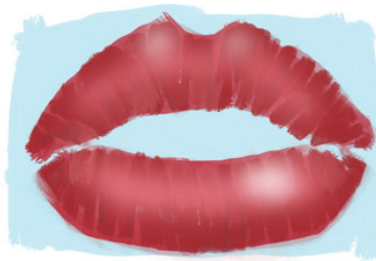
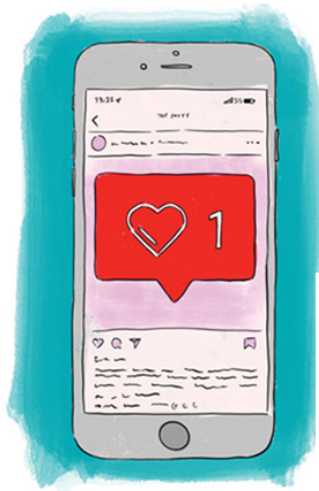
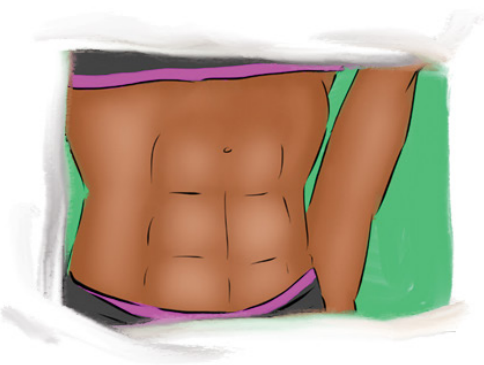


“We don't tell our teachers”

Experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales

December 2021



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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:

- 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.

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.

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.

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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.

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 schools². 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.

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:

² Where secondary schools are referenced, we include secondary-aged school pupils in all-age schools.

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[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

- 11 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.
- 12 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.
- 13 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.
- 14 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.
- 15 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.

- 16 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.
- 17 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.
- 18 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.
- 19 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.
- 20 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.
- 21 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.

- 22 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.
- 23 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.
- 24 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

- 25 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.

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

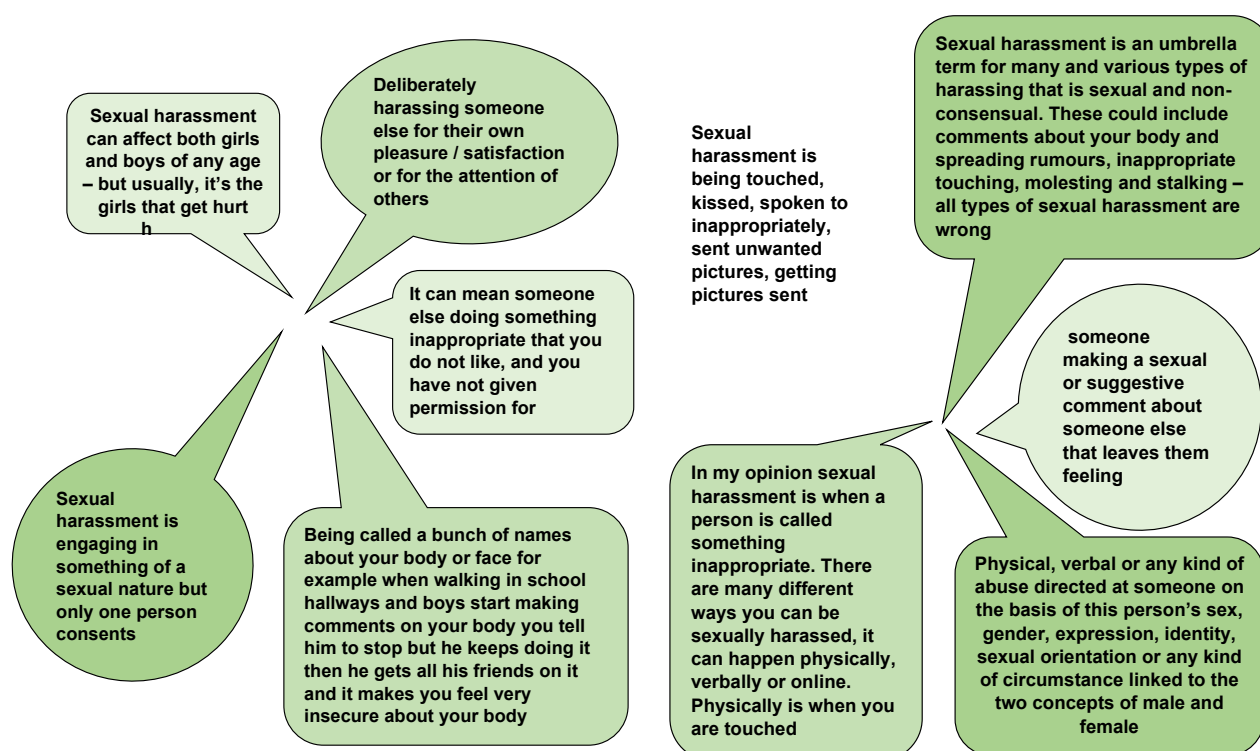
R9 Ensure schools receive regular and informative updates on best practice and suitable resources that are available to support them in the delivery of relationships and sexuality education.

