

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Atal trais ar sail rhywedd drwy ddulliau iechyd y cyhoedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Equality and Social Justice Committee](#) consultation on [The public health approach to preventing gender-based violence](#)

PGBV 01

Ymateb gan: Estyn | Response from: Estyn



Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, we are independent of the Welsh Government.

Our principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Tertiary Education and Research Act 2022 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, we must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Our remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, all age schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and initial teacher training.

We may give advice to the Welsh Parliament on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, we have set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

We note the critical role that education settings, and schools in particular, have to play in preventing gender-based violence and supporting learners who experience this in their personal or home life.

While schools' provision has improved over time, our response notes areas where schools have further work to improve both their prevention and intervention work. We also try to share aspects of effective practice that we have identified through our core and thematic inspections.

Consultation questions

What works in preventing gender-based violence before it occurs (primary prevention) and intervening earlier to stop violence from escalating (secondary prevention).

We published [A review of healthy relationships education](#) in 2017. One purpose of this report was to inform the ongoing implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. Although six years old, the report provides a useful reference point for considering work in schools relating to gender-based violence.

Preventing gender-based violence

In terms of a public health approach to preventing gender-based violence, schools have a critical, preventive role to play. Schools should promote gender equality and positive relationships. They should help pupils to understand their rights, respect the rights of others, recognise unhealthy behaviours and know what action to take if they are concerned about their own safety or well-being or that of someone else.

Within Curriculum for Wales, aside from the [health and well-being area of learning and experience](#), there are three relevant [cross-cutting themes](#): relationships and sexuality education (RSE), human rights and diversity. As the introduction to the [RSE guidance](#) states:

'Schools and settings have an important role to play in creating safe and empowering environments that support learners' rights to enjoy fulfilling, healthy and safe relationships throughout their lives. This is critical to building a society which treats others with understanding and empathy, whatever their ethnicity, social economic background, disability, or sex, gender or sexuality'.

RSE is a statutory requirement within Curriculum for Wales. Within RSE, the mandatory content for the [empowerment, safety and respect strand](#) is particularly relevant.

A school inspection may highlight strengths or concerns about RSE or broader provision for the health and well-being area of learning and experience or personal and social education. For example, the table below highlights some relevant comments from inspections of secondary schools in the current year.

School	Comments in inspection report
Risca	The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. This is mainly delivered through a comprehensive PSE and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme and religion, values and ethics (RVE) curriculum, as well as 'home room' periods and assemblies.
Queen Elizabeth	PSE provision is responsive to pupils' needs. For example, staff use data effectively from pupil surveys to plan preventative sessions about issues such as peer on peer sexual harassment, drawing on external expertise from the police and medical services when appropriate.
Calon Cymru	The personal and social education (PSE) programme for pupils in Key Stage 3 is generally relevant and responsive to pupils' needs, with a sensitive focus on issues such as healthy relationships. However, there is limited provision for relevant and topical PSE for older pupils.
Bodedern	The LGBTQ+ club provides vital support and gives learners a voice in terms of their sexuality... However, the PSE programme across the school has not been planned strategically enough to raise pupils' awareness of their well-being, mental health and emotional needs in full.
Rhyl	The school offers pupils a comprehensive personal, social, emotional, equality and diversity curriculum ... It also promotes respect for the LGBTQ+ community and enables pupils to challenge stereotypes and prejudice well.
Morgan Llwyd	However, PSE is not planned cohesively and strategically enough to ensure comprehensive, consistent and progressive provision for pupils in all years, particularly the school's older pupils.
King Henry VIII	A well-structured personal and social education (PSE) programme supports pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to make healthy lifestyle choices, for example in relation to healthy eating, relationships, alcohol and substance misuse, and online safety. The school has made beneficial links with external agencies who support and enhance the delivery of the PSE curriculum, for example in relation to the history and experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and LGBTQ+ communities.
Eastern High	There are limited opportunities for all pupils to learn about and understand important issues appropriate to their age, such as substance misuse, sexual health and the impact of lifestyle choices and behaviours on health and well-being.

Our ['We don't tell our teachers'](#) report in 2021 found that in secondary schools:

Many pupils across the whole age range say they have not had enough sex and relationships education. Older pupils in many schools report that they have had no

sex education at all and are very keen for more advice and guidance and opportunities to discuss sex and relationships in a safe and comfortable environment. Many pupils value well-delivered personal and social education lessons but they say that they do not have enough opportunities to discuss important issues such as respect, healthy relationships, harmful sexual behaviours and LGBTQ+ rights. Many say that they want to see more time given to discuss 'real life issues' in school.¹

The constraints of time and resource means that we can't look in depth at all aspects of a school's RSE work during an inspection. Through our thematic reports, which include evidence from day visits to schools with a specific focus, we have often highlighted that there is more work schools could do. In 'A review of healthy relationships education' in 2017, we noted that schools are not always carrying out their role as well as they could:

'Many schools in areas serving a diverse population with a wide range of cultural traditions make strong provision for groups of pupils who are at risk of social isolation and discrimination. In the best examples, schools liaise well with specialist agencies, such as BAWSO, to provide staff with training and advice on the specific needs of pupils from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. However, too many schools, particularly in areas where communities are not diverse, do not recognise issues of violence against women as high priority. As a result, they do not provide staff with appropriate training to identify and respond to concerns of this nature and do not prepare pupils well enough to live in a diverse society. For example, evidence from specialist agencies indicates that not all teachers are aware of the mandatory reporting duty placed on them regarding female genital mutilation (FGM)'.²

At this point, we do not know how well schools have progressed with the issues raised in the report as we have not received a request from the Minister to follow up this work.

