

# Template Whole School Action Plan



This document provides a template action plan that can be used and adapted to underpin a whole school approach to tackling sexism.

## Introduction

### What is a whole school action plan?

A whole school action plan is a strategy for tackling sexism and promoting equality between women and men. Adopting a whole school action plan enables a school to take a whole school approach to tackling sexism and to create an environment in which boys and girls can learn and live as equals.

The purpose of a whole school action plan:

- Identifies how sexism can manifest in the school environment, including through gender stereotyping, sexist language and sexual harassment;
- Prioritises actions to address and prevent sexism;
- Enables the school to track and review progress;
- Supports a collective, cohesive approach; and
- Communicates the school's commitment to tackling sexism.

### Why adopt a whole school action plan?

#### **School is a key site where sexism is experienced - and where it can be tackled.**

Gender stereotyping, sexist language and sexual harassment are commonplace in UK schools. Research commissioned by UK Feminista and the National Education Union<sup>1</sup>, conducted by the University of Warwick, found:

- Over a third (36.7%) of female students at mixed-sex secondary schools have experienced sexual harassment while at school.
- Almost one in three (32%) teachers in mixed-sex secondary schools witness sexual harassment in their school on at least a weekly basis.
- 64% of teachers in mixed-sex schools hear sexist language in school on at least a weekly basis. Over a quarter of teachers (29%) report sexist language is a daily occurrence.
- A quarter of all secondary school teachers say they witness gender stereotyping and discrimination in their school on a daily basis, and a further quarter say they witness it on a weekly basis.

Everyone in the school community has an important role to play in tackling sexism. A whole school action plan enables schools to take a whole school approach to the issue, ensuring action is collaborative, cohesive and effective.

<sup>1</sup> "It's just everywhere": A study on sexism in schools – and how to tackle it', National Education Union and UK Feminista, 2017: <http://ukfeminista.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Report-Its-just-everywhere.pdf>

## Requirements and recommendations

- **The Equality Act:** Under section 149 of the Equality Act, schools are required to have due regard to “eliminate discrimination”, “advance equality of opportunity” and “foster good relations” between girls and boys<sup>2</sup>.
- **Women and Equalities Committee, UK Parliament:** In 2016, an inquiry conducted by the Women and Equalities Committee concluded that “schools must make tackling sexual harassment and sexual violence an immediate policy priority.”<sup>3</sup> The Committee also stated that “Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools will only be reduced through a whole school approach.”<sup>4</sup>
- **Department for Education:** In 2016 the Department for Education stated: “We firmly support the [Women and Equalities] committee’s proposal for a whole school approach to reducing and preventing sexual harassment and sexual violence in all primary and secondary schools. We believe that such an approach with prevention at its core, promotes an environment of inclusion and respect, where pupils and staff are educated and empowered to recognise and challenge abuse of any kind.”<sup>5</sup>

The Department for Education also noted: “Under the PSED [Public Sector Equality Duty] Schools have a general duty to have regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity between different groups and foster good relations between different groups. The duty applies to all protected characteristics and means that whenever significant decisions are being made or policies developed, thought must be given to the equality implications, such as the elimination of sexual harassment.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>; see also: <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/resources/78/All-Day-Every-Day-Sexual-violence-in-schools-legal-briefing-Sept-2016.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> ‘Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools’, Women and Equalities Committee, 2016: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/91/9102.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/91/9102.htm>

<sup>5</sup> ‘Government response: Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools’, Women and Equalities Committee, 2016: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/826/82602.htm>

<sup>6</sup> ‘Government response: Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools’, Women and Equalities Committee, 2016: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/826/82602.htm>

# WHOLE SCHOOL ACTION PLAN



The following template includes the core elements that should be included in a whole school action plan and can be adapted to suit the particular school context in which it is to be used.

## Aim and objectives

### Aim

The aim of the whole school action plan is to create a school environment free from sexism, in which boys and girls can learn and live as equals.