What pupils told us – a summary of findings from pupil focus group activities and the online pupil questionnaire

Pupils' understanding and experience 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.

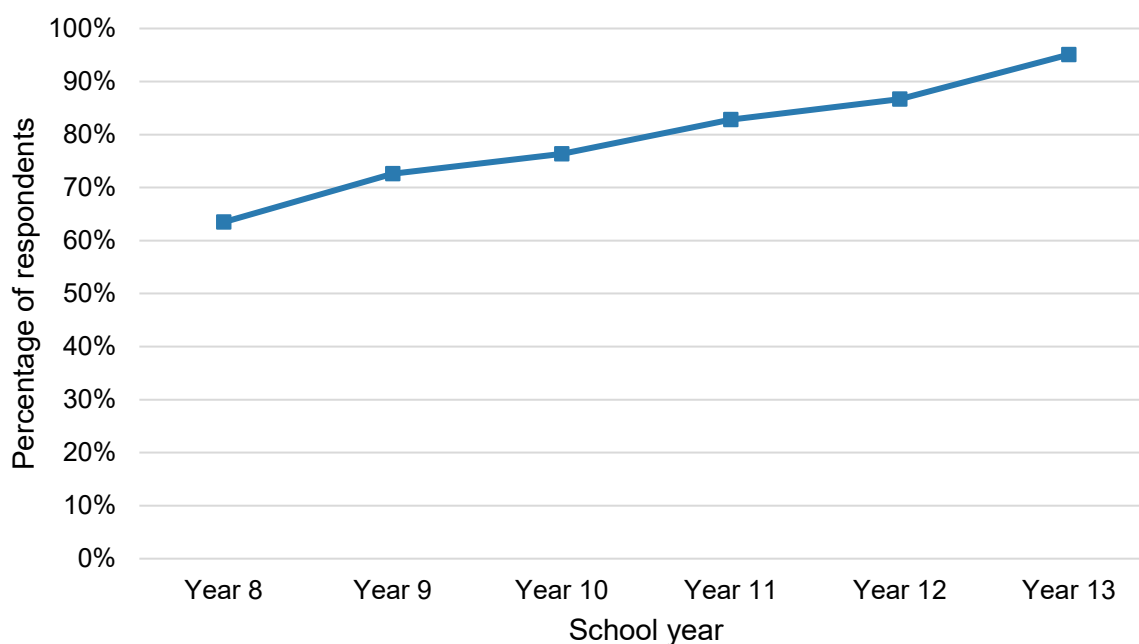
Generally, there is a difference between what older and younger pupils say. Older pupils generally base their responses on what they know and have experienced over time whereas younger pupils (those in Year 8) write and speak more generally about what they think might be the case. Also, the older pupils 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 and 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.

