

## Promoting and Ensuring Equality and Respect.

### Eradicating all forms of peer on peer abuse and harassment at Holy Trinity Catholic School.



All children have the right to be safe inside and outside of school. At the heart of our school ethos are the core values of 'Respect' and 'Equality'. Our Mission statement identifies that we are a 'caring community' where 'all are respected as equal'. We recognise as an inclusive school, the importance of celebrating the core values and beliefs, which unite us. As one community made in the Image of God we are welcoming and tolerant of all. Being made in God's image we should 'Learn to love and love to learn' in order to be the best we can be and to affect positively the lives of others and society in general. We are creating the next generation of pupils who are leaders, who know right from wrong and are able to develop a clear sense of responsibility and morale purpose in their decisions and actions- those who can be the voice and hand of good and the voice of the voiceless.

Earlier in the year, Ofsted published its report on **peer on peer abuse in schools**. We know that all forms of bullying, discrimination and violence have no place in society and certainly not in schools. This includes all forms of sexual abuse and harassment. The report says that sexual harassment is so commonplace in some schools that some students do not feel it is worth reporting it.

Ofsted advises that schools should act on the assumption that peer-on-peer sexual abuse is an issue in schools and should work to develop a culture where all kinds of bullying, violence, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse, prejudice and lack of tolerance is recognised and addressed. This will include instances of incidents outside of school and those that take place online. It is important that these are addressed in schools so that pupils are safe, that they are able to make safe and sensible choices in the future, that they know what to do if they are at risk of or suffer harm and that they understand that they have a voice to speak out when and if they are victims. Pupils also need to know how to challenge what is wrong if they see or know that something is happening to someone else which may leave them at risk.

We have robust processes to address all forms of peer on peer abuse and a clear plan to stamp out harassment and abuse of all kinds when it occurs between students.

## **Our school climate:**

Our Motto, 'Learn to Love. Love to learn' reinforces what we stand for as a school. Along with our Mission statement and our fundamental Catholic and human values we believe that we are all made in God's image and that we should follow and adhere to the fundamental Gospel Values of loving thy neighbour and caring for each other. Core British values and Human values, key messages around Children's rights, a strong culture of very effective safeguarding and our robust behaviour policy and high standards of behaviour linked to the development of self-esteem and positive wellbeing are additional key factors, which feed into our school climate.

At this point, we are in the early stages of our journey and have identified some key areas we are going to work on in our initial steps to help us to protect students from sexual harassment in school. These are policy, staff training and education.

## **Rights Respecting School Award- RRSA**

We have recently been awarded our Bronze RRSA award and are currently working towards the Silver accreditation. Central to this award **are the core rights of all children to be safe and to be able to enjoy and achieve at school.** Much of our work around peer on peer abuse is threaded through the core work and Values of the Rights Respecting School Project, which has the key messages of **equality and respect** permeating throughout.

**Ongoing work to develop understanding of peer on peer abuse.** Please see below for some of the actions, which are ongoing in terms of our ongoing work to combat peer on peer abuse.

Firstly, we have clarified within our school setting what "sexual harassment/abuse" means. In our school, we will work define harassment as "unwanted attention that makes you feel uncomfortable".

We want to remove the word "sexual" because we felt this could mislead students to think that only certain explicit behaviours were sexual harassment, rather than seeing the broader definition. All forms of harassment are unacceptable.

We will be conducting our own student voice surveys as well as staff surveys. Not only do we feel it is important to take our students' own voices and experiences into account, but also know this is the first step in raising the profile and starting the conversation around this very complex issue. We also conduct a parent voice survey asking parents to comment on whether they feel that their child is safe at school. Parents can use this forum to feedback any questions, concerns or issues that they

may have. The survey is evaluated by a member of the SLT team, any issues or concerns are followed up and dealt with by the appropriate member of staff. The survey will be sent to all parents each term.

The student voice Health, safety and wellbeing committee have been pivotal in terms of putting together the content and questions for our forthcoming pupil questionnaire. All staff have also been given the opportunity to contribute to a staff questionnaire.

We have established a staff working party with staff representative from all key areas of school life. Our local school link police officer, our student social worker and school nurse are also forming part of this committee, which is helping us to shape our next steps and providing some joined up thinking in terms of how we address these challenges.

