

# Everyone's Invited: OFSTED report - analysis and action plan

Maria Strauss and Veryan Exelby | 23 June 2021

By now, the findings and recommendations of the OFSTED rapid review of sexual abuse in schools have been widely reported on and discussed in the media. The OFSTED review was launched following thousands of disclosures on the website "Everyone's Invited" about sexual harassment and sexual violence involving schools (both state and independent) as well as universities. As things stand, there are over 51,000 testimonies on the website naming hundreds of education settings across the UK with the disclosures highlighting the full spectrum of behaviour from lower level harassment to serious sexual assault and rape.

In this note, we have drawn together OFSTED's findings and recommendations (**Appendix 1**) as well as the reactions from the Police, DfE, Minister for Education and NSPCC (**Appendix 2**) and our suggested actions for schools (embedded into the comments in Appendix 1). We have provided this information in table format to help senior leaders and governors identify the issues clearly with a view to creating an action plan in response. Your school may well already be doing much of what is recommended but we think it is helpful to have a complete list of factors to take into account when discussing this at senior level.

Our first recommendation is that Governors and leaders review the findings of the report, create their own plan in response using this as a guide while taking into account the particular context of their school and consider the appropriate strategy for engaging with your school community on these issues. We recommend this as a priority action. We further recommend that senior leaders take the time to properly examine and understand the root causes of sexual violence, the impact on individuals, families and the school community, as well as knowing the steps to offending, so that schools can ensure that any action plans are prepared with a sound understanding of the underlying issues. We, and other colleagues from the [Safeguarding Unit](#), will be exploring these issues in closer detail in the coming months.

If you require further information on anything covered in this briefing please contact:



**Maria Strauss**  
Partner

[Email Maria](#)  
+44(0)20 3375 7259



**Veryan Exelby**  
Senior Counsel

[Email Veryan](#)  
+44(0)20 3375 7000

Alternatively, please contact the firm on 020 3375 7000. Further information can also be found on our website.

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## Key points to take away from the OFSTED Review

- OFSTED visited 32 schools and spoke to 900 children and young people which is a good sample size in the short time that was available.
- They have produced a lengthy report which highlights many of the issues that we see and hear from schools in practice.
- The review does not report on individual schools or cases and is therefore anonymous but helpfully gives examples of good practice and initiatives.
- The review revealed how extremely prevalent sexual harassment (including online sexual abuse) is for children and young people. Such is the prevalence that OFSTED have said:

“Schools, colleges and multi-agency partners [should] act as though sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening, even when there are no specific reports”.

- We think this is a sensible approach to take partly because of the OFSTED findings but also due to the prevalence of sexual harassment in wider society. In addition, the scale of sexual violence in schools was highlighted 5 years ago by the Women and Equalities Committee in their [report](#).
- Equally, preventing sexual harassment should be a key strategic priority for schools because of the harmful impact on young people and the time, energy and costs that are absorbed in dealing with complaints or legal cases that arise from these circumstances.
- OFSTED noted that there is a significant problem of children being sent unsolicited sexual material:

“90% of girls, and nearly 50% of boys, said being sent explicit pictures or videos of things they did not want to see happens a lot or sometimes to them or their peers”.
- In addition, lower level behaviours (which can be very damaging to the young people involved and if not acted on can also enable more violent and abusive behaviours to set in) are also prevalent:

“92% of girls, and 74% of boys, said sexist name-calling happens a lot or sometimes to them or their peers”.
- When asked about sexual violence, the young people typically talked about spaces outside of school, such as parties or parks. OFSTED found that senior leaders were unclear and needed guidance on what fell on schools to refer and investigate (noting that schools have a duty to refer concerns about children to statutory agencies irrespective of where they occur (in line with statutory guidance and local child protection procedures)).
- Of serious concern, is the finding that some teachers and leaders underestimated the scale of the problem, didn't identify sexual harassment as problematic, dismissed it as “banter” or “mucking around” or were unaware it was happening and, further, that professionals consistently underestimated the prevalence of online sexual abuse even where there was a proactive whole-school approach to tackling sexual harassment and violence.

