is too broad and does not enable the school to record and evaluate instances of homophobic, sexist or racially motivated bullying.

8. Because of the issues detailed above, many leaders do not use information about trends in pupil behaviour and the impact of subsequent actions to deal with them to evaluate the effectiveness of their work. In addition, in many schools, leaders do not make enough use of the findings of the biennial 'Student Health and Wellbeing Report' (Page *et al.,* 2021) produced by School Health Research Network (SHRN) to plan provision.

9. In around half of schools, leaders have begun to develop suitable provision for the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning Experience (AOLE) (Welsh Government, 2020a) of the Curriculum for Wales for one year group, usually Year 7 or Year 8 Overall, there is adequate inclusion of topics covering healthy relationships for these year groups. In a few schools, leaders ensure appropriate provision for personal and social education (PSE) across the whole age range, including for pupils in the sixth form. This provision is a blend of dedicated PSE lessons, assemblies, workshops and some coverage in other subject lessons.

10. There is too much variation in the time allocated for PSE across schools in Wales and not enough consideration of the breadth and depth to which PSE topics are covered as pupils progress through the school. In most schools, largely due to the pressures of the current curriculum, there are no regular PSE lessons for pupils at key stage 4 or those in the sixth form. The pandemic and remote learning have impacted disproportionately on the provision for PSE and provision from external partners temporarily stopped during the lockdown periods.

11. In a small minority of schools, leaders actively elicit pupils' views on personal and social issues, including peer sexual harassment, and respond well to issues as they emerge or when they are shared by pupils and staff.

Examples of strong practice include 'concerns' boxes placed in discreet areas, a 'PSE Suggestions Box' in classrooms, older pupil mentors on duty at breaks and a pupil LGBTQ+ reference group which provides advice and support for school leaders on diversity matters.

12. All schools value the support and collaboration of external agencies, such as the school police officer and youth workers, to supplement their PSE provision. However, schools report that there is now limited external specialist support for sex education which has a negative impact on the wellbeing of many pupils.

13. All schools say they need more training and support to deliver relationships and sexuality education. This includes whole-school professional learning in how to proactively engage in conversations with pupils about gender issues and sexual harassment. They also require training on LGBTQ+ issues, for example on how to support transitioning or transgender pupils, including through the appropriate use of language or personal pronouns by which they prefer to be addressed.

14. School staff voice strongly the need for collaboration with parents and for their co-operation in dealing with incidences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. Often, these incidences happen online in the evenings and during weekends, but impact pupils' wellbeing and behaviour during the school day. This collaboration includes regular parental monitoring of children's use of social media and chat facilities.

Local authorities

1. Under the Welsh Government's (2019b) Rights, respect, equality: Statutory guidance, there is a responsibility on local authorities to monitor the termly bullying and equality data that schools share with them and advise schools on local trends. Schools report few instances of bullying to local authorities and rarely report on peer-on-peer sexual harassment. There is a lack of consistency in how local authorities collect, analyse and use school bullying and harassment data, for example to plan interventions or staff training.

Recommendations

Secondary schools should:

R1   **Recognise that peer-on-peer sexual harassment is highly prevalent in the lives of young pupils and adopt a whole-school preventative and proactive approach to dealing with it.** This importantly includes providing pupils with assurance that school staff will take every incidence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment seriously and work in partnership with parents and external agencies.

R2   **Provide sufficient, cumulative and beneficial learning opportunities for pupils across the whole age range about healthy relationships, sex and sexuality education.** This includes providing a safe, enabling and supportive environment for open and honest discussions.

R3   **Improve the way they record, categorise and analyse incidences of harassment and bullying**. Records should include details about the nature and type of incidences, the impact on the victim and appropriate actions in response to both perpetrators and victims. Leaders should ensure they review records regularly and evaluate the impact of their actions on pupils' wellbeing.

R4   **Ensure all school staff receive regular and purposeful professional learning opportunities on personal and social education matters, including relationships, sexuality, diversity and gender transitioning.** This is so that they are able to provide an affirmative, proactive approach to supporting pupils as they grow and develop into young adults.

Local authorities should:

R5   **Work with schools to collect and categorise and analyse all bullying and harassment data correctly and comprehensively**. In addition, support schools to analyse this information regularly to

identify trends and put restorative arrangements in place.

R6   **Plan suitable intervention and support on gender issues at both school and local authority level, evaluating regularly their impact on pupil wellbeing.**

R7   **Provide school staff with the necessary professional learning to adopt a proactive approach to peer-on-peer sexual harassment, including homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and harassment.**

The Welsh Government should:

R8   **Work with local authorities to improve the way they collect bullying and harassment information from schools and ensure that local authorities identify and respond to patterns and trends in behaviour**. This is in order to plan suitable guidance, training and support for schools.

R9   **Ensure schools receive regular and informative updates on best practice and suitable resources that are available to support them in the delivery of relationships and sexuality education**.

What pupils told us – findings from pupil focus group activities and online questionnaire

Pupils' understanding of peer-on-peer sexual harassment

Most boys and girls have a clear understanding of what sexual harassment is. The majority refer to consent in determining whether behaviours are appropriate or not. Most pupils, especially girls, understand that peer-on peer sexual harassment usually results in young people feeling uncomfortable, anxious or unhappy. Generally, girls have comprehensive knowledge of the different types of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and the direct negative impact on victims. Boys also understand what constitutes sexual harassment, but they have a narrower understanding of its effect. Girls' definitions are broad and include feeling objectified, judged and constrained, as well as being treated with a lack of respect. Boys' views are less nuanced than the girls' and tend to focus on the most obvious aspects such as use of language and behaviours that constitute sexual harassment.

Generally, there is a difference between what older and younger pupils say. Older pupils generally base their responses on what they know and have experienced over time whereas younger pupils (those in Year 8) write and speak more generally about what they think might be the case. Also, the older pupils are, the more clearly they express incidents in terms of sexual harassment, whilst for many of the younger pupils (Year 8 and the majority of Year 9) it is 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.

In response to the pupil questionnaire, 46% of all pupils say they have personal experience of some form of sexual harassment while 76% report seeing others experience this. Pupils who did not select a sex or identify as male or female report a higher rate of peer-on-peer harassment with 64% having personal experience of it. Many female pupils (86%) report personal experience of peer-on-peer harassment or seeing others experience this. This compares with a lower proportion of male pupils (74%). Twice as many girls (61%) report having

personal experience of peer-on-peer sexual harassment than boys (29%).

Pupils' experience of peer-on-peer sexual harassment increases as they get older. A greater proportion of older pupils report seeing others experience peer-on-peer sexual harassment (see Figure 1). Nearly all Year 13 pupils (95%) report seeing this harassment, with 72% reporting seeing it in school, 75% outside of school and 75% online. Only 20% of Year 13 pupils report not seeing and experiencing peer-on-peer sexual harassment online.
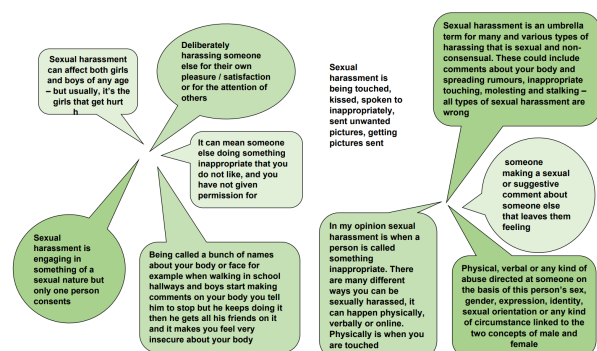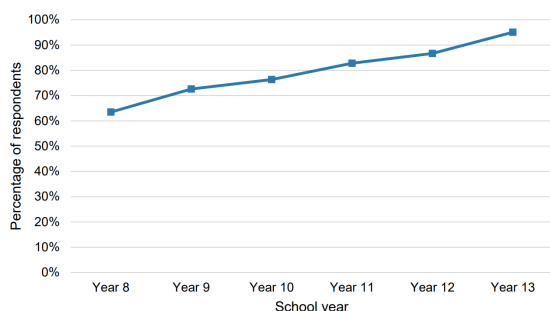

Figure 1: Pupils who reported having seen others experience peer-on-peer sexual harassment, by school year

Peer-on-peer sexual harassment in school

Across every school, the most common occurrences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in school are catcalling, making homophobic comments mainly towards boys, and comments about the body. Most pupils across the age range

say that hurtful comments by peers about appearance is one of the most common forms of sexual harassment they experience. This type of sexual harassment happens both online and face to face. The sexualisation or objectification of the body – both for boys and girls – and issues around fitness trigger cat calling, name calling and public body shaming including 'fat shaming'.

In nearly all cases, girls' responses focus on what they are experiencing themselves with limited 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"**.

Nearly all pupils comment to some degree on homophobic name calling in corridors in their schools, which often pupils and a few teachers identify as **"just banter"**. Boys, in particular say that boys are the main perpetrators of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic verbal abuse. Many LGBTQ+ pupils note that homophobic bullying is happening all the time and that this is the most common type of harassment in school – **"every time we walk down the corridor, someone will call names at us"**.

Many pupils speak about peer pressure and expectations about the way they should look and the consequent body shaming and bullying if their bodies do not conform with a certain image of beauty or fitness. Generally, boys and girls say 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 identify substantial anxieties around being too skinny or too fat and how peer pressure and comments from other girls about body image make them feel inadequate and unattractive. Name calling such as **"cow"** or **"fatty"** and hurtful remarks such as **"starve yourself"** or **"hide your stretch marks"** can result in some girls dieting to lose weight so that they look like their slimmer peers. A few describe this as aiming to look **"prettier and sexier"**. Girls also speak about pressure from television, celebrities and social media and how seeing **"the perfect female body"** may lead to girls developing eating disorders.

