

How we can challenge victim blaming and sexual harassment in our school

Sexual harassment: definition

Sexual harassment means unwanted sexual conduct.

It can happen online and offline. It 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, such as non-consensual image sharing, unwanted sexual comments and messages, sexualised online bullying, sexual exploitation, coercion, threats, or upskirting
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6 tips to help you challenge it in the moment

- **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 girls should adapt their behaviour to avoid
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Conversation starters

- > “That’s not how we behave in school, or anywhere. This could be seen as inappropriate touching / language ... ”
- > “You may not have seen it this way, but ... ”
- > “What do you think that word means?”
- > “What do you mean by that?”
- > “You may not think there’s anything wrong with that behaviour / language, 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 ... ”

Remember: always follow up by recording and reporting incidents.

Source

- > [Keeping Children Safe in Education, GOV.UK – Department for Education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2
- > [EqualiTeach](#)

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