## Types of sexual harassment and sexual violence

The girls who responded to the OFSTED questionnaire indicated that, in order of prevalence, the following types of harmful sexual behaviours happened “a lot” or “sometimes” between people their age:

Non-contact forms, but face-to-face:

- sexist name-calling (92%)
- rumours about their sexual activity (81%)
- unwanted or inappropriate comments of a sexual nature (80%)

Non-contact forms, but face-to-face:

- being sent pictures or videos they did not want to see (88%)
- being put under pressure to provide sexual images of themselves (80%)
- having pictures or videos that they sent being shared more widely without their knowledge or consent (73%)
- being photographed or videoed without their knowledge or consent (59%)
- having pictures or videos of themselves that they did not know about being circulated (51%)

Contact forms:

- sexual assault of any kind (79%)
- feeling pressured to do sexual things that they did not want to (68%)
- unwanted touching (64%)

## Safeguarding training

- A significant area for OFSTED which was referenced throughout the report was staff, DSL and Governor training.
- OFSTED found that in just over a quarter of the schools they visited, Inspectors reported that Governors had some sort of safeguarding training, although it was not always clear that this included specific training on harmful sexual behaviour.
- Evidence in the review indicates that there are gaps in Governors’ knowledge of online safety issues when applied to sexual harassment and violence. (Separately, Governors who are also Trustees of charitable schools should also understand their duties under charity law and guidance).
- Referring to the DfE guidance on sexual violence, OFSTED said that the guidance acknowledges that professionals may be required to make complex decisions in situations of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online. The guidance stresses the importance of effective training and clear policies for staff to help them take a considered and appropriate response.



**OFSTED also recommends that there is a need for training to ensure that all staff (and Governors, where relevant) are able to:**

- Better understand the definitions of sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online sexual abuse.
- Identify early signs of peer-on-peer sexual abuse.
- Consistently uphold standards in their responses to sexual harassment and online sexual abuse which are reported to them.
- Understand prevalence and what constitutes harmful sexual behaviour.
- Know good practice (in relation to hearing disclosures) and supporting children to bring issues to trusted adults.
- Understand the prevalence of harmful sexual behaviour in all schools.

### **Other actions:**

In light of the OFSTED report and the Everyone's Invited movement, we recommend, that schools ensure they have:

- A proper strategy for engagement with complainants and survivors that doesn't take a defensive standpoint but is open to engagement, ensures that disclosures are acted on properly in accordance with statutory guidance and best safeguarding practice and that everyone is supported. Knowing what referrals to make and when is also key.
- Good procedures for investigating issues. An understanding of how to run a thorough investigation including best practice in interviewing children and young people.
- Many schools embark on culture reviews or safeguarding audits which, if done well and supported by experts, can give schools very valuable insights into their particular culture from which they can create a training programme and action plan based on the results of the culture review.
- An understanding of the risk that when allegations are made, there is an increased risk of self-harm and suicide in those who have been accused.
- Consider amending your safeguarding policies to provide the safest environment for your community. This may include ensuring that safeguarding information is visible around the school, providing an anonymous reporting system and amending your alcohol policy with regards to onsite events.

**We would also suggest that schools check the website [Everyone's Invited](#) to understand whether their school is named and consider whether action needs to be taken in relation to specific testimonies per David Smellie's earlier briefing [Everyone's Invited- peer on peer abuse](#).**

## Peer on Peer Abuse Toolkit

Evidently, sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online abuse, occurring between peers#, is a form of peer-on-peer abuse.

Our colleague, Senior Counsel [Adele Eastman](#), is in the process of a comprehensive revision of our [Peer-on-peer abuse toolkit](#), supported by [Xinlan Rose](#), and working with a panel of experts including Dr Carlene Firmin, Professor Andy Phippen and Elizabeth Prochaska.

The revised Toolkit will be published to coincide with the DfE's revised versions of statutory guidance KCSIE, and advice on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children In Schools and Colleges, going live in September 2021. We plan to formally launch the revised Toolkit at our Annual Safeguarding Conference this September.

In the meantime, we would encourage you to read through the current version of our Toolkit (link above) if you have not done so, as many of the same principles will remain the same. However, please note that one of the fundamental changes to the Toolkit will include us no longer advising schools and colleges to produce a standalone overarching peer-on-peer abuse policy, in accordance with KCSIE.

Finally, on Monday 21 June, the Farrer's Safeguarding Unit, in collaboration with other experts and schools, hosted a webinar to discuss sexual violence in schools and possible solutions. A recording of the webinar is available on our Hive Learning platform for those who missed it or wish to watch it again. For further information about joining Hive Learning please contact Shelly Kainth [here](#).