Pupils understand that finding other pupils attractive is healthy an natural. However, many boys feel that girls are pressured to look good for them. They often blame other girls for this and describe the 'cat-calling' culture amongst girls

that exists in school and online. A majority of the boys are of the view that all the girls want a boyfriend and therefore they are prepared to alter the way they look to achieve this. Many boys are of the view that when girls show any parts of their body, by wearing short or revealing clothes, they are sending out a message to boys that they are seeking sexual attention. A minority state that girls want the boys to cat-call them or they want to be touched by boys. As they get older, there is an increasing prevalence of boys judging and ranking girls' bodies and making comparisons between them based on the body shape, size or perceived level of sexiness. Also, boys admit to staring at girls but do not perceive this as a form of sexual harassment but rather normal **"boy behaviour"**.

LGBTQ+ pupils have substantial personal experiences of verbal homophobic harassment because of their body shape or appearance. For example, lesbian girls talk of being called a **"fat lezzie"**, even though they are not overweight. The actions or appearance of homosexual boys are often called out by peers with comments such as **"that's' so gay"** or **"your hair is so gay"**. Often, heterosexual boys will tease homosexual peers saying they **"fancy"** them and want to **"bang them"**.

A few girls say that 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 talk of how they **"hate the way they look"** and how upset they are because their schools do not allow make-up. This may lead to significant emotional problems for them as well as make them open to peer sexual harassment. For example, a minority of boys say that girls who wear make-up are **"picked on"** and called names like **"slag"**.

School uniform and the sexualisation of girls

Boys and girls are highly vocal about issues around clothing choices, particularly the school skirt and the sexualisation of girls in general. Most girls and the majority of boys discuss issues around the length and fit of the school skirt. They say that girls are bullied by other girls if their skirts are too long and sexually harassed by boys if they are too short.

"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 short

skirt, boys will use that as a way of consent – you are asking for it.”

The majority of girls have some experience of having their skirt lifted up during their time in school, blaming boys for **“always pulling up girls’ skirts or looking up their skirts when they sit down”**. A few girls say 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 **“to stop boys from looking”**. Other girls say they wear tight skirts to make it more difficult for the boys to lift them up. Many girls overall express annoyance that teachers tell them off for wearing tight skirts but don’t tell the boys to stop groping and catcalling. Younger pupils in Year 8 and a few in Year 9 say that younger boys always try to lift girls’ skirts up as they run by but dismiss this as boys being **“just a nuisance”** and **“there’s nothing sexual involved”**. Younger boys comment that they think lifting up girls’ skirts is mainly **“for fun”**. Boys talk of times where they have lifted skirts because they have been dared by their peers to do it and earn social approval for doing so.

Many girls report substantial peer pressure to roll up their school skirt to make it shorter and then it being sexualised by both boys and girls. They describe how they feel anxious if they follow the trend but also discuss anxieties they will experience if they don’t. Girls report 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. Very few boys show empathy towards girls. However, in the sixth form, boys discuss the issue of objectifying girls and how society blames women for their choice of clothing. They agree that this is wrong and needs addressing, with one pupil saying,

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

Online sexual harassment

Pupils say that peer-on-peer harassment happens more online than in school (Figure 2). They speak comprehensively about mobile phones, social media and

gaming sites and the issues associated with them.

Figure 2: Responses to question "Where does pupil sexual harassment happen most often?"
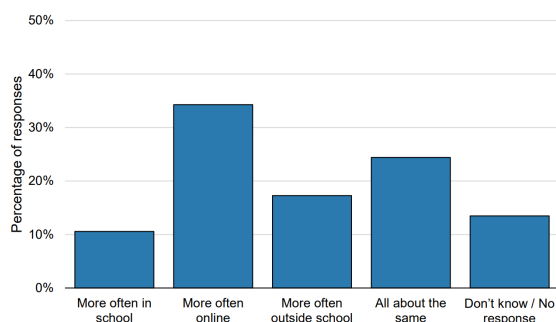
These are the main themes associated with online activity as identified by the pupils:

- 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 value owning a mobile phone, they understand how the problems associated with them can impact negatively on mental health. From their comments it is clear that young people feel there is a pressure to post popular comments regularly and to be 'liked' on social media.

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

Boys and girls alike talk widely about online peer pressure to be popular on social

media and needing to gain 'likes' and 'followers'.

Hurtful comments by peers are more commonly made online than in school. Girls, in particular, receive negative comments from other girls because they have shared a photo of themselves on their profile page on social media. They feel pressure to conform with certain expectations about shape and looks as they perceive that attractive young girls regularly post pictures of themselves, expecting others to make complimentary comments about them and the way they look. Boys admit to sending and receiving vulgar comments and texts from other boys, often related to body shaming or making fun of other boys' posts. They perceive this to be **"normal"**.

In a few instances, there is more targeted bullying between girls where they spread rumours about other girls' sexual activity, dare other girls to have sex or send photos of themselves in their underwear. Girls 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 are concerned about the effects of online bullying, saying that this can lead to anxiety, depression and body dysmorphia, which could also lead to eating disorders and self-hatred.

In terms of sexting, sexualisation of peers and sending nude photographs, nearly all pupils from Year 10 onwards identify common issues. However, many do not realise that this is a criminal act and the impact of a criminal record on their future career or aspirations following prosecution. By sending or receiving a naked picture, a child may commit criminal offences relating to the creation and distribution of indecent images of children under section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 (which includes images of those aged 16 and 17 by virtue of section 45 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003), section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and section 62 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. Sexting by children could also lead to causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity under section 8 (child under 13) or section 10 (child) of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

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 among older pupils. Most girls say that boys asking for nude photographs of them is a regular occurrence and speak about the constant pressure from boys to send photographs. For example, one girl noted, **"It is a daily occurrence – it is very common. Boys ask for nudes or keep spamming your phone."**

Most girls are aware of the dangers of sending photos via text and the threat of anyone sharing them further. All girls who talk of their experience of sexting say that it is only boys who ask for nude photos but a few of them also blame girls for complying **"just to please boys and to be more liked or loved"**.

More than half of the boys speak 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 talk about the pressure by other boys to send nudes or sexual content. Many boys say sharing nude photographs of girls amongst their friends and boasting about the number of nude photographs they have in their possession is commonplace. Although they admit to doing it, the majority of boys acknowledge that this is wrong and disrespectful.

A minority of older boys say that pornography is shared around as **"boys want to impress their friends"**. Normally the content is not of someone they know. When asked if they think this is acceptable – a minority comment that it is **"ok as long as you don't know the girls in the pictures"**. Overall, only a few LGBTQ+ pupils say they have personal experience of sexting, stating that members of the LGBTQ+ community have more respect for each other than other young people. One shared...

"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."

Many boys identify grooming by older people as a significant online risk. This includes unknown people contacting boys and sending 'friend requests', which they say is a regular occurrence. A minority of boys note that random people often come online and that it is **"too easy to communicate with people you don't know"** via online games. Nearly all are aware that they shouldn't talk to

people they don't know online or accept friend requests from strangers.

Pupils speak knowledgeably about catfishing where pupils create fake accounts to send unsolicited images and harass other pupils. They state that catfishing is a common problem and usually involves older men targeting young girls. A substantial number of girls say they have been targeted, usually by receiving inappropriate pictures and texts from strangers and not from peers through a popular digital social media app.

The majority of young people know how to identify fake accounts and feel able to block them. Most young people understand the term 'grooming' and say they would report it if it happened to them. Older girls talk of receiving messages from unknown men and boys on a social media site that is popular for sharing photographs, asking them to send images of themselves, **"begging us for nudes"**.

Most boys say that they have played games that they are legally too young to play. Older boys say they play these games regularly and enjoy them whilst the younger boys say they are pressurised into swearing and **"talking dirty"** when playing these games. Boys in the sixth form have a reasonable awareness of the level of toxicity of language used in gaming fora, including the normalised use of terms such as **"slut"** and **"whore"** when referring to women. Girls who speak about this mostly identify a problem around inappropriate games that often shame women. Girls speak about the sexist portrayal of women in games that are popular with boys, where girls are treated in a derogatory and sexualised manner. A few boys adopt this tone in the way they speak to girls during online games,

"Boys treat women differently because games portray women as being inferior to men."

Why pupils don't tell their teachers about sexual harassment and where they go to for support

In discussions with young people in the focus groups and through the online questionnaire, it is evident that pupils do not tell their teachers everything about

their experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. In many cases, this is because they think this behaviour is normal and not worthy of a complaint. Also, they do not wish to draw attention to themselves. In addition, pupils think that sexual harassment complaints are often ignored or not dealt with well enough by schools. They feel that, too often, verbal sexual harassment is classed as **"banter"** by peers and adults alike. Many girls say that they have had negative experiences when making a verbal complaint about boys' attitudes or behaviour to teachers. They give examples of teachers' dismissive responses to their complaints, such as, **"take no notice of it"**, or **"they're just being silly"** and, most often, **"boys will be boys"**.

A minority of pupils note that sexual harassment is sometimes addressed in assemblies or lessons, and that they receive some guidance about it. However, pupils also note that complaints are often ignored by school staff or are not dealt with properly. They say that there is a lack of understanding about what sexual harassment is and how pupils should make complaints. It is clear from pupils' responses that many of them feel that schools underestimate the prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in the lives of young people. Pupils say that teachers do not understand the extent of the problem, in particular what is happening online, **"It is happening more than you think"**.

