

Safeguarding Hot Topic: Tackling Sexual Harassment

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment means unwanted sexual conduct. It can happen online and offline and can include:

- Sexual comments, such as sexual stories, lewd comments, sexualised name-calling or sexual remarks about clothes and appearance
- Sexual 'jokes' or taunting
- Physical behaviour, such as deliberately brushing against someone or interfering with their clothes (note: this can sometimes cross a line into sexual violence), or displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
- Online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:
 - Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and/or videos (note: taking and sharing nude photographs of under-18s is a criminal offence)
 - Sharing of unwanted explicit content
 - Upskirting (note: this is a criminal offence)
 - Sexualised online bullying
 - Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media
 - Sexual exploitation, coercion and threats

Tips to help you challenge sexual harassment

- **Challenge it there and then.** It's important to do this to send a clear message that the comment or behaviour isn't acceptable. Don't dismiss or downplay an incident
- **Challenge the behaviour, not the person.** This depersonalises the challenge. For example, "That is sexist language" is a more helpful comment than "You're sexist"
- **Explain what the problem is.** This gives a reason for your challenge and helps pupils see why their comment or behaviour was problematic
- **Support the victim and show empathy.** Let them know it's not their fault. Consider the incident from their perspective and encourage others to do the same
- **Challenge gender bias and stereotypes.** And be aware of your own biases too. Don't stereotype or make assumptions based on your perceptions of the pupils involved

- **Focus on the perpetrator's behaviour rather than the victim's.** This moves us away from seeing sexual harassment and violence as 'inevitable' and something pupils should adapt their behaviour to avoid

Conversation starters

- "That behaviour is entirely inappropriate. It may constitute sexual harassment / assault"
- "You may not have meant to cause harm, but ... "
- "What do you think that word means?"
- "What do you mean by that?"
- "You may not find that behaviour / language offensive, but many others would"
- "In our school we ... "
- "I'm really uncomfortable with you saying things like that / behaving that way. It makes me feel ... "

What we are doing at Beechen Cliff:

- Promoting respect as a core value and committing to the Pledge of Respect;
- Raising awareness of, and educating children about, sexual harassment and violence through assemblies, PSHE and tutor time;
- Championing campaigns and awareness-raising efforts such as International Women's Day and Everyone's Invited;
- Promoting and ensuring a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment, language and any form of related prejudice or discrimination;
- Working closely with external agencies such as children's social care, domestic and sexual abuse charities and the Police; and
- Tracking all instances of sexual harassment via behaviour and safeguarding systems and quality assuring them to make sure they are dealt with appropriately.

Always follow up by recording and reporting incidents. If you are unsure, please speak to the DSL or a Deputy.