Appendix 1

What did OFSTED consider?	What did OFSTED find?	What did OFSTED recommend?	Comment / actions for Schools
<p><b>Safeguarding:</b></p> <p>Are existing frameworks for Inspectors strong enough to properly assess how schools safeguard and promote the welfare of children?</p>	<p>The review found that safeguarding is generally well covered on inspection but that improvements can be made.</p>	<p>Ofsted and ISI will update training and inspection handbooks to strengthen Inspectors’ ability to inspect how schools are tackling peer-on-peer sexual harassment including online.</p> <p>OFSTED will mandate that Inspectors should follow up and record schools’ responses to requests for their records and analysis of sexual violence.</p> <p>Inspectors will hold discussions with single-sex groups where this helps to understand better a school’s approach to tackling sexual violence.</p> <p>From September 2021 ISI will refer all complaints) to the DfE.</p> <p>OFSTED and ISI will provide a series of webinars and events for schools about the findings of the review.</p>	<p>We expect that OFSTED and ISI will have sexual harassment and sexual violence front and centre of their minds. Schools should be prepared for a deeper inspection on these issues going forwards and take appropriate action to prepare.</p> <p>This will involve clear record keeping of incidents reported and action taken to satisfy Inspectors that they are responding correctly at all levels as well as no doubt showing training schedules (including Governors’ training) and the impact of training.</p> <p>Specific attention should be given to incidents concerning harmful sexual behavior and they should be referred to explicitly, rather than as “a serious incident”.</p> <p>Schools could also sensibly produce the results from surveys carried out or culture reviews that have been done to satisfy Inspectors.</p>
<p><b>RSHE:</b></p> <p>How can schools be supported to successfully deliver the new RSHE</p>	<p>RSHE is just one part of a whole-school approach to tackling sexual violence. Other factors, and the role of parents, are also vital.</p> <p>Young people were “rarely positive” about the RSHE they had received, Young people said:</p>	<p>Schools should ensure a carefully sequenced RSHE curriculum, based on the DfE’s statutory guidance, that specifically includes sexual violence, including online.</p> <p>This should include time for open discussion of topics that children and young people tell us they</p>	<p>Following this review, leaders should make the planning of the PHSE/RHSE a key priority factoring in the issues raised in the OFSTED report.</p> <p>The importance of the curriculum covering PHSE/RSE cannot be underestimated.</p>



curriculum (inc teaching about:

- cyber-bullying
- pornography
- healthy relationships
- consent

- The RSHE they received was too little, too late.
- The curriculum was not equipping them for the reality of their lives.
- They turn to social media and peers for education.

There are a number of issues that mean young people are not getting the quality of education in this subject including:

- Weak implementation of RSHE.
- Significant gaps in curriculum coverage.
- Lack of subject knowledge that teachers had on topics like consent, healthy relationships and sharing of sexual images.

RSHE lessons were not inclusive enough and only focused on heterosexual relationships.

Several teachers reported that resources for the lesson were sometimes too late for them to look through fully.

Others expressed resentment that they had to teach relationships and sex education beyond their own subject specialism.

In some schools, leaders did not regularly or systematically check on the effectiveness and impact of teaching. Leaders also did not seek

find particularly difficult, such as consent and the sending of "nudes" and the confusion surrounding the status of relationships.

High-quality training for teachers delivering RSHE is necessary.

The findings indicate that additional resources to support non-subject specialists to teach RSHE would be beneficial for schools to help them successfully implement the new RSHE curriculum.

When planning the RSHE curriculum, it is essential that schools work closely with parents and carers to talk them through areas covered, address any gaps in their understanding and equip them with the confidence to be able to have open discussions with their children. Research indicates that there is a particular gap in parents' understanding of issues around online sexual abuse. Many parents are interested in learning more about the issue through schools and online resources. They also want more support in understanding how to talk about these issues with their children.

Pupils benefit from small group discussions led by young adults or outside experts who are engaging. External speakers should always be quality assured. Schools should encourage discussion around harmful sexual behavior in order to provide a message of understanding and transparency. They should encourage students to engage in debate on the issue of equality and fairness and they should teach empathy. Schools must provide support for the pastoral leads.

Leaders should gauge the effectiveness of the curriculum through surveys and culture reviews/culture diagnostics.

Where the curriculum does not appear to be having an impact, schools should review this and make changes accordingly engaging outside experts and the LSP as necessary.

Governors should seek evidence of the impact of effective teaching – through pupil questionnaires, feedback and Governor visits, this should include talking to staff. This should not be a “one-off” but rather as part of ongoing good safeguarding governance.