Most LGBTQ+ pupils feel that only a few teachers would do anything about it if they heard pupils using homophobic slurs against them. A high percentage of non-binary pupils feel that their complaints are ignored or are not dealt with. Those that did not wish to disclose their sex or preferred gender generally feel that issues of sexual harassment are ignored or not dealt with well, but also acknowledge that there is some guidance for them on what to do about it.

Overall, many LGBTQ+ pupils state in group discussions and in the questionnaire that they are angry or upset that their teachers do not respond when they hear homophobic names being used. Many LGBTQ+ pupils feel that their schools don't understand the extent of the homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying and want teachers to be educated on how to spot it and deal with it.

According to pupils, there are only a few secondary schools who always deal well with incidences of negative or sexist attitudes when they are made aware of them.

Pupils who have experienced harassment are less likely to believe complaints

are taken seriously (Figure 3). Those who did not select a sex or identify as male or female are most likely to believe complaints are never or rarely taken seriously. Overall, girls are less likely to believe complaints are taken seriously than boys. This may be because they experience peer-on-peer sexual harassment more often.

Figure 3: Responses to question "In your opinion, do people in your school take complaints about sexual harassment seriously and respond appropriately?"
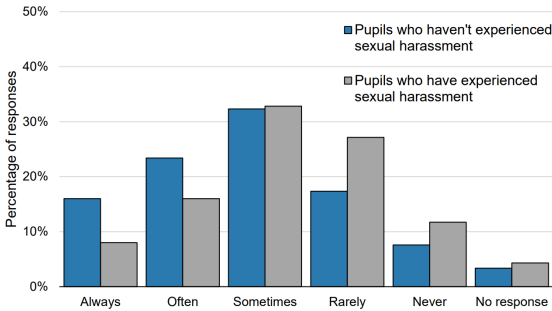
In the questionnaire, 46% of pupils who said they had experienced sexual harassment from their peers report that they kept the experience to themselves. Girls are more likely to keep sexual harassment to themselves than boys and are also less likely to tell an authority figure. However, girls are much more likely to tell their friends than boys (68% compared with 36%). Only 22% of all pupils said they told a teacher and 30% told their parents or carers. Overall, the majority of pupils who had been sexually harassed had spoken to their friends about it.

When completing the questionnaire, pupils who haven't personally experienced harassment were automatically directed to a question asking them what they would do if they did experience it. More pupils who have not experienced sexual harassment believe that they would stand up to it if faced with the issue or tell a responsible adult. These results differ greatly from those who have experienced harassment as illustrated below.

Figure 4: Responses to question "How did / would you deal with sexual harassment?"
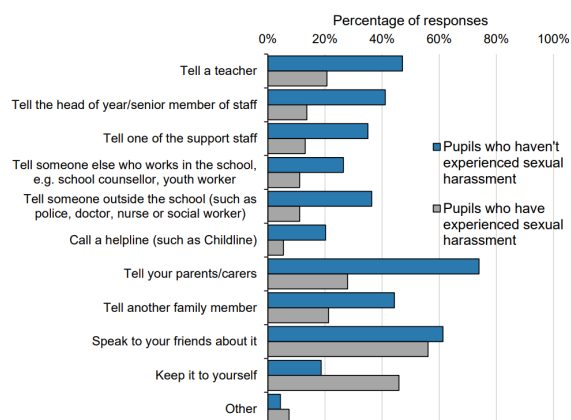
In focus group discussions about sources of support for online sexual harassment, sexting and sending or receiving nude photographs, pupils typically say they reach out to their friends as they generally feel more comfortable telling a friend about it than telling a responsible adult or family member. A few note that they are too scared to tell anyone at all.

A few note 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 understand the need to report any activity of peer-on-peer sexual harassment on social media, they do not typically state that they would tell their teachers.

In terms of more general support for any experience of harassment, more boys say they would tell a teacher than girls. Only a very few pupils – less than 10% – mention outside support services such as Childline, NSPCC and the police. A very few pupils who attend faith schools say that they would turn to their church or a religious figure for help. A minority of pupils in independent boarding schools say they would talk to their houseparent.

A few pupils, mostly girls, say they keep worries and feelings to themselves. A few of these say they would **"talk to themselves"** using a commonly used online social media platform. Many LGBTQ+ pupils also note that they would also do this as they are anxious about talking about their feelings about sex, gender and sexuality with others.

Young people's views and experience of personal ad social education

Many pupils value personal and social education lessons but say they do not have enough opportunities to discuss issues that they deem important in these lessons. They feel that some of the content, such as lessons on substance misuse, is useful and important. However, most believe that schools need to spend more time educating pupils about respect, healthy relationships, harmful sexual behaviours and LGBTQ+ rights. Many say that they want to see more time given to discuss **"real life issues"** in school and that an occasional assembly about sexual harassment or another topic is **"usually not enough"**. They also say that they **"want teachers who are interested in the subject to teach it"**.

Many pupils across the whole age range say they have not had enough sex education during their time in school. Sixth form pupils, in particular, are very eager to have more sex education, with many saying they have not received any sex education at all. In a large majority of schools, older pupils say they enjoy PSE activities when they happen but would like to have more opportunities to discuss healthy relationships, body positivity and how to maintain romantic connections.

"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."

Young people particularly enjoy sessions run by external speakers who give presentations and run workshops. Nearly all pupils see the importance of hearing **"real life stories from real people"** and agree that the lessons and assemblies from the school police officer are highly beneficial. A majority of pupils recall particularly helpful assemblies delivered by the school police officer on sexting and sending or sharing nude or inappropriate images. A few older pupils talk about a video they have seen on consensual sex, known as 'the tea video', but feel that **"just one assembly on this isn't enough"**. Other pupils

say that they have had **"good assemblies"** on the Pride movement and LGBTQ+ rights but that there is usually no opportunity for further discussion about these issues in lessons afterwards.

In schools where the provision for PSE is strong, pupils speak highly of valuable opportunities to discuss healthy relationships, including how to communicate appropriately and respectfully with peers, and talk about consent. Pupils also comment on how they sometimes have useful discussions around relationships in religious education lessons, especially attitudes towards women and girls in different cultures and faiths.

What pupils want their schools to know

"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"

We asked pupils what more they think schools can do to deal with peer-on-peer sexual harassment. Many believe that schools should teach pupils about sexual harassment more regularly, particularly in lessons such as the Welsh Baccalaureate and PSE. They also stipulate that organising more assemblies and bringing in external visitors would help to educate pupils about it. More boys than girls say that they believe that schools already do enough. More boys state that placing information such as posters around the school would be enough to deal with the matter.

Many pupils, particularly girls, refer to schools needing to create a safer and more comfortable environment where pupils can talk to teachers or other members of staff about their experiences. A few suggest that boys and girls should be separated during the conversations so that they feel more comfortable discussing the issues.

Many non-binary pupils also believe that a safer environment for discussions should be created.

A majority of pupils refer to the need to change staff attitudes, with many pupils believing that staff should take matters more seriously and that harsher punishments should be put in place for incidences of harassment. Furthermore, a

few pupils believe that there is a need for increased awareness and understanding, either by staff paying more attention when sexual harassment happens, or by raising staff awareness and understanding of peer-on-peer sexual harassment.

Non-binary pupils and pupils who preferred not to define their sex or gender make particular reference to increasing staff awareness about transgender matters. Many want schools to address the harmful impact of homophobic name-calling because it affects pupils' mental and emotional health.

What pupils want their schools to do

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

1. what they would like their school to **stop** doing,

2. what they would like their school to **start** doing and

3. what they would like their school to **continue** doing
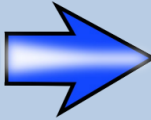
What pupils want their schools to do

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

1. what they would like their school to **stop** doing,
2. what they would like their school to **start** doing and
3. what they would like their school to **continue** doing

STOP	▶	→
"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"	"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"	"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"

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. This includes 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 say that they want schools to stop thinking that only girls are victims of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. There is 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 repeat lessons on drug and alcohol misuse.

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

Pupils are unanimous in their views that schools should **continue** with lessons and assemblies by the school police officer. It is evident that all pupils across all areas of Wales value this provision. There is a strong agreement by pupils that

schools should continue to have external speakers and **"real life people who talk about real life problems"**. Many pupils comment on the need for schools to continue to provide the support they need and to have the right staff to talk about problems with them. A minority of pupils say they want their schools to continue to talk about and promote respect. These pupils are those who attend schools with a strong ethos of respect and diversity.

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

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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**
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> 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.

Why young people don't tell their teachers about peer-on-peer sexual harassment, and why schools do not know the extent of the problem

It is helpful to explore in more detail some of the reasons why schools are not aware of the prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment, including considering why young people don't tell staff about their experiences.

Too many schools work reactively around this issue and are not proactive enough in their approach. In essence, they are too reliant on waiting for pupils to approach school staff with complaints or concerns. In the majority of schools, once staff are aware of a problem, there are processes in place to address it and incidents are dealt with appropriately. However, schools do not talk about peer-on-peer sexual harassment openly and regularly enough to enable pupils to speak up safely. In most schools, staff are unable to describe any measures their school have taken to proactively promote a culture where staff and pupils refute harassment and stand up to any negative attitudes towards sexuality or gender. Pupils in the same schools told us how much they want open, direct conversation about this so that issues are brought to the surface and called out.

