

## 3 steps to creating a school environment where sexual violence and harassment aren't tolerated

There are growing concerns about sexual violence and sexual harassment between children and young people. In this guide we look at the preventative strategies your school can use and the subjects your RSE curriculum should focus on. What is sexual violence and sexual harassment between children? Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between children and young people of any gender or age. It can also occur through a group of children or young people sexually assaulting or harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and harassment can occur online and offline, both physically and verbally.

A young person may perceive sexual harassment as teasing or banter and the sending of naked images, or sexting, as part of their social norm

### Step 1: Educating students and staff at Thomas Estley

To reduce and prevent incidents of sexual violence and harassment, children and young people should have a clear understanding of what they are. To support this, your school should develop an effective sex and relationship education (SRE) programme and a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme that's supported by the wider curriculum.

What healthy and respectful relationships are?

What respectful behaviour looks like?

What consent is?

What gender equality means

What bullying is?

How to keep safe online?

What prejudiced behaviour is?

Body confidence and self-esteem Gender roles and stereotyping

- Ensure the RSE curriculum addresses all areas of peer on peer abuse including sexual abuse
- Student assembly held Spring and summer term focus on Peer on peer abuse – sexual harassment focus in summer term
- All Staff Training Autumn term
- Launch student action group – Autumn term
- DSL training- Dealing with incidents of sexual abuse in schools
- Sign posting students and parents to support

### Step 2: Promoting a whole school ethos

It's important to recognise that children and young people can feel under pressure with matters of sexual harassment. Incidents shouldn't be treated as 'banter', 'just having a laugh' or seen as part of growing up. By promoting and supporting a whole school ethos towards sexual violence and harassment, your school can help to prevent it.

## **To create an environment where sexual violence and harassment aren't tolerated, your school should:**

Challenge incidents of a sexual nature, for example, grabbing bottoms, breasts or genitalia – not acting or dismissing such behaviours risks promoting or normalising them

- Respond to incidents in ways that are effective, proportionate and consider the context in which they've occurred
- A bystander intervention programme can help to enforce this message while also helping students to support each other

Encourage staff, students and parents to share their concerns openly so they feel listened to and don't feel judged

- Offer students various routes to report concerns, such as surveys, a concern box and via a member of staff they identify as someone they trust
- Engage parents in discussions about your response to sexual violence and harassment, for example, via parent surveys

Have clear policies and procedures regarding sexual violence and harassment and peer-on-peer abuse that are reflected throughout your school safeguarding practice

- Peer on peer abuse included as appendix in child protection policy
- [Reportabuse@thomasestley.org.uk](mailto:Reportabuse@thomasestley.org.uk) – launched with students in assembly – STAND UP SPEAK OUT
- Student survey launched with students
- Action plan shared with students
- Student action group meet weekly with Mrs Cornelius
- Staff training – Zero tolerance to normalising behaviours
- Introduce a bystander's intervention programme

## **Other preventative measures could include:**

Promoting a safe environment within your school by asking pupils where they feel unsafe and observing where groups of pupils stand – safety mapping activities and student surveys can help with this

- Survey feedback
- Introduce student action group – Stand up Speak out

Understanding the local community and how it influences your school – through safety mapping with students and engaging in multi-agency meetings where local concerns are being discussed

Building relationships with agencies and charities who can offer additional support, should you require it

- External agencies to come into school to work with students – deliver workshops

## **Step 3: Responding to suspected peer-on-peer abuse**

If you suspect a child is in immediate danger from peer-on-peer abuse, you must report your concerns to your designated safeguarding lead (DSL). They'll make a referral to children's social care and/or the police. If the DSL isn't available you mustn't delay in reporting the abuse yourself, but you must inform the DSL as soon as possible. If you suspect a child is at risk of, or experiencing, peer-on-peer abuse or that child is abusing their peers, you should discuss your concerns with your DSL. A decision can then be made whether to:

Report your concern to social care and/or the police

Undertake an early help assessment

Manage your concern internally with or without external agency support

When dealing with peer-on-peer abuse the welfare of all the children involved is your school's top priority and your response should reflect this.

**When dealing with peer-on-peer abuse you should:**

Act quickly and sensitively  
Gather information from everyone involved to make sure you have all the facts

**Ask open questions to obtain clarity:**

- What happened?
- Who saw what happened?
- What was seen and heard?
- Did anyone intervene?

Decide on the next course of action.  
In doing so, you should consider:

- Was the act deliberate and with the intent to cause physical or emotional harm?
- Has the child experienced this abuse before?
- Has the child done this before?
- Does the child understand the impact of their behaviour on others?
- Have similar incidents occurred in the school involving other children – is this a pattern emerging in a particular group or key stage, or in a certain location at school?

Follow the peer-on-peer abuse policy and safeguarding policy

Cathy Cornelius, September 2021