Schools need to plan an effective engagement strategy with parents / carers and work together with pupils, their families and local safeguarding partnerships to ensure that RSHE is effective and having an impact. Parents should understand that poor supervision of parties and alcohol and substance abuse may be signs of neglect.

Parents should at the very least be sign-posted to



feedback from children and young people. This meant they did not pick up on the above issues.

Children and young people also talked about wanting to know more about issues around consent in established relationships.

Evidence suggests that early experience of dating and relationship violence is associated with subsequent adverse outcomes, such as suicidal behaviours, other mental health problems and low educational attainment.

available resources so they can educate

themselves on the issues or indeed invited to sessions and workshops run by schools.

Schools need to consider how they will engage parents and pupils on the findings of the OFSTED review.

PHSE/RSHE lessons should reflect current affairs and issues that concern young people in a language that they use and recognise. React and respond in a way that engages young people and encourages them to discuss and debate in an open and safe environment that respects views of others.

A range of resources are available on our Hive Learning platform for schools. These are resources that we have discovered and shared whilst working for schools on the Everyone's Invited movement.

Given the scale and impact of harmful sexual behavior, it would be beneficial for schools to be supported by outside experts in designing the curriculum on these issues and keeping ahead of issues by ensuring they are part of their local safer communities network so they know what is going on in their area (rather than be the last to find out).



<p><b>Multi – agency safeguarding arrangements:</b></p> <p>How well are safeguarding guidance and processes understood and working between schools and multi-agency partners?</p> <p>Does working between schools and statutory agencies (social care, police, health) need to be strengthened?</p>	<p>Local Safeguarding Partnerships have varying levels of oversight and understanding of the issues for young people in their area.</p> <p>Schools reported that levels of support from local authorities varies from area to area.</p>	<p>Multi-agency partners should improve engagement with schools in their local area, tailoring their approach to what their analysis indicates are the risks to children and young people in their local area.</p> <p>Government to strengthen “Working Together” guidance to make the involvement of all schools with local safeguarding partners more explicit.</p> <p>Government to produce clearer guidance for schools to help them make decisions when there are long term or criminal investigations which do not lead to a prosecution or conviction.</p> <p>Government to develop a guide that helps children and young people know what might happen when they talk to an adult in school about sexual harassment / violence.</p> <p>Government to develop national training for DSLs plus resources for schools to help shape the RSHE curriculum.</p> <p>In any future updates of government guidance, the full range of children and young people’s experiences should be reflected in the language used. Clearer categories of the types of sexual harassment and online sexual abuse would also be helpful for professionals.</p>	<p>We know that practice varies across different local authorities but we have seen excellent examples of private organisations building good relationships with local statutory agencies and this certainly reaps benefits in the long run in terms of working in partnership on issues. This should include the police and a good relationship with your school’s Police Officer.</p> <p>Do engage with your local authority and look for opportunities to build relationships whether through attending training or by other means.</p> <p>Always seek guidance and help from the local authority who are there to support cases and refer cases in line with local thresholds and statutory guidance.</p> <p>Schools might find it helpful to review their local authority child protection arrangements, ensure that Governors are aware of these but also be aware of other services the statutory partners can offer such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programmes for parents and families.</li> <li>- Health services, sexual assault referral centres / domestic abuse services.</li> <li>- Drug action teams.</li> <li>- Police School's Officer.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Victim’s voice and reporting:</b></p> <p>How does the system listen to the voice of children when reporting sexual abuse?</p> <p>What prevents children from reporting?</p> <p>Do victims receive timely and appropriate support?</p> <p>Have inspections been robust enough?</p>	<p>Children and young people rarely speak to adults about sexual harassment and sexual violence.</p> <p>One of the main reasons for this is a misplaced sense of shame and embarrassment, but there are other complex factors at play. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fear of social exclusion by peers.</li> <li>- Worry about how adults will react.</li> <li>- Feel that once they talk about abuse, the next steps will be out of their control.</li> </ul> <p>Young people are less likely to tell someone about abuse when it is perpetrated by peers</p> <p>Research indicates that even when some children attempt to tell someone, they are not always listened to or believed.</p> <p>On OFSTED’s visits, they found that professionals still rely too much on children telling someone about abuse instead of recognising other indicators such as emotional or behavioural changes.</p> <p>Professionals’ and victims’ groups said that it is rare that children and young people talk about abuse as a “one-off” and that this may be a process that happens over time.</p> <p>Victims’ groups also considered that children and young people are much more likely to talk about abuse when secure and trusting relationships have been developed within a supportive culture.</p>	<p>The review emphasises the importance of schools teaching acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, with clear guidance and support, so that children and young people can support each other to bring issues to trusted adults. This is because in the event of an incident, young people are more likely to disclose an issue to a friend than an adult.</p> <p>Adults, including parents, are to be better educated and informed about sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online, between peers.</p> <p>It is also vital that adults are supported by professionals to provide appropriate, non-judgemental responses to children and young people who talk about abuse.</p> <p>Children and young people need reassurance and open discussion in schools about what they can expect, and what will happen if they do need to report concerns. They also need trusted adults they can talk to.</p> <p>In light of this, schools should take a whole-school approach to tackling sexual harassment and online sexual abuse because it is likely that they are underestimating the scale of the problem. This should include speaking to children, and listening to their views and experiences and using these to inform a preventative approach to sexual violence.</p> <p>Schools should consider the DSL’s role carefully, including how children and young people may perceive it. They should try to avoid any negative associations that might compound children’s misplaced sense of shame, embarrassment or “being in trouble”.</p>	<p>We refer below to creating a “speak up” culture in schools.</p> <p>We know that many organisations, in response to movements such as MeToo for example, are embarking on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive / active bystander programmes.</li> <li>- Having specially trained staff to deal with sexual violence and harassment.</li> <li>- Confidential whistleblowing lines and anonymous reporting tools.</li> </ul> <p>Schools should map out and consider all available programmes and measures and consider whether they would be suitable and workable in their school context. These examples will hopefully encourage early disclosure of issues.</p> <p>However, schools also need to consider whether there are additional challenges and barriers to reporting issues for example, children with disabilities or special educational needs or those from particular ethnic backgrounds or religious groups and address how those children can be further enabled to raise issues.</p> <p>The OFSTED report highlighted that schools must not rely on children’s disclosures alone and that schools needed to be picking up the early warning signs and acting accordingly. We suggest specific training for DSLs on this which should be cascaded around all staff together with a review of how well your IT systems are serving you in</p>
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Most of the young people said they would feel most comfortable talking to friends.

