

Harmful Sexual Behaviour: Information All Staff Need to Know

Key Information	Covered by Staff Training?
This type of abuse takes place in school, outside of school, and online. It can and probably does happen in this school and community.	
It can affect any age of child, but is predominantly an issue for secondary and college age groups. Girls are more likely to be victims and boys are more likely perpetrators - however, any report or suspicion should be taken seriously.	
The behaviour can be displayed by an individual or a group.	
It can happen in intimate relationships between peers.	
There can be links between this type of abuse and sexual and criminal exploitation.	
Some children may face additional barriers in reporting because of vulnerabilities, mental health issues, being involved in domestic violence, disabilities, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.	
There are warning signs that might indicate that an issue of harmful sexual behaviour has occurred - staff must know these signs and act immediately on them.	
Downplaying inappropriate behaviour can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour and, ultimately, to normalisation of abuse. As a result, there must be a zero-tolerance approach to harassment of any kind - for example, discriminatory comments cannot be laughed off as "banter". Staff must intervene to stop inappropriate behaviour. Doing this can prevent inappropriate behaviour from escalating to abusive or violent behaviour.	
Responding well to each incident will build trust in the system so that victims will feel able to come forward in future.	
Victims of this type of abuse are likely to be distressed and there is a likelihood of it affecting their educational attainment - this is more likely where the alleged perpetrators attend the same school or college.	
It is extremely important to listen and react to children's reports or disclosures. Staff must listen well and not ask leading questions.	
Whilst victims' wishes and feelings are of paramount importance when responding to an incident, the school should not forget to balance this with its duty to protect other children.	
All staff should be aware of the available resources for those affected by and those displaying the behaviour.	
Staff should read the relevant parts of KCSIE21, and DfE guidance on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children which is available here .	