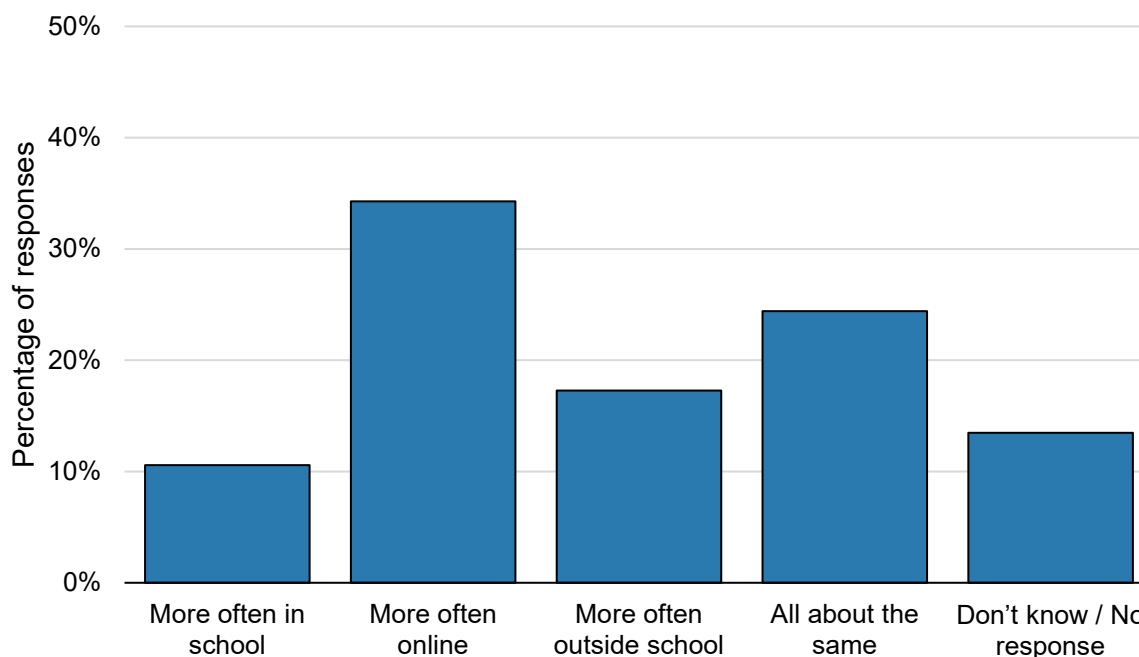
Many girls report substantial peer pressure to roll up their school skirt to make it shorter and then it being sexualised by both boys and girls. They describe how they feel anxious if they follow the trend but also discuss anxieties they will experience if they don't. Girls report that the shortness 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”**.

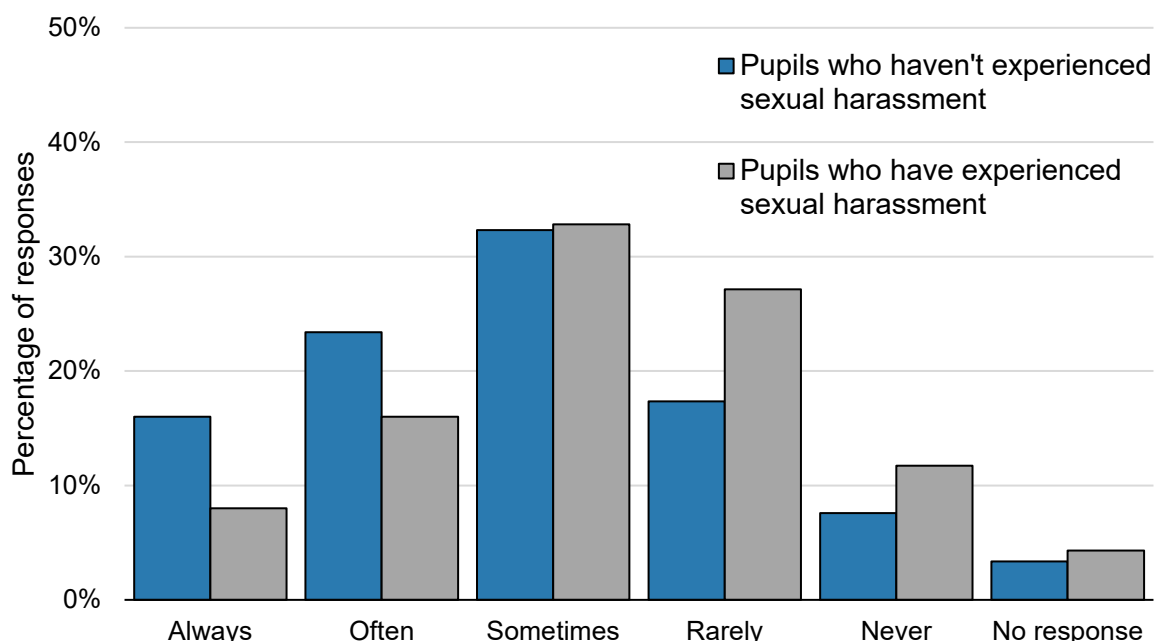
Most LGBTQ+ pupils feel that only a few teachers would do anything about it if they heard pupils using homophobic slurs against them. A high percentage of non-binary pupils feel that their complaints are ignored or are not dealt with. Those that did not wish to disclose their sex or preferred gender 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.