Children deciding whether to report an incident depends on the perceived severity of the incident. For example, they thought they would be listened to if they reported “serious” incidents but less likely to report what they see as “common” incidents, such as “being asked for nudes” and “comments from boys in corridors”.

Pupils’ concerns about confidentiality can also be a barrier. Young people do not always know “what will be done with the information”. They are also worried that responses such as a whole-school assembly would just set the “rumour mills going”.

They were worried that they would get into trouble if they spoke to the DSL when this individual had a dual role as the deputy headteacher for behaviour.

Children and young people were also worried about their parents being told particularly if alcohol or drugs were involved.

The NSPCC has developed guidance for professionals to support children and young people when they talk about abuse. This highlights the importance of:

- Demonstrating to a child that you are listening.
- Putting a child in charge of the conversation.
- Reassuring a child and showing empathy.

Recent guidance from the UK Council for Internet Safety outlines some good practice in dealing specifically with incidents of youth-produced sexual imagery.

identifying concerns with children and issuing warnings.

Change of culture within schools cannot be brought about by adults alone. It needs the pupil voice to be at the forefront. Before we can address the issues of consent, healthy relationships and general sex education, we need to step back and consider other issues such as addressing misogynistic behaviours and attitudes, equality and discrimination. We are aware of concerns about the damaging impact of extreme pornography (please see our work with the reward Foundation [here](#)) as well as other misogynistic online communities. Schools need to be ready with a counter narrative and address what is and isn’t appropriate in terms of attitudes and behaviours and be alive to the places where children are being inducted with extreme views.