There is often a lack of understanding of what constitutes peer-on-peer sexual harassment and how it impacts on pupils. School staff do not always have a complete understanding of what is covered within the term sexual harassment nor do they have a consistent comprehension of wider related issues to do with equality and diversity. There is also a variable level of tolerance for comments that are homophobic or sexist. In too many instances, staff ignore incidents or dismiss them as something less. Although reactive safeguarding processes are robust in schools, the wider culture of safeguarding to support pupils in this area is generally underdeveloped. This prevents pupils from understanding how abstract values such as 'kindness and respect' that schools pride themselves on promoting, can be translated into practice and thus become part of effective strategies to call out sexual harassment and homophobia.

Schools do not make productive and effective use of the data and information available to them to categorise and analyse incidences of

bullying and harassment. In many cases, schools do not systematically log incidences of sexual harassment. Under the [2019 statutory anti-bullying guidance](#) (Welsh Government, 2019a) there are clear reporting requirements for schools in terms of bullying and harassment. This includes reporting the number of prejudice related bullying incidents and bullying incidents based on sex, gender and sexuality. There are expectations for local authorities to collect termly data reports from schools. They are required to monitor equality data and advise schools on local trends. However, in the documentation seen during visits, it is clear that schools report few instances of bullying and rarely report harassment to the local authority. Leaders told us that they do not receive feedback from local authority officers regarding termly bullying reports. We engaged with over a third of all local authorities in Wales to enquire about how they used the data to inform planning. There is currently no statutory requirement for local authorities to respond to this information or to pass it on to the Welsh Government.

Most schools who use a digital or online information management system to record incidents and concerns, do not use it well enough to identify shortcomings or patterns of behaviour. Although staff at all levels have access to the system and, in many cases, use it well to share information with relevant leaders they do not make wider, more comprehensive use of these systems. In a few cases, the classification of 'bullying' is too broad and does not enable the school to record and evaluate instances of homophobic, sexist or even racially motivated bullying. In other examples, although a school may have a record of several incidents of verbal harassment, it is unable to state how many of these are related to sexual harassment. Clarifying the definitions of harassment and bullying would enable leaders to gather valuable information on trends and patterns of behaviour and plan suitable provision to respond to shortcomings. In addition, actions taken by schools are typically detentions or temporary in-house suspensions. There is little evidence of schools recording their restorative responses, although we know that schools do provide this, often in collaboration with external partners. Including detail of support and intervention for both victim and perpetrator would be useful and beneficial. In time, further analysis of the success of such provision on behaviour and attitudes would enable senior leaders to draw secure conclusions about the quality of leadership and provision through its impact on pupil wellbeing.

Schools' use of their local SHRN report to plan for provision and improvement is underdeveloped. Nearly all maintained secondary schools in Wales take part in the School Health Research Network (SHRN) survey, which is undertaken every two years. Pastoral leaders recognise the survey's importance and support its administration well. As well as published national reports using

the data, schools receive their own comprehensive 'Student Health and Wellbeing Report', which highlights strengths and areas for improvement in terms of pupils' standards of wellbeing, including issues of sexual behaviour. These reports contain high level analyses and are a powerful tool for schools to use for curriculum planning and to engage with pupils and parents on issues that come to light. However, overall, schools' use of their SHRN report to plan for provision and improvement is not effective enough. In a few cases, leaders acknowledge shortcomings and patterns of behaviour around sexual issues in their SHRN report but make few changes to provision.

Appendix 1: 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 completed by approximately 1,250 pupils
- Scrutiny of relevant school documents including bullying reports, a sample of PSE schemes of work and 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, 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 six girls and six 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. In total, we also saw six 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.

In addition, we had discussions with a range of other organisations who have an interest in this field, including seeking initial feedback on emerging findings from most of them. We engaged with:

Professor EJ Renold, Cardiff University

The Children's Commissioner's office

Welsh Women's Aid

The NSPCC

Wales Schools Police Programme Manager,

Welsh Government Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Team

Ofsted

Appendix 2: Definitions and glossary

Body Dysmorphia	A mental health condition where a person spends a lot of time worrying about flaws in their appearance. These flaws are often unnoticeable to others.
Body shaming	Criticism of someone on the basis of the shape, size or appearance of their body
Catcalling	Shouting or calling out sexually harassing or derisive suggestive comments at someone publicly
Catfishing	When a person creates a fake persona or a fake profile on a social media platform, usually with intention to lure others into a relationship
ELSA	Emotional literacy support assistants who have been trained in the delivery of emotional support for children and young people
Fat shaming	Expressing mockery or criticism about someone judged to be fat or overweight
Grooming	When someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so that they can manipulate, exploit and/or abuse them
Harmful sexual behaviours	Harmful Sexual Behaviours (HSB) can be defined as: sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards themselves or others or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult. This definition of HSB includes both contact and non-contact behaviours such as grooming, exhibitionism, voyeurism and sexting or recording images of sexual acts via smart phones or social media applications. (Wales Safeguarding Procedures, 2020)
Peer-on-peer sexual harassment	Persistent unwanted conduct of a sexual nature by a child towards another child that can occur online and offline. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment. (Department for Education, 2021)

Sexting (sharing nude images)	Writing and sharing explicit messages or images with other people (Welsh Government, 2020c); Sexting commonly refers to the sharing of illicit images, videos or other content between two or more persons. Sexting can cover a broad range of activities, from the consensual sharing of an image between two children of a similar age in a relationship to instances of children being exploited, groomed, and bullied into sharing images, which in turn may be shared with peers or adults without their consent. (Crown Prosecution Service, 2017)
The protected characteristics	The nine protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation (Great Britain, 2010)

Numbers – quantities and proportions

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Appendix 3: References

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Supporting Resources: Explanatory note

This Supporting Resources document has been produced to help schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their current provision for relationships and sexuality education and plan for improvement. We have included relevant and important Welsh Government guidance, shared details of useful resources and provided links to relevant reports published in recent years. We have also included key messages from research to help inform schools as they plan their provision for the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience as part of Curriculum for Wales.

By kind permission of Professor EJ Renold, Cardiff University, we have included the pupil focus group booklet and the tutor booklet used during our school visits. We have also included the pupil questionnaire. These are now available for schools to use if they wish to gather pupil views as part of their self-evaluation and improvement work.

Finally, we have included a synthesis of the full findings of the pupil focus group activities and a full analysis of the pupil questionnaire. The main report contains a summary of both.

National guidance documents and resources for schools

Welsh Government guidance

Guidance for education settings on peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour 2020 (Welsh Government, 2020a)

This guidance provides education settings with practical tools to prevent and respond to instances of peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour taking place both inside and outside of school. This includes digital abuse and exploitation. The Welsh Government advises education settings to use this guidance to put in place clear policies to prevent and respond to instances of peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour, so that all children who attend their setting can realise their right to be safe and their right to an education

The guidance gives examples of what sexual harassment and digital sexual abuse and harassment may look like in practice. It describes how education settings have a statutory duty to safeguard children and young people, promote their welfare and uphold their rights. The guidance highlights the importance of remembering that both boys and girls can display harmful sexual behaviour. Evidence suggests that welfare responses tend to be given to girls, whereas boys' harmful sexual behaviour is seen as a criminal justice issue. Children who have experienced peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour should be supported to speak out, listened to and able to access the help they need, both in and out of education settings.

The guidance shares advice about how to implement a whole school approach in relation to sexual harassment and abuse and how to engage with parents.

It includes key features of a successful multi agency approach in responding to peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour.

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: Responding to incidents and safeguarding children and young people – Keeping safe online – Hwb

(gov.wales) (Welsh Government, 2020b)

This is a Welsh Government document specifically written for headteachers, safeguarding leaders and senior leadership teams in education settings. There is also a practitioner guide available for teachers. The guidance aims to support schools and further education colleges in responding to incidents of sharing nudes or semi-nudes (previously referred to as 'sexting' and encompasses all types of image sharing incidents) and ensuring their response is part of their safeguarding arrangements.

The guidance states the importance of not criminalising children unnecessarily. Young children creating and sharing nudes and semi-nudes may be putting themselves and others at risk, but it is often the result of natural curiosity about sex and their exploration of relationships. The guidance stresses the importance of considering incidences on a case-by-case basis.

The report shares guidance on the use of assessment tools such as Hackett's 'Continuum of children and young people's sexual behaviour model'. It also includes a handling responses flow chart to guide school staff when they deal with incidents. There is guidance for teachers on how to approach this safely – considering safeguarding issues, the perspective of the child/young person, promoting dialogue and empowering them. It makes clear that external practitioners should only be used to enhance an education setting's provision, and not to provide stand-alone sessions in isolation.

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: guidance for governors | GOV.WALES (2016) (Welsh Government, 2016b)

This Welsh Government guidance informs school governors of the issues surrounding violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, and the need to have an appropriate policy in place to help staff to recognise the signs of abuse and how to get help for themselves, to assist their colleagues and the young people in their school. The guide contains a number of actions that governors can take to make their school safer. There is a checklist to enable governors to determine how well their school is equipped to support children and young people on issues of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) (Wales) Act 2015 sets out an expectation that school staff receive

relevant training to help them identify and understand violence against women.

The Welsh Government five-year **Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: National Strategy 2016-2021** (Welsh Government, 2016c) is currently being reviewed, and issues relating to young people have been considered throughout. A public consultation on a draft new strategy is planned for later in 2021.

The VAWDASV group in Welsh Government continues to fund Hafan Cymru's (2021) Spectrum project, which promotes the importance of healthy relationships and raises awareness of VAWDASV. Spectrum also delivers training for school staff and governors about understanding the impact of domestic abuse on a child and promotes a whole school approach to tackling domestic abuse.

