

**WE DON'T TELL OUR  
TEACHERS, BUT  
SCHOOLS NEED TO  
KNOW – A REPORT  
FOR LEARNERS**



# YOUR VOICE – MAKE A CHANGE AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

We've spoken to 1,300 learners – and you told us that catcalling, being asked for nude pictures, people making hurtful or homophobic comments and body-shaming have become a major problem.

It's not "banter", it's sexual harassment.

It's time to make a change. We all need to work together to change attitudes and behaviour around pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment and healthy relationships. For example, in one school, all the staff feel that they are well supported to deal with incidents of sexual harassment, and training has been provided to all staff on LGBTQ+ matters.

We've made recommendations for the Education Minister to consider, and our report has gone to all schools for them to consider our recommendations and work with you to improve how they prevent and respond to pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment.

But we need your help too. If you see or experience sexual harassment, school staff or an adult you trust need to know about it in order to help.

Read on to learn more about our findings, the changes that we think need to be made, and how you can help. We've also included details for organisations that can help if you need to talk to someone further.





## WHO ARE ESTYN?

We're responsible for checking standards and the quality of education in Wales. We inspect schools and give regular advice about education to the Welsh Government and other organisations.

## HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT?

In June 2021 the Education Minister asked us to review pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment in secondary schools. We're concerned by our findings, which show that this issue is happening more often than we think and becoming a major problem for young people and schools.

In autumn 2021, we visited 35 secondary and independent schools across Wales. We discussed pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment with around 1,300 young people and used the feedback to write our report.

## WHY DID WE WRITE THIS REPORT?

Normally we write reports for the Welsh Government, headteachers and teachers and suggest what needs to improve. We decided to write this report for you because we're grateful for the honesty and bravery shown by the young people we spoke to. It's not an easy topic to talk openly about, but their honesty will help make necessary changes.



# HOW DO PUPILS REACT TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Our survey told us that many of you don't tell teachers or other adults about the harassment because it happens so often, and that it's become 'normal' behaviour. Over half of all pupils feel more comfortable telling a friend about sexual harassment than telling a responsible adult. A few say that they are too scared to tell anyone at all.


JUST UNDER HALF OF THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED THIS HARASSMENT KEEP IT TO THEMSELVES.

ONLY 2 OUT OF 10 PUPILS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT TELL A TEACHER.



# HOW DO SCHOOLS RESPOND TO COMPLAINTS?

Those of you who've experienced sexual harassment said you weren't sure how to make a complaint, and that you wouldn't be taken seriously. You also told us that you want more opportunities to talk about sexual harassment in assemblies or lessons.



**A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF NON-BINARY PUPILS FEEL THAT COMPLAINTS ARE IGNORED OR ARE NOT DEALT WITH.**



**AROUND A THIRD OF PUPILS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT THINK THAT THE SCHOOL DOES NOT TAKE COMPLAINTS SERIOUSLY.**

# SCHOOLS: WHAT'S GOOD AND WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE?

Unfortunately, not all schools in Wales deal with sexual harassment well enough. Staff in schools usually respond appropriately to incidents of pupil sexual harassment that are reported to them, but most schools are not doing enough to prevent those incidents from happening in the first place.

Schools value outside speakers, such as the police and youth workers, as they help to teach many topics in personal and social education. Schools say that parents also play an important role in preparing young people to handle relationships successfully and feel that they need to work closely with parents on this. More pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment takes place outside school than inside, but it often carries on in school. Schools say that parents need to monitor how their children are using social media.

We found that the best schools make sure that respect is a top priority and that differences between people are celebrated. When sexual harassment does occur, staff know how to deal with this type of harassment quickly and effectively.

The way that all forms of harassment and bullying are recorded in schools needs to be more detailed to allow staff to respond to incidents properly. When schools record incidents of bullying and harassment they do not always note the type of bullying or harassment that has taken place. Having more detailed and specific information means that schools could consider the extent of the problem and how well they deal with pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment.

Schools do not provide enough time for young people to learn about and discuss healthy relationships, sex and sexuality in a safe, comfortable and open way.



## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We've made recommendations for the Education Minister to consider. However, we all need to work together to change attitudes and behaviour around pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment and healthy relationships.

We'd like all schools to consider the recommendations from our report and work with their pupils and school councils to improve their work.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Report any issues to school staff, a family member, or an adult you trust, and don't be afraid to talk about it – whatever it may be.
- Create an anonymous and confidential system for other pupils to report any concerns about sexual harassment. This may be a simple box in a central location or a digital platform to voice your concerns.

- Start learner voice discussions with different groups of learners – make sure that all groups of young people are represented.
- Ask for training for young people to become pupil support ambassadors. Make sure that they are recognisable and available around the school.
- Allow opportunities to discuss openly and make suggestions to your teachers on the kinds of topics you want to talk about in your health and well-being or PSE lessons.
- Stay safe online and remember to report any inappropriate behaviour as soon as possible.
- If you need to talk to someone about pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment, then you can contact:  
**Childline:** 0800 1111  
**NSPCC:** [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)  
**Children's Commissioner for Wales:** 0808 801 1000



## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR SCHOOL?

Use the questions below to discuss what's happening in your school and what could be done to prevent and respond to pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment. You will need to discuss these with other pupils to get their views. You may also want to talk to staff about some of these questions.

1. How much of a problem is pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment in your school? Have you ever had an opportunity to discuss this issue in school?
2. What positive steps does your school take to prevent pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment?
3. If you experienced sexual harassment, who could you tell in school about it and what would they do?
4. How does your school promote the importance of respecting everyone within the school?
5. How does your school celebrate the differences between people, including differences in gender and sexuality?
6. How helpful is the personal and social education (PSE) programme at your school? Does it prepare you for the challenges of growing up in the modern world? Are topics introduced at the right age? Is enough time given to learn about and discuss them? Are there any important topics that are missing?
7. How often are people from outside school brought in to lead relationships and sexuality sessions? How helpful are these?
8. Are you able to discuss relationships and sexuality in an open and honest way with school staff?
9. What information on LGBTQ+ is provided by your school and what is discussed in your RSE lessons?
10. How does your school work with parents and other people to prevent pupil-on-pupil sexual harassment?