Via our Assembly and PSD/ SRE inputs, pupils are reminded of our key messages, as well as being introduced to our whole school key work and messages.

All pupils access a robust PSD and SRE programme which is taught weekly. Mutual respect, tolerance and the forming of respectful relationships is the golden thread that runs through all aspects of the PSD curriculum. Key themes that will explore peer on peer abuse more explicitly are respectful relationships, consent and resolving conflict. Access to the full PSD and RSHE curriculum can be found on the school website.

Our Assembly inputs to date are focussed on embedding the key fundamental values, which sit at the heart of addressing issues linked to peer on peer abuse. To date since September these have included:

- RRSA introduction, Rights and Responsibilities
- British Values
- Using words carefully- the power of words and actions
- An introduction to Children's Rights (Healthy mind, healthy Body)
- Equality- the skill of communication (Literacy Link)
- An introduction to peer on peer abuse
- Eating for life (Healthy mind and Healthy Bodies)
- 5 Rs – (Responsibility, Resourcefulness, Respect, Reflection, resilience)
- Love Thy Neighbour (Our Key values as a school), E safety
- Anti-bullying- led by the Pupil led Anti Bullying Ambassadors

Our focus is for pupils to know what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and to report it. Birmingham is adopting a 'zero tolerance' stance towards peer on peer abuse. Ofsted cites that one reason why students did not come forward to report incidents of sexual harassment was because they were worried about what would happen if they did; that they might get in trouble or that the information, once out of their hands, would be out of their control. We need students to be explicitly aware of what happens when they report and that it is important that they do so.

**Policy:** Our Safeguarding and child protection policy has been updated in line with Keeping Children Safe 2021 and with LA guidance to include all aspects of peer on peer abuse.

As a school, we have delivered additional training inputs to all staff around peer on peer abuse. This training is ongoing with further inputs over the year. Additional training is provided for those who may work to support any prospective victims and or offenders. The impact of this is that the staff are highly alert to identify situations of concerns and to escalate and support accordingly. As we progress, we will be looking at the following areas:

- What constitutes sexual harassment.
- Recognising "low-level" instances – considering the intention of the perpetrator.
- Considering and being aware of your own bias.
- Responding to low-level instances in a safe and respectful way.
- Removing "gender". We want to ensure that students and staff don't see this as boys vs girls or men vs women. This is a human issue and should be treated as such. We'll be avoiding stereotyping and generalisations as much as possible.
- Appropriate vocabulary to use (the Ofsted report explores that using the word "victim" is not necessarily appropriate as some may not wish to be seen as or perceive themselves as such).

At this point, we are in the early stages of our journey and have identified three key areas we are going to work on in our initial steps to help us to protect students from sexual harassment in school. These are policy, staff training and education.

### **Pupil Education:**

We're fortunate enough in our school to have a weekly space in the curriculum carved out for PSD and SRE. We have a robust programme which looks at all aspects of the curriculum linked to safety, equality, respect and self-respect and self-esteem. School has prepared all resources to ensure that these sensitive issues are delivered skilfully and we benefit from the Catholic Ten Ten SRE inputs, which ensure that self-esteem and respect are embedded throughout. We will be using lesson time in this subject to educate all students on what is acceptable/unacceptable behaviour at age-appropriate points throughout their school careers. This is supplemented with our drip feed Assembly programme, including inputs from pupils, work in other curriculum areas, and work with our partner agencies (WM police and Our School NHS nurse), our ongoing and robust behaviour, CP and safeguarding policies and with additional inputs by external visitors. Our student council is also keen to become involved in helping to deliver key messages linked to this agenda and the RRSa agenda.

This work is ongoing in school. We are looking to challenge behaviours which have been 'hidden' for long time in society in general and may be prevalent in all works of life. To make a significant change for good we know that we need to educate the young people, our children, of today, so this can be challenged. Much of our groundwork is already embedded at Holy Trinity. Nonetheless we continue to be reflective, (We never think it cannot happen here) and to strengthen this further as we seek to address all forms of abuse and harassment at its most fundamental level. As a result, the next generation will have a stronger understanding and a louder voice when speaking out about inequalities and all forms of abuse in society.

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