National-action-plan-preventing-and-responding-to-child-sexual-abuse.pdf (gov.wales) (Welsh Government, 2019)

This Welsh Government document on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse was published in July 2019. Objective 2 is 'Increased awareness in children of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong' (Welsh Government, 2019, p.6). It includes a section on peer-on-peer harmful sexual behaviour. There are four actions in total to achieve Objective 2. The first two are for Welsh Government and the latter are for Safeguarding Boards (Welsh Government, 2019, p.8):

- Issue Relationships and Sexuality Education in Schools Guidance

- Develop a poster campaign on unsafe and unhealthy relationships for children and parents/carers

- Promote information to children and parent/carers on healthy/unhealthy relationships

- Develop a clear referral pathway for children who display inappropriate sexualised behaviour to receive and early help assessment

The document clarifies why early intervention and support is important to prevent harm to both victims and perpetrators and to protect them from further harm or abuse of other children.

[**Enhancing digital resilience in education: An action plan to protect children and young people online**](#) (Welsh Government, 2020)

Originally published as the Online safety action plan for children and young people in Wales in July 2018, the action plan set out the Welsh Government's commitment to working with a range of partner organisations to enhance online safety provision, policy and practice across Wales. In 2020, the action plan evolved to reflect the important role cyber resilience and data security has in ensuring children and young people are safe and secure online. Providing a progress update on the original actions, it sets out the details of 71 actions, including 26 new workstreams, which are being taken forward by Welsh Government to enhance digital resilience provision, policy and practice across Wales.

Particularly relevant actions include the work with partners such as NCA-CEOP (action 2.19), Common Sense Education (6.10) and Childnet (action 6.11), to make bilingual online safety education resources available to schools in Wales on Hwb. These resources can support practitioners to address the issue of online sexual harassment, including the sharing of nude images, and discuss healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviours with their learners. (See [Online sexual harassment](#), [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes](#), [Online relationships](#) and [Online bullying](#) issue pages on the [Keeping safe online](#) area of Hwb)

[**Keeping learners safe | GOV.WALES**](#) (Welsh Government, 2016a)

Comprehensive guidance for local authorities and governing bodies on arrangements for safeguarding children

Resources and toolkits

These useful resources and toolkits that are available, free of charge, to schools to support their relationships and sexuality education programme.

[**Agenda**](#) (n.d.) – Supporting children and young people in making positive relationships matter

Agenda is a resource for educational practitioners who want to support children and young people aged 7-18 to make positive relationships matter in their school

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and community. This free and downloadable resource has been co-created by Cardiff University, NSPCC Cymru/Wales, Welsh Women's Aid and the Children's Commissioner for Wales. It is suitable for secondary schools and covers a broad range of relevant topics.

A further resource for schools, **Crush** (Agenda, n.d.) has now been developed and is specifically designed to help schools develop their RSE programme.

Violence against women, domestic violence and sexual violence toolkit for schools and FE colleges:

[Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) educational toolkit | GOV.WALES (Welsh Government, 2016b)](#)

Childnet International (2018a) [Step up, speak up: Teaching Toolkit](#): a series of lesson plans and activities for 13-17-year-old pupils that address online sexual harassment amongst young people:

How to respond to incidences of pupils sharing nudes toolkit:

[https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/6ad01b82-3a2c-4bf4-bd21-f5bac42655a4/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-guidance-for-education-settings-in-wales-final-english-011220.pdf](#) (Welsh Government, 2020b)

Peer-on-peer abuse toolkit:

[farrer--co-safeguarding-peer-on-peer-abuse-toolkit-2019.pdf (Farrer & Co, 2019)](#)

NSPCC Resources on peer-on-peer sexual abuse in education and healthy relationships 2021:

[Resources on peer-on-peer sexual abuse in education and healthy relationships | NSPCC Learning (NSPCC, 2021a)](#)

Step up, speak up Toolkit (13–17-year-olds) Resources on peer-on-peer sexual

abuse in education and healthy relationships 2021:

[Repository – Keeping safe online – Hwb (gov. wales) (Hwb, n.d.)](#)

Guidance and training for schools to deal with online harmful sexual behaviour:

[Supporting children who display harmful sexual behaviour online – Childnet (Childnet International, 2018b)](#)

[An evidence-informed framework for children and young people displaying harmful sexual behaviours NSPCC:](#)

[Harmful sexual behaviour framework | NSPCC Learning (NSPCC, 2019)](#)

[This framework includes a helpful assessment tool for education professionals to use to assess the level of appropriateness of children and young people's sexual behaviour](#)

Services from external agencies available to schools

[Welsh Women's Aid Children Matter project](#) (Welsh Women's Aid, 2021a)

This project works to ensure the needs and experiences of children and young people impacted by domestic abuse are identified and met. Welsh Women's Aid aims to make sure that all children and young people understand domestic abuse and the help available, and that those affected by domestic abuse are identified, supported and protected, have access to high-quality specialist services in every area, and are supported to recover from the abuse to develop their full potential. The organisation does this by promoting education and community approaches to prevention and early intervention, challenging inequality between girls and boys, improving safety and minimising the immediate and future impact on children and young people of witnessing or experiencing violence and abuse.

Their work includes prevention work in schools and communities to minimise adverse childhood experiences.

NSPCC Learning 'Speak out Stay Safe' Online programme for primary school pupils (NSPCC, 2021b)

The [Speak out Stay safe programme | NSPCC Learning is an online safeguarding programme for primary aged children but could also be used with Year 7 pupils.](#)

The Childline Remove Photo Service (Childline, n.d.)

This is a helpful advice document and [toolkit](#) to help young people and schools to remove from the internet any nude images or videos that have been shared online

Estyn reports

[Healthy and Happy](#) (Estyn, 2019) – School impact on pupils' health and wellbeing.

[A review of healthy relationships education](#) (Estyn, 2017)

[Celebrating Diversity and promoting inclusion](#) (Estyn, 2020) (Good practice in supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners in schools and colleges)

[Involving Parents](#) (Estyn, 2018) – Communication between schools and parents of school-aged children

Key messages from research

Harmful sexual behaviour

The term 'harmful sexual behaviour' (HSB) is used to describe a continuum of sexual behaviours, from normal to abusive and violent. There is a range of common and healthy behaviours at different developmental stages. When a child or young person behaves in ways considered to be outside this range, their behaviour may be called 'harmful' because it is harmful to themselves or others.

Hackett (2010) has proposed a continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, which should help professionals identify which behaviours are potentially harmful and which represent healthy sexual development.

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
• Developmentally expected • Socially acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Problematic and concerning behaviours • Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected • No overt elements of victimisation • Content issues may be unclear • May lack repricocity or equal power • May include levels of compulsivity	• Victimising intent or outcome • Includes miuse of power • Coercion or force to ensure victim compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim • May include elements of expressive violence	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • nstrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator • Sadism

In 2011, the Department for Education of the UK Government published a review of the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood, examining the pressures children are under to grow up too quickly. **Letting children be children: Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood** (Bailey, 2011) draws on research with children and

young people and identifies how our culture has become increasingly sexual and sexualised. This can be evidenced by the increase in sexualised and gender-stereotyped clothing, products and services for children. In addition, the report considers the pressures on children from a range of commercial sources such as companies who 'push the boundaries' when advertising to them. The report recommended defining a child as under the age of 16 in all types of advertising regulation.

In 2013, the Children's Commissioner for Wales published a joint funded report designed and conducted by Professor EJ Renold of Cardiff University. **Boys and Girls Speak Out: A Qualitative Study of Children's Gender and Sexual Cultures** (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2013) explores how sexuality and sexual learning are part of children's everyday lives. Children are actively negotiating and learning about the contradictory ways in which sexuality shapes who they are, how they feel in their bodies, how they relate to others and how others relate to them. The report found that adults' fears of children 'growing up too soon' are disconnected from children's own experiences. Boys and girls who took part in the work talked about 'looking older' or 'looking sexy' in very different ways (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2013, p.39). 'Looking older' (e.g. wearing high heels or cultivating 'six packs') was rarely about 'being sexy' for children aged 10-12. For a few children, particularly girls, ageing up was a bid for social autonomy and a desire to be given more freedom by other adults in their lives. For others, looking young was risky and looking older was about protecting themselves from peer violence in their community. Girls of all ages talked about their bodies being constantly judged and valued. In addition, many girls reported experiencing verbal sexual harassment from within their own peer culture (boys and girls) and from older boys, and more so in public places than online. The report found that many children, although still young, were angry about having to live in a sexist peer culture and society.

In 2017, the NSPCC published the **Impact and evidence series: Children and young people who engage in technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour. A study of their behaviours, backgrounds, and characteristics** (Hollis and Belton, 2017). This report draws on data from the NSPCC's Turn the Page service, which supports children and young people aged 5-18 who display harmful sexual behaviour. The report draws on a sample of 91 boys and young men. The study found that the most common form of technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour was the possession or distribution of indecent images, this includes sexting images, developmentally inappropriate use of pornography, sending sexual texts, including sexting without images and exposing other

children and young people to pornography.

In 2017, Stonewall Cymru published a report **School Report Cymru: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Wales' schools in 2017** (Stonewall Cymru, 2017). This report finds that more than half of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ+) pupils in Wales (including 73% of transgender pupils) are bullied at school for being LGBT. Three in five LGBTQ+ pupils 'frequently' or 'often' hear homophobic language in school. Nine in ten LGBTQ+ pupils regularly hear phrases such as 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay'. However, around half of LGBTQ+ pupils who experience homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying never tell anyone about it.