Our report [Celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion](#) highlights good practice in supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) learners in schools and colleges. It identifies a similar need for more professional learning for staff to be able to confidently promote healthy relationships.

Intervening earlier to stop violence from escalating

In terms of intervention work in education settings, we have highlighted and promoted the use of restorative approaches as an effective approach to dealing with conflict and promoting positive relationships. For example, our Healthy and happy report included the following:

'Good schools use restorative approaches to prevent issues escalating, to address poor behaviour during learning experiences or resolve disputes involving pupils. Using restorative approaches respects the value of all those concerned and encourages empathic relationships. Restorative approaches work particularly well where the approach is also used by police officers, social workers, youth workers and other external staff working with pupils and their families outside of the school, as the consistency of approach to conflict resolution consolidates pupils' attitudes and skills. In schools that do not use restorative approaches, or do not use them consistently, incidents of poor behaviour are more likely to escalate into more

¹ [experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales](#), page 8

² [A review of healthy relationships education](#), page 15

serious incidents or repeat themselves, and pupils are more likely to be excluded from school'.³

Similar messages about the effective use of restorative approaches featured in other thematic reports too:

- [Knowing your children – supporting pupils with adverse childhood experiences \(ACES\) \(2020\)](#)
- [Effective school support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils – case studies of good practice \(2020\)](#)
- [‘We don’t tell our teachers’– experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales \(2021\)](#)

Our ‘We don’t tell our teachers’ report includes a recommendation for local authorities to ‘put restorative arrangements in place’ when working with schools to deal with bullying and harassment.

We have several case studies of individual schools that refer to their effective use of restorative approaches too, for example:

- [Using a nurturing approach to manage conflicts](#)
- [School’s culture is focused on children’s rights](#)
- [Improving pupil outcomes through highly effective nurture provision](#)
- [A highly effective graduated response that promotes inclusion successfully](#)

Our ‘We don’t tell our teachers’ report noted the following about incidents involved two or more pupils in secondary schools:

‘Normally, leaders respond suitably to formal complaints by parents or pupils about peer-on-peer sexual harassment and make appropriate referrals to external agencies such as social services or the police. The majority of schools use a restorative approach to poor behaviour, bullying and known cases of harassment and use external agencies well to support their work. This usually includes providing suitable support such as counselling for victims.’⁴

Police forces increasingly alert schools where incidents of domestic abuse have happened at home before the pupil next attends school, especially where protection notices have been served ([Operation Encompass](#)). Our report above on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) covers examples of how this work is effectively supporting schools to care for affected pupils’ well-being and work sensitively with their family.

Our review of healthy relationships report in 2017 noted:

‘In nearly all schools surveyed, the DSP [designated senior person] for safeguarding has received additional training to make them aware of domestic violence, violence against women and sexual violence. However, very few schools have effective arrangements to share this training with other staff.’

‘Only around half of schools surveyed were aware of the Welsh Government statutory guidance, ‘The National Training Framework on violence against women,

³ [Healthy and happy – school impact on pupils’ health and wellbeing \(gov.wales\)](#), page 15

⁴ [‘We don’t tell our teachers’– experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales](#), page 8

domestic abuse and sexual violence' (Welsh Government, 2016a). Staff in only a very few schools have accessed the training.⁵

While the focus was slightly different, our ['We don't tell our teachers'– experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales](#) report in 2021 still noted concerns about professional learning for staff:

'All schools say they need more training and support to deliver relationships and sexuality education. This includes whole-school professional learning in how to proactively engage in conversations with pupils about gender issues and sexual harassment. They also require training on LGBTQ+ issues.'⁶

This report also noted the following:

'There is a general inconsistency across school staff about their understanding of what constitutes peer-on-peer sexual harassment including wider issues relating to equality and diversity and how they impact on pupils.

Even within schools, there is inconsistency in the way in which teachers respond to incidences of sexual harassment. In the worst cases, teachers dismiss or ignore incidences of verbal sexual harassment by pupils towards their peers.'⁷

Effective recording of incidents and allegations of incidents is important so that issues can be monitored over time and followed up where necessary. Our 'We don't tell our teachers report' found that:

'Despite the fact that schools generally record behaviour and bullying incidents, they do not make productive use of the data and information available to them to categorise and analyse incidences of peer-on-peer bullying and harassment well enough or identify trends. This hinders schools from having an accurate picture of the extent of different types of bullying and harassment, such as sexual harassment. In many cases, schools do not systematically log incidences of sexual harassment and, often, their classification of 'bullying' is too broad and does not enable the school to record and evaluate instances of homophobic, sexist or racially motivated bullying.'⁸

The report goes on to note that 'schools report few instances of bullying to local authorities and rarely report on peer-on-peer sexual harassment' and 'there is a lack of consistency in how local authorities collect, analyse and use school bullying and harassment data, for example to plan interventions or staff training.'⁹

How effective is a public health approach to preventing gender-based violence and what more needs to be done to address the needs of different groups of women, including LGBT+, ethnic minorities, young and older people at risk of violence at home and in public spaces.

⁵ [A review of healthy relationships education](#), page 15

⁶ ['We don't tell our teachers'– experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales](#), page 10

⁷ Ibid, page 8

⁸ Ibid, page 9

⁹ Ibid, page 10

We have answered this question as much as we are able to in our response to the first question.

What is the role of the public sector and specialist services (including the police, schools, the NHS, the third sector and other organisations that women and girls turn to for support) in identifying, tackling and preventing violence against women, and their role in supporting victims and survivors.

We have answered this question as much as we are able to in our response to the first question.