### Objectives

The whole school action plan will:

1. Identify the action **[name of your school]** will take to promote sex equality.
2. Facilitate a cohesive, whole school approach to tackling sexism.
3. Communicate **[name of your school]**'s commitment to, and means of promoting, equality between girls and boys.

### Sexism in schools

Research on sexism in schools reveals that gender stereotyping, sexist language and sexual harassment are prevalent in UK schools. A study commissioned by UK Feminista and the National Education Union<sup>7</sup>, conducted by the University of Warwick, found:

- Over a third (36.7%) of female students at mixed-sex secondary schools have been sexually harassed at school.
- Almost one in three (32%) teachers in mixed-sex secondary schools witness sexual harassment in their school on at least a weekly basis.
- 64% of teachers in mixed-sex schools hear sexist language in school on at least a weekly basis. Over a quarter of teachers (29%) report sexist language is a daily occurrence.
- A quarter of all secondary school teachers say they witness gender stereotyping and discrimination in their school on a daily basis, and a further quarter say they witness it on a weekly basis.

**[Name of your school]** is committed to tackling sexism and working to ensure that girls and boys can learn and live as equals.

## Implementation

### Leadership

The lead staff member responsible for the whole school action plan is **[name]**.

**[Insert names of other individuals or groups with specific leadership responsibilities relating to the action plan.]**

<sup>7</sup> "It's just everywhere": A study on sexism in schools – and how to tackle it', National Education Union and UK Feminista, 2017: <http://ukfeminista.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Report-Its-just-everywhere.pdf>

As a formal document, the whole school action plan operates in conjunction with:

- **[List existing policies and strategy documents relevant to the whole school action plan, such as the anti-bullying policy and equal opportunities policy.]**

## Timeframe

This action plan runs from **[date]** until **[date]**.

## Reporting and review

An annual progress report of the whole school action plan will be completed by **[working group or named person]** and presented to the **[name of school]** board of governors. The first report will be presented on **[date]**.

As part of the progress report, consideration will be given to the following:

- Implementation of actions and realisation of targets identified in the strategy
- Qualitative feedback from staff and students
- Number of staff who have received training on tackling sexism
- Number of students and staff who reported incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Number of students who participated in a workshop/talk/lesson on sex equality
- Opportunities created for students to take positive action to tackle sexism, such as participation in a feminist group or campaign

Data gathering activities to support the annual progress review are identified in the whole school action plan.

**[Insert any other arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the action plan.]**

## Action plan

The following action plan sets out what **[name of your school]** will do to promote sex equality.

The actions support the following three **strategic priorities** - which are the main pillars of a whole school approach to tackling sexism:

1. Establish an organisational framework for tackling sexism.
2. Train and equip teachers with the knowledge, resources and confidence to tackle sexism.
3. Support students to learn about sexism, to report incidents and to take action for equality.

Strategic priority	Action	Delivery date(s)	Monitoring requirements	Staff lead
1. Establish an institutional framework for tackling sexism.	<p>[Suggested actions in blue]</p> <p>1.1 Establish a working group within the senior management team or board of governors in order to monitor progress on the whole school action plan.</p> <p>1.2 Amend existing school policies to reflect the aim, objectives and strategic priorities of the whole school action plan.</p> <p>1.3 Survey students about their experiences of sexism and sexual harassment.</p>			
2. Train and equip teachers with the knowledge, resources and confidence to tackle sexism.	<p>2.1 Provide Continuing Professional Development training for teachers on how to tackle sexism.</p> <p>2.2 Make practical resources available to teachers on how to promote sex equality.</p> <p>2.3 Ensure all staff are aware of the whole school action plan and procedural guidelines for responding to incidents of sexism and sexual harassment.</p>			
3. Support students to learn about sex inequality, to report incidents, and to take action for equality.	<p>3.1 Hold a workshop for students on sexism and how to effect positive change.</p> <p>3.2 Ensure all students are aware of the whole school action plan and the policy on sexual harassment and how to report incidents.</p> <p>3.3 Integrate challenging sexism into the school curriculum and run classroom activities for all students on sexual harassment, sexist language and gender stereotyping.</p>			