In 2018, the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse published a report, **Key messages from research on children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour** (McNeish and Scott, 2018). The Centre of expertise on CSA is an independent multi-disciplinary team, funded by the Home Office. Hosted by Barnardo's, the team works closely with key partners from academic institutions, local authorities, health, education, police and the voluntary sector. The report states that there are no accurate figures on the full spectrum of HSB. The majority of children and young people displaying HSB do not become sexual offenders as adults. HSB in pre-adolescent children is more likely to be at the 'inappropriate' or 'problematic' end of the continuum rather than being 'abusive' or 'violent' (McNeish and Scott, 2018, p.2). Young children may be 'acting out' abuse they have experienced themselves or responding to other trauma and neglect. The early teens are the peak time for the occurrence of HSB, most of which is displayed by boys. There are some gender differences, with girls tending to be younger when their HSB is identified.

The report states that there is limited published research on effective interventions, particularly at the 'problematic' end of the HSB continuum. However, there is a general consensus that interventions need to be holistic and child focused and involve families. Services should avoid stigmatising children and young people as 'mini adult sex offenders' (McNeish and Scott, p.2). The most effective prevention education takes a 'whole school' approach to healthy relationships, is longer-term and involves young people in development and delivery. Bovarnick and Scott (2016), as quoted in McNeish and Scott (2018, p.7), argue that 'alongside classroom-based sessions, the best schools consider how they promote healthy relationships across the curriculum, in their bullying and safeguarding policies, in their pastoral support and in the information and support

they provide to parents'.

In 2020, the NSPCC explored the safety of children and young people in the UK, using 10 indicators in their report, **How safe are our children 2020?** (Bentley *et al*., 2020). In the chapter on adolescent harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), the report states that the law in relation to sexual offences was never developed with the needs of children and young people who display HSB in mind. According to the report, this makes it often an ineffective and stigmatising process for dealing with incidents of HSB amongst adolescents. This research highlights that under-18s may be responsible for at least one third of recorded sexual offences against children and young people in the UK. The vast majority of abuse is perpetrated by boys, with girls typically over-represented among victims. The average onset of HSB among boys tends to be around the ages of 13 to 14, coinciding with the onset of puberty.

The report states that preventing children and young people who have displayed HSB from abusing further victims is a key safeguarding goal. But young people who have displayed these behaviours also need to be protected and, like their victims, have a right to nurture, respect, family life, education and social inclusion. That means embedding these rights in responses for young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour, even when their actions have caused considerable harm to others.

The reports says that all young people need to have support and guidance from trusted adults, to answer their questions and help them to navigate their sexual development in a safe and positive way. All need positive and consistent messages from the adults responsible for their welfare (professionally or otherwise) about sex and relationships, and about keeping safe and being respectful on and offline.

In 2021, in their report **'I trust them' Children and Young People in Wales: sources of resilience in the community: Results of Welsh Women's Aid's Survey**, Welsh Women's Aid (2021b) explored sources of resilience in communities through an online questionnaire for 13 to 25-year-olds. The report found that the internet is widely considered as one of the main sources of support for children and young people. Eighty per cent of respondents said they consult the internet for support and guidance. No one stated that they would seek support from the Police. Young people aged 13-17 were also less likely to seek support from 'education'. The supportive qualities most valued by young people were receiving impartial advice, being trusted, feeling safe, and not being judged.

The main barrier to seeking support was lack of trust that conversations would remain confidential, particularly professionals informing parents. Other barriers included feeling unwelcome and lacking in confidence.

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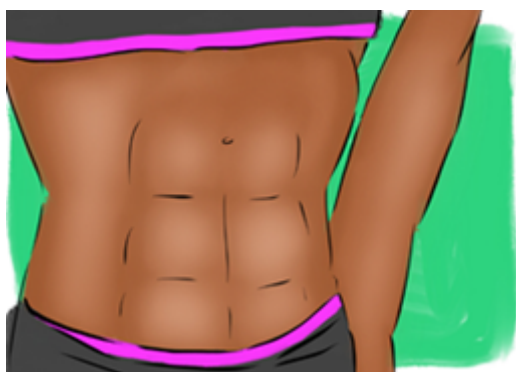
The types of harassment mentioned mostly involved 'fat shaming', unwanted touching, the sexualisation or objectification of the body – both for boys and girls – and issues around fitness. The 'six pack' image also triggered a number of comments around cat-calling, name calling and public body shaming.

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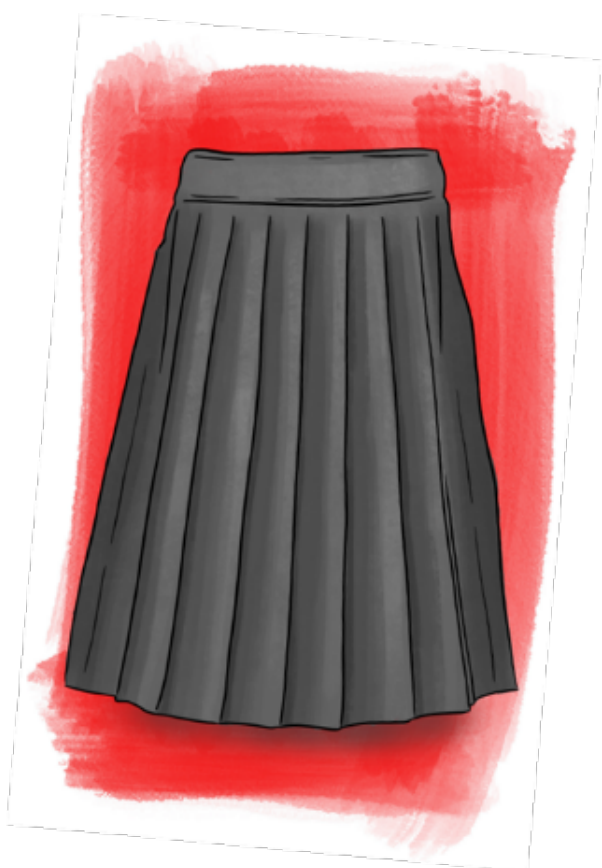
Many pupils selected the skirt image and associated it with issues about the size of school skirts, lifting girls' skirts up and the sexualisation of girls and women because of the clothes they choose to wear. Nearly all girls identified with issues around school skirts and many boys were

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
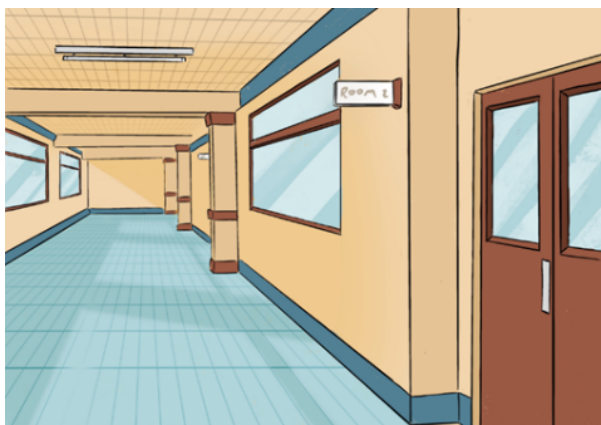
Generally, across all focus groups, only a few chose the scenario of the school corridor as a place for problems. In a majority of schools, no pupil discussed or wrote about serious issues relating to the school corridor. The most common themes were generalised bullying and name-calling, sexualised comments 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
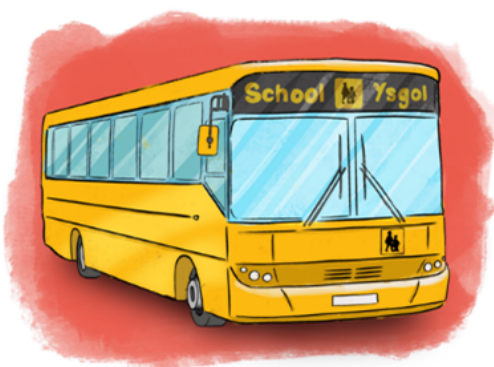
Less than 5% of pupils chose to discuss the school bus. There was no common theme other than verbal bullying including

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 can affect both girls and boys of any age – but usually, it's the girls that get hurt h

Deliberately harassing someone else for their own pleasure / satisfaction or for the attention of others

Sexual harassment is being touched, kissed, spoken to inappropriately, sent unwanted pictures, getting pictures sent

Sexual harassment is an umbrella term for many and various types of harassing that is sexual and non-consensual. These could include comments about your body and spreading rumours, inappropriate touching, molesting and stalking – all types of sexual harassment are wrong

It can mean someone else doing something inappropriate that you do not like, and you have not given permission for

someone making a sexual or suggestive comment about someone else that leaves them feeling

Sexual harassment is engaging in something of a sexual nature but only one person consents

Being called a bunch of names about your body or face for example when walking in school hallways and boys start making comments on your body you tell him to stop but he keeps doing it then he gets all his friends on it and it makes you feel very insecure about your body

In my opinion sexual harassment is when a person is called something inappropriate. There are many different ways you can be sexually harassed, it can happen physically, verbally or online. Physically is when you are touched

Physical, verbal or any kind of abuse directed at someone on the basis of this person's sex, gender, expression, identity, sexual orientation or any kind of circumstance linked to the two concepts of male and female

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:

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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.
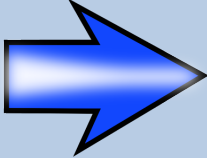
Key messages from pupils about the practices that they would like schools to **stop** include schools avoiding or ignoring issues of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. There were many comments about stopping schools accepting ingrained traditions of boys' making fun of each other, having sexist attitudes 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 visited 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.