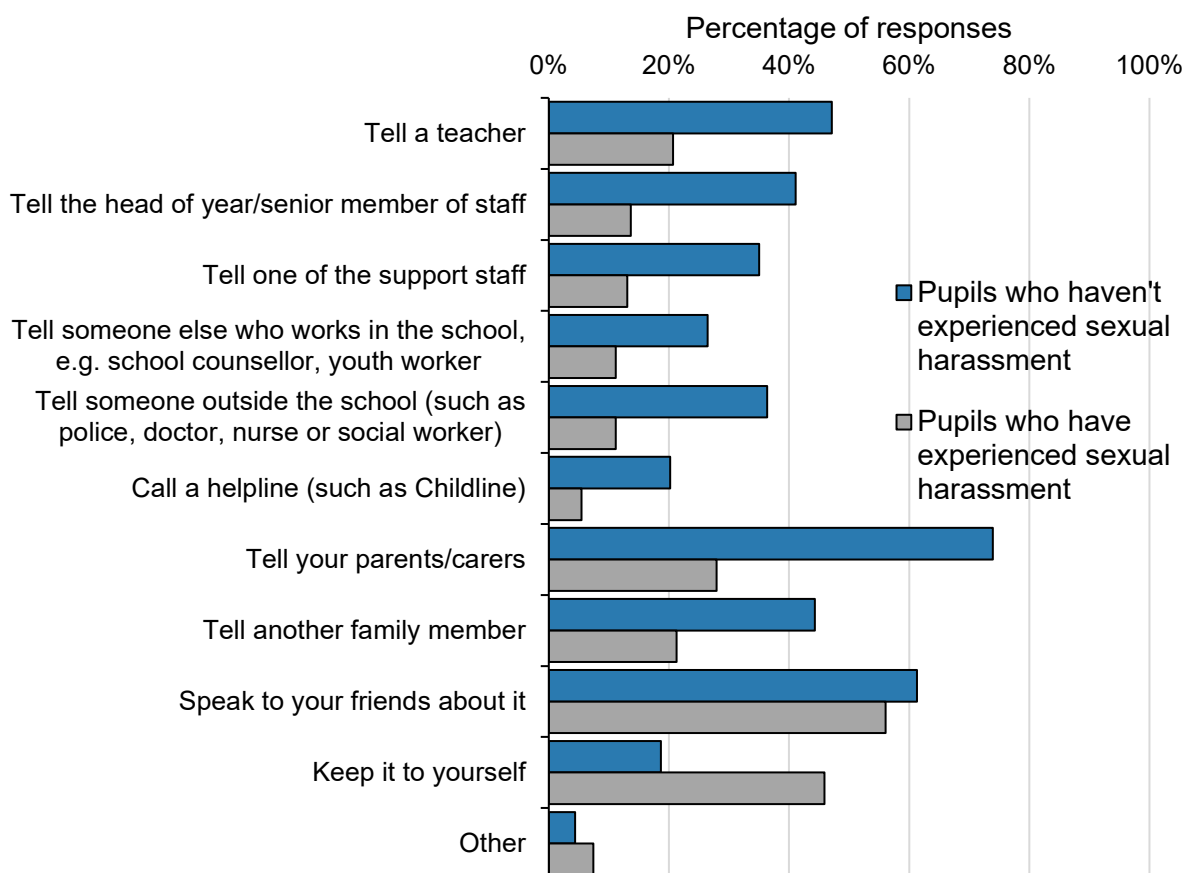
Figure 3: Responses to question “In your opinion, do people in your school take complaints about sexual harassment seriously and respond appropriately?”