<p><b>A range of other considerations including:</b></p> <p>Range, nature, location, severity of allegations.</p> <p>Extent of schools' knowledge of incidents.</p> <p>Safeguarding responses to incidents.</p> <p>Use of sanctions.</p> <p>Schools' willingness to work with other partners.</p> <p>The extent to which inspections explored relevant cases and issues.</p>	<p>Research indicates that approximately one quarter of cases of all child sexual abuse involve a perpetrator under the age of 18.</p> <p>Although anyone can experience sexual harassment and violence, research indicates that girls are disproportionately affected.</p> <p>In the past year, girls aged between 15 and 17 reported the highest annual rates of sexual abuse for young people and children aged 25 and younger.</p> <p>In the focus groups, many young people talked about teachers not "knowing the reality" of their lives, or being "out of date".</p> <p>In general, they reported much higher incidences of sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and bullying behaviours than teachers and leaders tended to be aware of. In terms of sexualised language, young people said that "slag" and "slut" were commonplace and that homophobic language was also used in school.</p> <p>Many felt that staff either were not aware of this language, dismissed it as "banter" or simply were not prepared to tackle it.</p> <p>Sometimes, children and young people themselves saw the use of derogatory language as "banter" or "just a joke".</p> <p>Overall, children and young people tended to say that they felt physically safe at college or school, although there was a clear emotional impact on girls who experienced regular sexual</p>	<p>The review recommended a need for development and training for all school staff on prevalence and what constitutes harmful sexual behaviour.</p> <p>There is a need for school leaders to take an approach to tackling sexual harassment and bullying behaviours that goes beyond tackling incidents in isolation.</p> <p>Children and young people need to feel confident that staff will respond in a proportionate and fair way to incidents. They also need to be told the different potential consequences of reporting. Schools need to have a range of responses to different forms of behaviour and intervene in a proportionate way at the right time.</p> <p>Leaders should take a whole-school/college approach to developing a culture where all kinds of sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are recognised and addressed.</p> <p>To achieve this, schools and colleges need to create an environment where staff model respectful and appropriate behaviour, where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children and young people are clear about what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour,</li> <li>- Where they are confident to ask for help and support when they need it.</li> <li>- Central to this should be a carefully planned and implemented RSHE curriculum.</li> </ul>	<p>Schools should aim to have a "speak up" culture where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The expected standards of conduct (of pupils and adults) are widely communicated.</li> <li>- Poor behaviour is challenged and reported appropriately.</li> <li>- Policies, procedures, interventions and sanctions are applied consistently and proportionately to everyone in school.</li> </ul> <p>Anyone who makes a disclosure (particularly of something serious) needs appropriate support and schools should liaise with LSPs about local services available to young people).</p> <p>Leaders and Governors need to do significant work on culture change if pupils in their schools are reporting that they are concerned about being seen to be "snitches" per the OFSTED report.</p> <p>The report clearly also identifies a need for more safeguarding governance across schools. Governors should hold senior leaders to account by examining the data in school, asking questioning and monitoring progress and impact of initiatives. We suggest that Governors undertake their own annual safeguarding audits.</p> <p>They may find it useful to have an external "critical friend" who has expertise in this area to help them.</p>
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harassment or other harmful sexual behaviour.

Some school leaders defined online sexual harassment as “happening out of school”, OFSTED saw clear evidence of how online sexual harassment has a significant impact on the normalisation of harmful sexual behaviour and unhealthy cultures within school.

Most secondary school pupils recognise the harm that sexual approaches from adult strangers online bring, there is less clarity about what constitutes sexual harm within the context of peer relationships or existing online networks.

School leaders highlighted the problems that access to pornography had created and how pornography had set unhealthy expectations of sexual relationships and perceptions of women and girls.

Evidence suggests that nearly half (48%) of 11- to 16-year-olds in the UK have viewed pornography. Of these, boys were approximately twice as likely as girls to have actively searched for it.

In relation to disciplinary sanctions, young people had a clear desire for justice, but this was at odds with others who told OFSTED that harsh sanctions for their peers put them off talking to an adult about abuse. These children and young people said that sometimes the consequences of reporting abuse have been so “punitive” for the perpetrator that, rather than acting as a ‘deterrent’ to harmful sexual behaviour, the result is to “put off” young people

- Sanctions and interventions to tackle poor behaviour,
- Provide support for children and young people who need it.
- Training and clear expectations for staff and governors, and
- Listening to pupil voice.

Good practice recommendations include:

- Engaging students in small-group sessions to discuss different forms of harmful sexual behaviour.
- Mapping the school and out-of-school spaces to identify where harmful sexual behaviour takes place.
- Using a curriculum-based approach to tackle a culture where reporting is perceived as “snitching”.
- Children having a trusting and positive relationship with an individual staff member.
- Children being aware of previous positive experiences of school responses.
- Teachers showing that they respect students, listen and respond subtly.
- Having staff with a specialist role not linked to teaching or behaviour.

Governors should understand the process of an investigation. They should attend training on how best to conduct an investigation on the issue of harmful sexual behavior.

Governors should also support Heads and senior leaders by ensuring that they have in place access to the right support when cases arise and high-quality training to equip senior leaders to be prepared to tackle cases. Governors should also ensure that they are equipped to deal with any complaints that are brought by parents that may arise in this climate as a result of actions taken by schools in response to disclosures.

,from reporting incidents.

