

From: [Robert Gairey](#) on behalf of [Enquiries](#)
To: [Enquiries](#)
Cc: 0
Subject: 2 22 03 FOI request - response 06
Date: May 2022 08:22:00

Dear

Thank you again for your email, in which you formally request information in regard to the sexual harassment survey findings.

When dealing with requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the 'Act'), Estyn's obligations include:-

1. Confirming or denying whether it holds information of the description specified in the request; and
2. Communicating the information requested to the applicant.

There are a number of exemptions under the Act that impact these obligations. Estyn is required to consider whether an exemption applies in the context of the information being released into the public domain, not just in the context of the information being released to the particular applicant that has requested the information.

If Estyn releases information in response to a Freedom of Information request, this is essentially a decision that the information can be released in response to any similar request from any member of the public.

In response to your request, I can confirm the following:

As part of this thematic work we visited 35 schools and spoke with 1,350 secondary aged pupils. We held focus sessions with groups of pupils. In addition, each school visit included a meeting with the headteacher, meetings with leaders with responsibility for wellbeing, the leader with responsibility for personal and social education (PSE) and the designated safeguarding person at the school. Our visits also included a meeting with a random group of teachers who didn't have a leadership role or responsibility for any aspect of school life other than teaching and also a random group of teaching assistants. In our discussions with teachers we asked about their experience of peer-on-peer sexual harassment (POPSH). Overall, there was variation in their understanding of what constituted POPSH with some teachers considering it as silly or immature behaviour whilst others viewed it as general age related peer-on-peer verbal disrespect. In a minority of cases, teaching staff understood clearly what POPSH is and its potential harmful impact. Teachers clearly understand their role and responsibility for safeguarding but they voiced strongly the need for further training to enable them to identify potential POPSH and to help them respond suitably to incidences.

Here are extracts from our report for further clarification:

"In nearly all the schools we visited, staff know what to do if they have any concern about a pupil and talk confidently about their ability to identify signs of abuse. They have a clear and accurate understanding of what constitutes significant harm in terms of safeguarding children. Staff tell us that they understand how harmful sexual behaviour is also considered a safeguarding issue and that they would report concerns about this in the same way.

"However, in many schools, teachers and to a lesser degree senior leaders and support staff are not fully aware of the full prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in their school as reported to us by their pupils and therefore are not aware that it is a substantial problem. This is because, although prevalent in school life and outside of school, pupils do not systematically report peer-on-peer sexual harassment to school staff.

"One of the main challenges associated with peer-on-peer sexual harassment is that young people do not tell teachers or school leaders about it when it happens. There is significant polarisation between what pupils say about the prevalence of sexual harassment and what teachers believe is the case.

"In many schools, teachers have less awareness of the prevalence of incidences of peer-on-peer harassment than support staff. In interviews with teachers in these schools, none could recall a specific case, stating that they thought peer-on-peer harassment was not a major issue in their school. When speaking with support assistants

and non-teaching wellbeing staff from these same schools, they often had a slightly different account. In many cases, they were able to describe at least one incident of sexual harassment that they had dealt with themselves or had been involved in supporting pupils. Nearly all senior leaders described one or two incidences that they had experienced in recent times. These tended to be linked to pupils sharing nude images and where pupils' parents or somebody from outside the school had alerted them to the incident.

"While teachers did not describe many incidents of peer-on-peer sexual harassment, they did speak at length about the impact of the pandemic and school closures on young people's attitudes, confidence and general mental health. Many feel that pupils are quieter, more introverted and less likely to come to speak with them than before the first lockdown period.

"Generally, staff express concern about the normalisation of sexualised language and behaviours among children and young people in society, and the impact this is likely to have on their pupils' mental health and wellbeing. Nearly all agree that sexual harassment, homophobic and misogynistic attitudes are societal problems that are transferred to children and young people, often by parents and other influences."

I trust this information is helpful to you.

If you are not satisfied with the decision Estyn has taken regarding your request for information, you are entitled to request that we review the matter. Your request for a review should be addressed to the Feedback and Complaints Manager, and received no later than 20 working days after the date of this communication.

If you are still not satisfied, you also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner through their website:

<https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/who-we-are/wales-office/>

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Email: enquiries@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Robert Gairey
Swyddog Arweiniol Cyhoeddiadau / Lead Officer: Publications

Estyn
Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate For Education and Training in Wales

Cyfeiriad: Llys Angor, Heol Keen, Caerdydd, CF24 5JW
Address: Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff, CF24 5JW
Ffôn Estyn/Estyn Phone: 02920 446309
E-bost/E-mail: robert.gairey@estyn.gov.wales

Gwefan/Website: www.estyn.llyw.cymru / www.estyn.gov.wales
Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth.
Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

Dilynwch @EstynAEM / Follow @EstynHMI

-----Original Message-----

From:

Sent: 02 May 2022 20:36

To: Enquiries <Enquiries@estyn.gov.uk>

Subject: FOI <https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/sexual-harassment-in-and-around-secondary-schools-we-don-t-tell-our-teachers/>

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Freedom of Information request - The above page says that Estyn "...also found inconsistency in school staff's understanding of what sexual harassment is, meaning there are discrepancies in how they respond." I would like to know more about this - please disclose, preferably by PDF, the understanding of what sexual harassment is that Estyn found from school staff and the ways they responded differently based on their understanding. Thank you.