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 and 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”**.

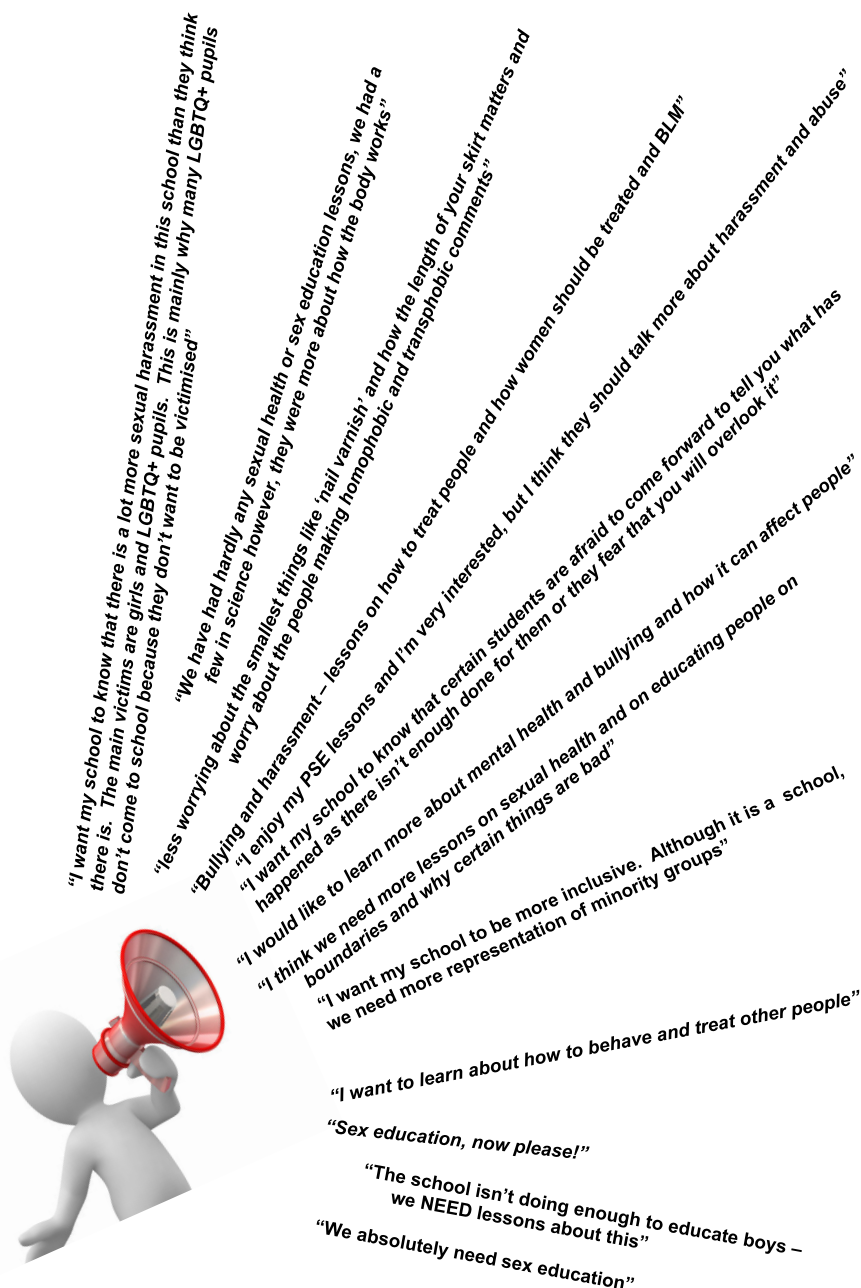
Many pupils across the whole age range say they have not had enough sex education during their time in school. Sixth form pupils, in particular, are very eager to have more sex education, with many saying they have not received any sex education at all. In a large majority of schools, older pupils say 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



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.