STOP	▶	➡
"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"	"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"	"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"

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: ……………………………………

Full findings from the pupil questionnaire

Online questionnaire

At the end of the focus group sessions, pupils were invited to take part in an anonymous online questionnaire. We received approximately 1,250 responses. However, around a hundred of these were partial responses therefore they aren't included in this analysis. The survey focused on pupils' personal experience of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and seeing others experience it. We asked about sources of support if pupils had experienced peer-on-peer sexual harassment or if they were to hypothetically experience it. We asked pupils' opinion about when school should start discussing issues around peer-on-peer sexual harassment and for suggestions of what more could schools do to deal with the issue.

Table 1: Survey respondents by year group

Year group	Number of responses	%
Year 7	*	*
Year 8	241	21.9%
Year 9	230	20.9%
Year 10	220	20.0%
Year 11	273	24.8%
Year 12	75	6.8%
Year 13	61	5.5%
No answer	*	*

* Number greater than zero but less than five.

Pupils were asked to complete contextual information but were not asked for their names or that of their school. Pupils were asked to choose their gender identity from a list and pupils could also tick a box if they preferred not to say and add a further description in a text box if they wished. We also asked pupils if they considered themselves to have a disability. Only 61 respondents of the survey said they had a disability. This is a very small sample size, so it is difficult to ascertain whether any minor differences between disabled pupils and the general population is due to a skewed sample or otherwise. There was an almost equal balance of male and female pupils. Only 66 pupils gave a different answer to

male or female and 14 preferred not to say. However, the differences in responses between this group and the general population was much larger than those with disabilities, but care should be taken when interpreting minor differences.

Experience of peer-on-peer harassment

We asked pupils about their experience of peer-on-peer sexual harassment.

According to pupils, the most prevalent form of peer-on-peer sexual harassment amongst pupils happens online. Forty-six per cent of all pupils say they have personal experience of some form of sexual harassment while 76% report seeing others experience this. Pupils who did not identify as male or female report a higher rate of peer-on-peer harassment with 64% having personal experience of it.

A higher proportion of female pupils (61%) report personal experience of peer-on-peer harassment or seeing others experience this than male pupils (29%). Pupils who say they have a disability report slightly higher rates of experience of harassment (54%) compared to all pupils (46%), especially online, (39% vs 30%).

There is a clear trend for seeing others experience sexual harassment, with more pupils observing this as they get older (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Pupils who reported having seen others experience peer-on-peer sexual harassment, by school year
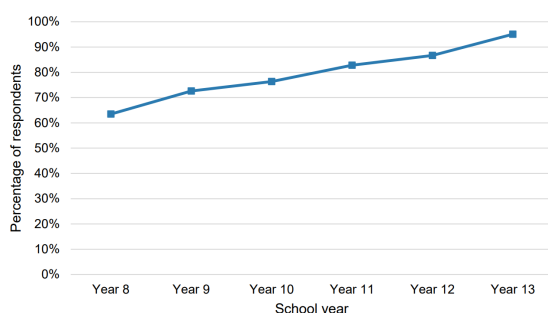
The trend for personal experience of sexual harassment is not as clear as that of seeing others experience it but still shows an increase as pupils get older. In general, pupils report more personal experience of sexual harassment from Year 10 onwards. Year 13 pupils in the survey reported the highest rate of personal experience at 56% (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Pupils who reported having personally experienced peer-on-peer sexual harassment, by school year
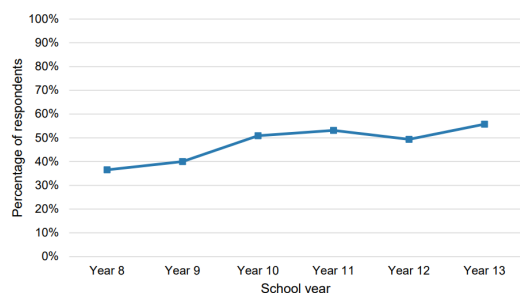
Type of peer-on-peer sexual harassment

We asked pupils who answered that they had personally experienced peer-on-peer sexual harassment about the type of harassment they had experienced and also when this first happened. We listed the following types of harassment:

- Hurtful sexual comments remarks or jokes

- Hurtful comments about someone's body that cause distress

- Hurtful comments about someone's clothes or looks that cause distress

- Sending texts or social media messages containing sexual wording that cause distress

- Sharing a nude/semi-nude photographs or video without the consent of the person pictured

- Sending unwanted sexual/explicit or pornographic photographs/videos to someone

- Lifting up skirts or taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing

- Sexual assault such as forced kissing, unwanted sexual touching

Of those that reported personal experience, most pupils report that harassment started in secondary school than at primary school. Some forms of harassment involving social media, sending or sharing pictures, and explicit videos, occur more often outside of school than inside. Making hurtful comments is the most common form of sexual harassment.

In general, fewer male pupils who report having experience with sexual harassment report on each of the individual categories. This suggests that female pupils are more likely to experience multiple types of the sexual harassment and at a higher rate than male pupils. Male pupils, like female pupils, also report the harassment beginning in secondary school more than at primary school.

Those who did not select male or female who have personally experienced harassment report higher incidences of hurtful comments and sexual assault than pupils who selected a gender.

Table 2: Responses to question "What kind of harassment or abuse have you personally experienced, and when did it first happen?"

	At primary school		At secondary school		Outside school, whilst I was in primary School		Outside school, since I've been in secondary school	
	Boys	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*
Hurtful sexual comments remarks or jokes	20%	17%	61%	66%	15%	15%	52%	62%
Hurtful comments about someone's body that cause distress	24%	32%	61%	70%	16%	25%	47%	57%
Hurtful comments about someone's clothes or looks that cause distress	20%	29%	53%	64%	17%	22%	49%	53%

Sending texts or social media messages containing sexual wording that cause distress	4%	8%	38%	41%	9%	11%	52%	59%
Sending unwanted sexual/explicit or pornographic photographs/videos to someone	3%	6%	28%	29%	5%	7%	44%	51%
Sharing a nude/semi-nude photographs or video without the consent of the person pictured	3%	2%	22%	28%	4%	3%	29%	38%
Lifting up skirts or taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing	3%	4%	10%	22%	3%	2%	13%	14%
Sexual assault such as forced kissing, unwanted sexual touching	3%	8%	23%	26%	5%	7%	24%	36%

Pupils who say they have a disability are much more likely to have received hurtful comments that started outside school when they were in primary school than the general population.

Pupils were invited to provide additional comments if they wished to. Most comments relate to sending and sharing unwanted message and images online. The behaviour of boys is highlighted, along with the reaction of teachers when complaints of such behaviour are made. Both male and female pupils highlight the behaviour of boys, but more girls reference this than boys. Those that do not consider themselves either male or female also highlight the behaviour of boys in particular.

Additionally, only girls note the negative reaction of teachers in such situations. Girls more than boys note receiving unwanted messages, images and videos online that are of a sexual nature. Boys, girls and non-binary pupils all note receiving comments about their appearance. However, a higher percentage of male and non-binary pupils highlight this issue more in the comments box.

In terms of types of peer-on-peer sexual harassment pupils have seen other pupils experience, receiving hurtful comments is the most featured type. Most of the harassment is first seen in secondary school and a variety of sexual harassment categories are seen by pupils. Online harassment is most likely to be seen outside of school for secondary pupils.

In general, female pupils are more likely to see a wider variety of pupil harassment than male pupils. This is similarly true for those who have not selected male or female. Older pupils are more likely to have seen a wider variety of harassment inside and outside secondary school.

Table 3: Responses to question "What kind of harassment or abuse have you seen others experience, and when did it first happen?"

	At primary school		At secondary school		Outside school, whilst I was in primary School		Outside school, since I've been in secondary school	
	Boys	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*
Hurtful sexual comments remarks or jokes	19%	19%	64%	77%	14%	14%	55%	62%
Hurtful comments about someone's body that cause distress	23%	29%	61%	76%	17%	21%	49%	63%
Hurtful comments about someone's clothes or looks that cause distress	22%	30%	54%	72%	18%	20%	45%	61%
Sending texts or social media messages containing sexual wording that cause distress	6%	7%	46%	47%	7%	8%	49%	61%
Sending unwanted sexual/explicit or pornographic photographs/videos to someone	3%	3%	36%	38%	4%	3%	39%	53%
Sharing a nude/semi-nude photographs or video without the consent of the person pictured	3%	2%	30%	36%	4%	3%	36%	47%

Lifting up skirts or taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing	4%	5%	16%	25%	2%	2%	13%	23%
Sexual assault such as forced kissing, unwanted sexual touching	7%	8%	24%	36%	4%	6%	27%	39%

From pupils' comments, we can see that most pupils claim to have seen or heard of some form of sexual harassment or assault. For those referring to sexual assault, the majority stated that they did not understand that it was assault at the time. The behaviour of boys is highlighted as a particular issue here again. A higher percentage of girls than boys refer to the behaviour of boys when discussing the sexual harassment of others. This is also highlighted by non-binary participants. Interestingly, in the comments box, it is only girls who describe experiencing negative comments about appearance.

Sources of support for pupils who have personal experience of peer-on-peer sexual harassment

Pupils were asked what they did when they experienced sexual harassment from their peers. They were able to select multiple answers if they wished. Forty-six per cent of pupils who had been sexually harassed reported that they kept sexual harassment to themselves. Girls are more likely to keep sexual harassment to themselves (49%) than male pupils (34%) and are less likely to tell an authority figure than boys. However, they are much more likely to tell their friends than male pupils (68% compared with 36%). Pupils who did not select male or female who said they had experienced peer-on-peer sexual harassment kept it to themselves more than other pupils. Sixty-three per cent kept it to themselves and 43% also spoke to their friends. Twenty-one per cent of all pupils told a teacher and 28% told their parents or carers. However, overall, the majority of pupils who had been sexually harassed had spoken to their friends about it.