Children and young people were also worried about police involvement. They said that they would prefer a pastoral and supportive approach without the immediate threat of police involvement.

Furthermore, some schools were dealing with incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online, in an isolated way, without considering the context and wider safeguarding risks. This meant that they were not considering factors such as:

- Whether other children and young people were at risk.
- Whether there were spaces in or outside school where children and young people were at particular risk.
- Where power dynamics in peer relationships were creating unhealthy cultures.

Leaders told OFSTED that they used a wide variety of sanctions for perpetrators of sexual violence. They intended these to be proportionate and to take account of individual circumstances. Examples included fixed-term exclusions, detentions, internal referrals and removal of privileges. Schools also included parents and carers as part of any response.

In addition to sanctions, many schools offered support to the victim and the perpetrator to



prevent future incidents and tackle any underlying causes of harmful sexual behaviour. This included counselling, pastoral support, educative approaches and the involvement of families, social care and external agencies, such as child and adolescent mental health services and specialist services.

In only around a third of the schools, inspectors highlighted that governors are involved in reviewing incidents, safeguarding logs, behaviour logs or procedures related to harmful sexual behaviour. This could be to help identify wider patterns, or to check that school policies and procedures have been adhered to.

Inspectors noted there were inconsistencies in how staff were defining and recording instances of sexual abuse, including recording of discussions with multi-agency partners and the outcome of referrals.



## Appendix 2

Reaction from the DFE	Reaction from the Education Secretary	Response from the NSPCC	Response from the Police
<p>Schools to be encouraged to dedicate staff training to handling sexual abuse and harassment.</p> <p>Further support and strengthened guidance for RSHE teaching.</p> <p>Government to meet with tech companies and young people to discuss keeping safe online.</p> <p>Teachers and school leaders will be better supported to recognise sexual harassment and abuse and teach confidently about</p>	<p>Sexual abuse in any form is completely unacceptable. No young person should feel that this is a normal part of their daily lives – schools are places of safety, not harmful behaviours that are tolerated instead of tackled.</p> <p>“Ofsted’s review has rightly highlighted where we can take specific and urgent action to address sexual abuse in education. But there are wider societal influences at play, meaning schools and colleges cannot be expected to tackle these issues alone.</p> <p>“By reflecting young people’s real experiences in what they are taught, I hope more people feel able to speak up where something isn’t right and call out activity that might previously have been written off as ‘normal’.”</p> <p>In its eight-week review, Ofsted looked at safeguarding measures in schools and colleges, as well as assessing whether extra support is needed for teaching about sex and relationships, working alongside social care, police, victim support groups, education leaders and the Independent Schools Council.</p> <p>Ofsted’s findings demonstrate that incidents of harassment and abuse have been “normalised” by their frequency, with the majority of the more than 900 children and young people surveyed experiencing some kind of unsolicited images or</p>	<p>This Review will shock many people but is sadly not surprising. It reinforces the testimonies published by Everyone’s Invited and shows how pervasive harmful sexual behaviour and peer sexual abuse is, both online and offline. For many pupils it’s an everyday part of school life they should not have to tolerate.</p> <p>“Crucially, Ofsted has listened extensively to children and that has helped expose what’s happening. This demonstrates that young people’s voices and experiences must shape policies and be central to the inspection process.</p> <p>“There now needs to be a whole school approach to preventing harmful sexual behaviour. Teachers should work with students to create a positive culture in which healthy behaviour flourishes, harmful attitudes are challenged and inappropriate behaviour doesn’t escalate. Governors should champion and support such an approach. Mandatory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RHSE) has the potential to help young people themselves to be a vital part of this transformation, but the Review shows the current approach to RSHE is not working for students or teachers. We need the Government to deliver an implementation that matches</p>	<p>Sexual abuse in any form is completely unacceptable. No young person should feel that this is a normal part of their daily lives – schools are places of safety, not harmful behaviours that are tolerated instead of tackled.</p> <p>“Ofsted’s review has rightly highlighted where we can take specific and urgent action to address sexual abuse in education. But there are wider societal influences at play, meaning schools and colleges cannot be expected to tackle these issues alone.”</p> <p>“By reflecting young people’s real experiences in what they are taught, I hope more people feel able to speak up where something isn’t right and call out activity that might previously have been written off as ‘normal’.”</p> <p>“I welcome the findings from the Ofsted report and the Department for Education’s pledge of further support for schools and colleges in relation to sexual abuse within an educational setting.”</p> <p>“It is evident from the hundreds of calls to the dedicated NSPCC helpline that support is required by victims and survivors, some of whom have suffered sexual abuse within educational settings, and therefore it is encouraging that the helpline is being extended until October 2021.”</p> <p>“It is deeply concerning that Ofsted found that such</p>



issues of consent, online pornography and healthy relationships.