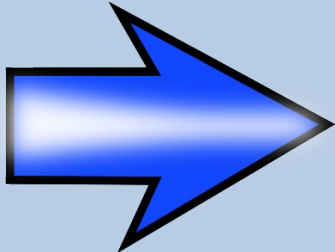
A majority of pupils refer to the need to change staff attitudes, with many pupils believing that staff should take matters more seriously and that harsher punishments should be put in place for incidences of harassment. Furthermore, a few pupils believe that there is a need for increased awareness and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

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

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 secondary schools

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

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

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

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

Strategic team approach to safeguarding

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

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

Schools have a statutory requirement to have a named designated safeguarding person (DSP) to oversee safeguarding and child protection. Across most schools we visited, the quality of the work of the DSP in responding to safeguarding concerns is a strength. They often are experienced leaders who fulfil their responsibilities well. They are usually well trained, often by relevant external statutory agencies and are very knowledgeable about the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures \(2020\)](#). They usually receive beneficial support from a suitably trained deputy DSP and a team of trained pastoral or wellbeing leaders and support staff. In many schools, there is a strong team approach to dealing with safeguarding matters and this means that pupils and staff have a secure understanding of whom they can turn to for support.

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

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

A few schools have trained older pupils as mentors to support pupils and act as a 'go-between' if they have particular worries and do not feel ready to speak to staff. Pupil mentors are available to pupils in designated areas such as the school library or canteen during breaks. One school organises regular 'Rainbow Days' where LGBTQ+ staff and pupils organise presentations in virtual assemblies during form

time which are followed by class discussions on diversity issues. Another school has a 'Rainbow Group', which is a sub-committee of the School Council, focusing on inclusion and diversity matters. A LGBTQ+ club in one school acts as a reference group, advising staff on diversity issues and providing guidance on the correct use of terms.

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

A culture of respect

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

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

A swift response to emerging issues

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

In most schools, there are effective systems and processes for staff to record concerns and actions. Many schools use a commercial online management information system to record incidents, concerns or referrals to external statutory agencies. Generally, staff use such systems regularly and well, and leaders respond swiftly and suitably to new information about individual incidents. There is variation in

the nature of concerns that are logged by staff on these systems. A few schools use the digital system to record every behaviour incident or when pupils display negative attitudes towards their work. This is usually because support and wellbeing staff have access to the system and are expected to respond to teacher concerns. In other schools, the information management system is used purely for safeguarding and wellbeing concerns.

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

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

Care, support and guidance

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

In many schools, teachers have less awareness of the prevalence of incidences of peer-on-peer harassment than support staff. In interviews with teachers in these schools, none could recall a specific case, stating that they thought peer-on-peer harassment was not a major issue in their school. When speaking with support assistants and non-teaching wellbeing staff from these same schools, they often had a slightly different account. In many cases, they were able to describe at least one incident of sexual harassment that they had dealt with themselves or had been involved in supporting pupils.

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

Intervention for perpetrators of peer sexual harassment

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

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

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

Comprehensive work with external partners

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

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

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

Generally, staff express concern about the normalisation of sexualised language and behaviours among children and young people in society, and the impact this is likely

to have on their pupils' mental health and wellbeing. Nearly all agree that sexual harassment, homophobic and misogynistic attitudes are societal problems that are transferred to children and young people, often by parents and other influences. The new curriculum encourages schools to incorporate learning related to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Many schools educate children about the harmful effects of prejudice and the importance of diversity, but teachers feel that this should also be done at home. When asked about support needed to deal with issues around peer-on-peer sexual harassment, teachers voiced strongly the need for collaboration and co-operation with parents. They are clear that the monitoring of children's use of social media and chat facilities is the responsibility of parents and carers. In most cases, school staff deal with incidences that have happened online in the evenings and during weekends, but which spill over into the school day. School leaders attribute the increasing prevalence of image-based sexual harassment to the use of social media platforms. Here it becomes more difficult to trace the origin of the sender. While schools understand the importance of referring serious concerns and individual cases to statutory agencies, they are often left to resolve everyday social media issues between peers themselves and on a daily basis. Nearly all school staff agree that it is important for parents to be aware, take responsibility and understand the scale of the problems. Nonetheless, they all also demonstrate a high degree of commitment to addressing peer-on-peer sexual harassment when they are made aware of it.

