

Committee	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report	Sexual harassment in schools
Date of Meeting	8/2/22
Relevant Officer	Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, Senior Officer for Safeguarding Children
Cabinet Member	Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams

## **"We do not tell our teachers"**

(Estyn, December 2021).

### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report is submitted at the request of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee due to the publication of a report by Estyn in December 2021, "*We do not tell our teachers*".
- 1.2 The report responds to information that became apparent in 2021 when information on pupil sexual harassment was seen on the "*Everybody's Invited*" website.
- 1.3 This report, along with associated appendices, elaborates on:
  - the contents of the Estyn report, specifically the voice of children on what needs to change within school provision in order for children to feel safe in schools.
  - the recommendations of the Estyn report, and recommends an approach for Gwynedd schools.

### **2. ESTYN REPORT BACKGROUND.** (December 2021)

- 2.1 The background of the report is that information on the "*Everybody's Invited*" website, which was created by people who had been victims of sexual harassment whilst they were school pupils.
- 2.2 The "*Everyone's invited*" website has published the comments of 16,000 children and young people who have submitted testimonies about their experiences in schools.
- 2.3 There are references to 91 schools in Wales on the website, with reference to three schools in Gwynedd.
- 2.4 The website was established as children and young people attending Independent Schools were very dissatisfied that the staff at these schools did not take sexual harassment complaints seriously.

#### **Peer-on-peer sexual harassment - characteristics**

- i. sexual violence - such as sexual violence, penetrative assault and sexual assault;

- ii. sexual harassment - such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and on-line sexual harassment, that could be isolated or part of a broader pattern of abuse
  - iii. upskirting - which usually involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of looking at their reproductive organs for sexual gratification, or to humiliate, distress or scare the victim
  - iv. sexting - (also known as 'sexual images created by young people')
- 2.5 The children and young people told us that there was a wide variety of behaviours taking place on-line. These include:
- receiving unsolicited photographs or videos, for example 'dick pics'
  - sending, or pressured to send nude and semi-nude photographs or videos
  - being sent or posted, or posted on-line - specific material such as pornographic videos.
- 3. ESTYN'S REPORT - "WE DO NOT TELL OUR TEACHERS" (DECEMBER 2021) OUTLINES THE FINDINGS OF THEIR ENQUIRIES IN TERMS OF WHAT MATTERS TO SCHOOL CHILDREN.**
- 3.1 61% of girls questioned during the Estyn investigation reported having suffered from harassment at school. It was reported that 82% of those who participated in the investigation were aware that harassment had happened to others at school.
- 3.2 In terms of boys, the percentage stating that they had suffered peer-on-peer harassment at school was substantially lower namely 29%, with 71% noting that they were aware that harassment had happened to others at school.
- 3.3 The report is clear in terms of what methods are used to harass and that harassment occurs more often outside the school rather than at school, and usually through on-line contact.
- 3.4 Children use mobile phones, social media and computer games to harass.
- 3.5 The report draws our attention to the different methods of peer-on-peer harassment at school, namely:
- i. On-line bullying
  - ii. Posting hurtful comments on-line, in particular comments about someone's appearance.
  - iii. Asking for and sending nude photographs on-line.
  - iv. Cat-fishing in order to target others on-line.
  - v. Unsolicited friend requests and sending demands for nude photographs using a fake on-line profile.
  - vi. Speaking in negative terms about females when playing on-line games.

According to the investigation, the most regular form of harassment was name-calling during the school day, and making sexual comments at school, as well as remarks of a homophobic nature usually against boys.

- 3.6 It was reported that comments about children's appearance were usually common.
- 3.7 The LGBTQ+ community reported that comments and sexual harassment occurred regularly at school and that this was the most regular harassment to this group of children.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS.**

- 4.1 The report notes what matters to children who participated in the investigation. The main elements that schools need to undertake are noted in order for children to feel safe at school. These are the important things for schools to deliver according to the children who were questioned as part of the investigation:

**1) Discuss what is respect.** There is a need to create an environment of respect towards everyone within schools. This is done by responding quickly to matters as they arise. Respond by immediately punishing the perpetrators of harassment. Use external agencies to discuss the behaviour with the individual who was responsible for the harassment. There is a need to respond in a way that safeguards confidentiality at all times. Create a system in every school which ensures that harassment matters are not ignored and that everyone who sexually harasses others at school or at an event outside school is punished.

**2) Presentations by individuals from the real world to discuss relevant subjects.** Provide suitable education in the field of Healthy Relationship / Oppressive Relationship using relevant agencies (e.g. RASA, Spectrum, Hafan Cymru) to speak to children about every element of a healthy relationship, including a LGBTQ relationship.

Commission bespoke work from external agencies to present sessions in the field of healthy relationships.

Hold regular assemblies discussing elements of a healthy and LGBTQ relationship.

Earmark specific funding to ensure that every school receives support from organisations such as Hafan Cymru and Spectrum Wales in order to improve the quality of personal and sex education offered in our schools.

- 3) Encourage discussion on matters of sexual harassment within lessons.** Hold regular assemblies to address the central topics in this report, namely:  
On-line bullying including use of hurtful comments and remarks about an individual's appearance and hateful and homophobic comments. Posting hurtful comments on social media to children from school.  
Frequent requests for nude photographs from girls usually at school but offering them an unsolicited nude photograph occasionally.  
Creating an on-line fake photograph and account (profile) to send hurtful comments to children from school.  
Creating regular groups for girls to discuss harassment matters in every school under the regular guidance of an experienced person in the field of sexual abuse.
- 4) Provide suitable support for every child by ensuring that a staff member is available to speak to the child at all times.**  
Ensure that a school pastoral service is available regularly for every child.  
Ensure that every child has a (Nominated) appropriate adult to listen to and to provide support at all times at School.  
Provide a safe space for children to talk within the school building.  
Provide a suitable time to discuss a healthy relationship within the School timetable.  
Ensure time for health and well-being matters in the school's timetable.  
Place an emphasis on planning lessons in the field of healthy relationship by including children and staff in the detailed planning.
- 5) Thoroughly train staff in the field of healthy relationship, the suitability of every behaviour and outcomes of all behaviours.**  
Thorough training for staff which responds to sexual harassment matters (including provision for children with additional learning needs).  
Invest in training for staff members to carry out the work thoroughly. This field is not secondary work where teachers can be used to cover free lessons.  
Work in this field is not an addition to school provision, it is core provision.

## **5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to:

- submit any observations on the suitability of the recommendations
- provide observations on how to fund the improvements in schools in line with Estyn's recommendations.