In terms of individual pupil comments, a higher proportion of pupils felt more comfortable telling a friend about sexual harassment or abuse than telling a responsible adult. A few noted that they were too scared to tell anyone at all. The comments matched the qualitative data in that girls are more likely to either tell a friend or keep the incident to themselves, than to tell a responsible adult or family member. Most of the pupils who selected the gender demographic 'other' said that they had told a friend.

Pupils that haven't personally experienced harassment were automatically directed to a question asking them what they would do if they did experience it. These pupils say that they would tell someone about it more than pupils who have experienced harassment. Only 19% of pupils who haven't experienced harassment say they would keep it to themselves compared to 46% of those who have experienced harassment. Older pupils who haven't experienced sexual harassment are more likely to say they would keep it to themselves but are also more likely to talk to their friends. Girls who haven't experienced sexual harassment are more likely to keep it to themselves than boys (17% compared with 21%) and are less likely to tell a teacher (51% compared with 38%) when compared to boys. Of those who selected neither male or female and also said that they have not experienced sexual harassment, 28% said they would keep it to themselves and 72% would speak to their friends.

Figure 3: Responses to question "How did / would you deal with sexual harassment?"
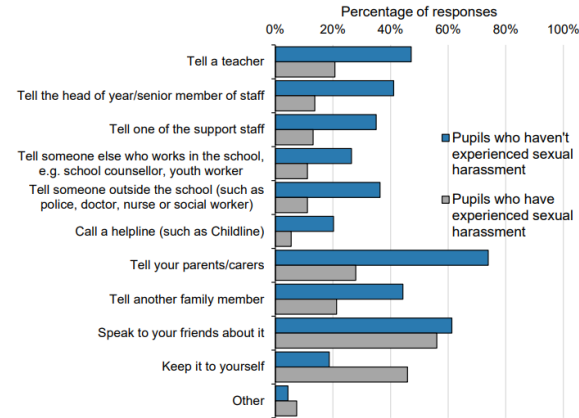
For this question, there is interesting evidence from pupils' comments. Pupils who have not experienced sexual harassment believe that they would stand up to it if

faced with the issue or tell a responsible adult. These results differ greatly from those who have experienced harassment. However, only male and non-binary pupils claim that they would stand up to sexual harassment. Female pupils are more likely to keep it to themselves than males. Non-binary pupils would either stand up to it, tell no one, or tell a friend.

Where peer-on-peer sexual harassment happens most

Pupils were asked if harassment happened more often in school, online, outside school or all about the same. We also offered the possibility to pupils to tick a 'don't know' box. More pupils said that peer-on-peer sexual harassment happens most often online (34%) than anywhere else whilst 24% of all pupils noted that incidences were similar in all three places.

Figure 4: Responses to question "Where does pupil sexual harassment happen most often?"
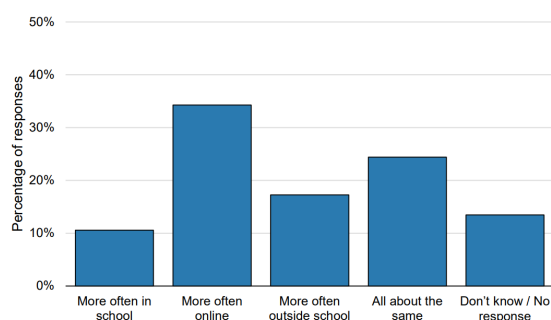
Harassment given by pupils to others

We asked pupils if they had been involved in sexually harassing others. Thirteen per cent of pupils admit to making hurtful sexual comments, remarks or jokes at secondary school. Girls are less likely to admit to making hurtful sexual comments remarks or jokes comments than boys at secondary school (10% vs

18%). Those who did not select male or female report harassing other pupils less.

Most pupils who left a comment for this question wanted to highlight that they have never harassed other pupils, while a few noted that sexual or hurtful comments had been made during arguments with friends or as a joke. Both boys and girls noted that they have made such comments as a joke. Whilst a small number of both male and female pupils claim to have made negative comments during arguments with friends, all comments made by pupils that consider themselves to be non-binary claim that they have never harassed others.

School response to complaints

We asked pupils if, in their opinion, school staff took complaints about peer-on-peer sexual harassment seriously and if they responded appropriately. Pupils who have experienced harassment are less likely to believe complaints are taken seriously. Overall, girls are less likely to believe complaints are taken seriously than boys, but this may be related to the fact that they are more often victims of sexual harassment.

Figure 5: Responses to question "In your opinion, do people in your school take complaints about sexual harassment seriously and respond appropriately?"
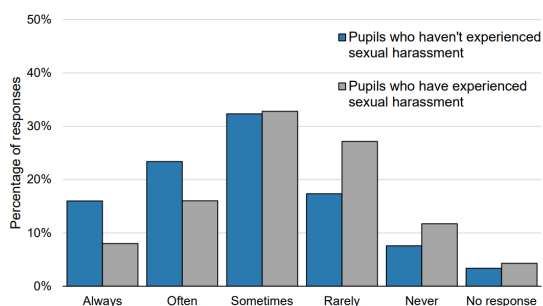
A high percentage of comments state that sexual harassment complaints are often ignored or not dealt with well by teachers. However, a minority of pupils also note that sexual harassment is sometimes addressed in assemblies or lessons, and others state that they do receive some guidance or help with the issue. More girls than boys believe that their school deals well with complaints

about sexual harassment. However, more girls than boys also note that complaints are often ignored or are not dealt with properly. Girls also note that there is a lack of understanding about what sexual assault is and how pupils should make complaints. A high percentage of non-binary pupils feel that complaints are ignored or are not dealt with. Non-binary participants also claim that they do not know whether the school deals well with complaints or not. Those that did not wish to disclose their preferred gender generally feel that issues of sexual harassment are ignored or not dealt with well, but also acknowledge that there is some guidance for them on what to do about it.

# When to start talking about peer-on-peer sexual harassment

We asked pupils to consider when they thought it would be appropriate to start lessons about peer-on-peer sexual harassment. Most pupils in all year groups put the age between Year 6 and 7. Only 38% of the pupils who did not select a sex or identity as male or female believe this. As pupils get older, the percentage of pupils who think it should be taught in primary school decreases.

Girls are more likely to choose a lower age than boys. Forty-four per cent of boys think it should be talked about in primary school compared to 61% of girls. Pupils who have experienced sexual harassment are more slightly more likely to think sexual harassment should be talked about at a younger age. Fifty-eight per cent believe it should be talked about in primary school, compared to 53% of all participants.

Those who did not select male or female are most likely to think it should be talked about in primary school, with 64% believing it should be talked about in primary school. Only 18% of this group of pupils believed it should be talked about in Year 7 , 20% in Year 6, and 44% believed it should be talked about in Year 5 or below.

Figure 6: Response to question "In your opinion, at what age should schools start to talk about pupil on pupil sexual harassment?", by gender
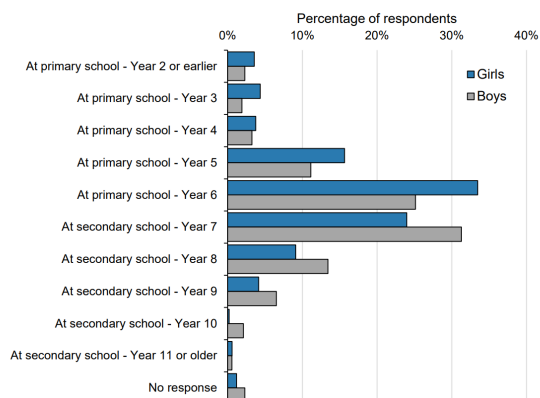
Many pupil comments include a detailed explanation for their answer. A high proportion of these reference age and maturity, believing that a few pupils are too young to understand, or are either not mature enough in a few cases, whilst mature enough in others. The majority believe that the topic should be introduced in primary school at the same time as sex education. A higher percentage of girls believe this than boys. A higher proportion of non-binary pupils believe that discussions on sexual harassment should be introduced in primary school than other groups of pupils. However, a few also believe that the topic should be taught in the first years of secondary school or that it should be made age appropriate according to maturity.

Pupils' opinions on what more can be done by schools

Pupils were invited to offer further comments if they wished about what they thought schools could do to deal with peer-on-peer sexual harassment.

Many respondents to the last question believe that schools should teach pupils about sexual harassment more regularly, particularly in lessons such as the Welsh Baccalaureate and PSE. They also stipulate that organising more assemblies and bringing in external visitors would help to educate pupils about it.

Interestingly, more boys than girls say that they believe that schools already do enough. More boys state that placing information such as posters around the

school would be enough to deal with the matter.

Many pupils, particularly girls, refer to schools creating a safer and more comfortable environment where they can talk to teachers or other members of staff about their experiences during a particular lesson. A few suggest that boys and girls should be separated during the conversations so that they feel more comfortable discussing the issues. Many non-binary pupils also believe that a safer environment for discussions should be created.

Pupils also refer to changing staff attitudes, with many pupils believing that staff do not take matters seriously enough and that harsher punishments should be put in place for incidences of harassment. Furthermore, a few pupils believe that there is a need for increased awareness and understanding, either by staff paying more attention when sexual harassment happens, or by educating the staff themselves on the issue of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. More girls than boys believe that staff should take matters more seriously and that harsher punishments should be given. Non-binary pupils and pupils who preferred not to define their sex or gender make particular reference to increasing staff awareness about sexual harassment.

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