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

The trusted adult

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

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

It is often the case that wellbeing support staff and pastoral leads have received purposeful training on peer issues, such as sexual harassment, but professional learning opportunities in this area for other teachers are less common. All teachers complete statutory safeguarding and Prevent training and a minority of teachers have

now completed statutory VAWDASV training. However, in many schools, it is usually only support staff and the designated safeguarding leads that access specialist training directly. Whilst a few schools allocate time for trained staff to share their learning with teachers, this is not always the case. Schools who put the wellbeing of staff and pupils at the core of their work ensure that all their staff are trained in important issues that impact on pupils' wellbeing.

Extensive training to support staff when dealing with sexual harassment

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

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

Many support staff and teachers say that professional learning on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) has been particularly useful to them when dealing with issues associated with harmful sexual behaviours. Many local authorities have provided education staff with beneficial professional learning in this area and ensured that schools are 'trauma-informed'. During the lockdown periods, many school staff accessed trauma-informed schools training either through their local education psychology service or through the regional consortia. The majority of school pastoral staff described how they use the useful skills they have acquired through this particular professional learning experience to deal with incidences of inappropriate sexual behaviour, for example when working with pupils with additional learning needs.

Interventions for pupils with additional learning needs

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

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

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

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

Safe spaces to talk

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

The curriculum

Time allocated for PSE

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

An increasing number of schools now deliver specific programmes that lead to external qualifications related to PSE themes. For example, a few schools deliver a BTEC level 1 and 2 programme on 'Personal Growth and Wellbeing'. This

programme includes a few aspects of RSE such as sexual health and wellbeing. This is a course primarily designed for lower ability pupils and those displaying signs of disaffection with learning, often offered in lieu of an academic subject. A few schools are delivering it across the ability range in Year 11. The course is not designed for such delivery.

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

Increased curriculum time for health and wellbeing

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

Teacher experience

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

Middle leaders delivering PSE lessons

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

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

Topics, themes and cumulative learning

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

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

A well-planned spiral curriculum

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

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

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

A whole-school approach to planning the PSE curriculum

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

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

Faith schools

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

Faith school working in partnership

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

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

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

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

A few Catholic schools use established learning programmes for PSE where the faith's values and beliefs are central to the curriculum. Although these programmes

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

Assemblies and presentations

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

Under usual circumstances, many schools have a comprehensive programme of planned assemblies, which cover national celebrations and a broad range of PSE topics such as respect, good behaviour and positive attitudes. In the majority of schools, assemblies often cover equality and diversity, consent, LGBTQ+ issues and mental health awareness. These assemblies are sometimes delivered by external speakers and experts. Generally, pupils place a high value on presentations from external speakers and have good recall of them as positive experiences. However, in general, schools do not make enough use of these presentations to engage pupils in further learning. In nearly all situations, following presentations and well-crafted assemblies, the normal timetable resumes leaving pupils and teachers with limited opportunity to discuss topics further. Older pupils complain that they are given strong messages about sensitive and difficult issues at the start of the school day and are then expected to go to normal lessons without any opportunity for reflection or discussion about these themes.

'Drop down' days

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

Use of external agencies

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

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

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

RSE in the wider curriculum

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

Many English teachers deliberately select literature from the set texts list provided by the examination board which have strong themes that are reflective of societal issues such as misogyny, homophobia, revenge and abuse. The set texts list for A level English includes plays such as Tennessee Williams' 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and novels such as 'The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning' by Tim Price and Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale'. English teachers told us that these are popular with sixth form pupils.

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

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

Leadership

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

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

Developing the curriculum for RSE after lock-down

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

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

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

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

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

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

Productive use of stakeholder feedback

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

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

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

A comprehensive provision map

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

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

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

The support schools need

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

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

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

Schools see the rapid development of digital technology, together with a generational divide around understanding pupils' negative or harmful use of social media as a

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

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

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%

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