School and college leaders will be encouraged to dedicate inset day time to help train staff on how to deal with sexual abuse and harassment among pupils and how to deliver the Government's new compulsory Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum (RSHE).

Strengthened safeguarding guidance will also be introduced to boost teacher confidence in identifying and responding to

or sexist comments – whether in person at school or college, or online or via mobile phone.

To address this, the Education Secretary Gavin Williamson and Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden have asked the Children's Commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza to join a roundtable discussion in the coming weeks with tech companies, law enforcement, children's charities and schools to talk about preventative measures ahead of legislation on age restrictions for app downloading and sharing, and how to support parents and children to make more informed and safer choices online.

Building on the work that the Government has set out on the Online Safety Bill, it follows a joint letter to Dame Rachel from Mr Williamson and Mr Dowden last month asking her to support the Government's drive to protect children from harmful online content and to ensure the voices of children are heard and represented in this work.

This will include working with schools, parents and charities to support them around building strong social norms against underage access to pornography, around children using the internet safely and educating those groups on the impact that some internet content can have on healthy sex and relationships.

The Online Safety Bill will enshrine in law a ground-breaking new system of accountability and oversight of tech companies, where companies will need to prevent children from accessing minimise inappropriate content, such as pornography and online bullying.

the scale of this challenge and ensures each and every school has the support and resources they need to confidently deliver a high quality curriculum. The NSPCC stands ready to help.

"However, this problem isn't limited to classrooms and corridors. Schools need to work closely with safeguarding partners to understand and address risks children face in their communities and ensure there is a joined-up response from services when they experience sexual abuse. At the same time, the Government must deliver a more ambitious Online Safety Bill that goes further to tackle preventable online harm and abuse."

unacceptable behaviours were not the exception, but instead young people have told us that this is a part of their daily lives. For this reason, we can assume that the testimonies on the Everyone's Invited website reflect only the tip of the iceberg. The clear message to young people now is – this is not a normal or acceptable part of growing up. There will be no normalising of such unacceptable behaviours, and as a society we all have a part to play – as parents, professionals, and responsible adults – to work together to prevent such behaviour through education, awareness raising, support, and, where appropriate, through enforcement in those instances where serious criminal offences are committed."

"Policing is committed to the continued work with local safeguarding partnerships to educate, inform, intervene where required, and most importantly, work to prevent future harm from taking place."

"We would encourage anyone that has been sexually abused to call the dedicated helpline and/or report their abuse to the police so we can ensure the right safeguarding measures are in place."

"If victims do wish to report criminal offences to the police, they can be confident that their account will be recorded, they will be treated with compassion and respect with an impartial and proportionate investigation commenced to identify any evidence, regardless of when or where the offence is said to have taken place."



these issues, as well as supervision to dedicated members of school and college staff in up to 10 more local authorities, whose role it is to identify safeguarding concerns among pupils, with a specific focus on sexual abuse.

Responding on Thursday 10 June, the Department for Education has confirmed it will take forward work to strengthen the RSHE curriculum so that teachers are clearer on when different elements should be taught, such as sharing images online and consent, as well as updating statutory guidance to ensure that the definitions used are in line with what pupils understand and experience.

In addition, to ensure continuity in the offer of a safe space for victims of sexual abuse to receive professional advice or to refer matters to authorities, the NSPCC 'Abuse in Education' helpline will also run for a further four months until October.

Launched on April 1 2021 alongside the Ofsted Review, the helpline will ensure that young people who may have experienced abuse at school or any other victim of recent or non-recent sexual abuse can receive the immediate support and guidance they require. As of Monday 7 June 2021, the helpline has received 426 calls and helpline staff have made 80 referrals to external agencies like the police or social services.

A trial already running in 30 areas will be extended to up to 10 new local authorities to provide supervision for designated safeguarding leads, working with up to a further 500 schools, including independent schools, with a specific focus on sexual abuse.

The programme aims to strengthen support for Dedicated Safeguarding Leads, improve individual safeguarding practices and enable better joined up



<p>working across different agencies. The programme will also help build the evidence base on what works in supporting safeguarding leads. At the same time, work is underway to raise the profile of the role in the same way as the role of a SENCo.</p>		
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