

Zero tolerance: An introduction to the school's policy on sexual harassment

Summary:

This session is designed to introduce students to your school's sexual harassment policy. It enables students to explore what sexual harassment is, how they can report an incident, and what action the school will take in response.

Learning objectives:

- Students can articulate what sexual harassment is.
- Students know how to report an incident of sexual harassment.
- Students are aware of the school's policy on sexual harassment.

Preparation note:

- Ensure you are familiar with the school's safeguarding policy - including procedures for how to respond if a student makes a disclosure of harm during or after the discussion on sexual harassment.

Duration:

30 minutes

Age group:

Secondary

Materials required:

- Computer and projector
- White board or flip chart pad and pen
- Copies of appendix 2: Girls speak out about sexual harassment
- Copy of the school's policy or statement on sexual harassment

Instructions

Step 1: Introduction (2 minutes)

- Outline the aims of the session.
- Set out the definition of sexual harassment (see appendix 1)

Step 2: Group discussions (10 minutes)

Divide students into small groups and give each group a copy of appendix 2: 'Girls speak out about sexual harassment'. Ask groups to discuss each quote and address the following questions:

- What makes this sexual harassment?
- How do you think the girl experiencing this harassment might feel?
- What action do you think should be taken?

Step 3: Feedback (5 minutes)

Ask groups to feed back on their discussions to the rest of the class using the following questions as prompts:

- Did you notice any common themes in the students' experiences?
- Did you all agree on your answers to the questions or were there any points of disagreement?
- Based on the quotes you discussed, how would you describe what sexual harassment is?

Step 4: Policy and procedures (5 minutes)

Provide an overview of the school's policy on sexual harassment:

- Inform students what they should do if they are subjected to sexual harassment at school and what happens once an incident is reported.
- Inform students how the school will respond to individuals who perpetrate or participate in the sexual harassment of another pupil or teacher.

Step 5: Q&A (5 minutes)

Invite students to ask questions about the school policy and procedures relating to sexual harassment.

- In case students do not wish to ask their question in front of the rest of the class, tell pupils they can ask questions after the class or on a separate occasion.

Step 6: Further information (3 minutes)

- Inform students where they can find further information and support on this issue (see appendix 1).
- Tell students who they can speak to within the school if they wish to discuss any matters raised in the session.



Appendix 1:

Supporting information

About sexual harassment

Definition:

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which:

- violates a person's dignity;
- intimidates, degrades or humiliates someone; or
- creates a hostile or offensive environment¹.

Sexual harassment can include verbal, non-verbal and physical acts – including sexual comments, taking 'up-skirt' photographs, or unwanted sexual touching². Sexual harassment is a form of violence against women and girls. It is underpinned by unequal power relations between women and men.

Unwanted sexual touching, where the target does not consent to the touching and the perpetrator does not reasonably believe they consent, constitutes sexual assault³.

Sexual harassment in schools:

Sexual harassment is a common experience for girls in UK schools.

- Over a third (36.7%) of girls in mixed-sex secondary schools have been sexually harassed at school⁴.
- Almost one in three (32%) teachers in mixed-sex secondary schools witness sexual harassment in their school on at least a weekly basis⁵.
- 25% of 11 to 16 year old girls say that concerns over potential sexual harassment make them consider whether or not to speak out in class⁶.
- Nearly three-quarters of 16 - 18 year olds say they hear sexual name-calling, with terms like "slut" or "slag" used towards girls at schools, on a daily basis or a few times a week⁷.

Support services

The following organisations offer information and/or advice relating to sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls:

- End Violence Against Women coalition www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk
- AVA www.avaproject.org.uk
- Tender www.tender.org.uk
- Women's Aid www.womensaid.org.uk
- Rape Crisis England and Wales www.rapecrisis.org.uk/
- Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

¹ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/what-are-the-different-types-of-discrimination/sexual-harassment/>

² For further information about sexual harassment visit: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/what-harassment>

³ The Crown Prosecution Service: http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p_to_r/rape_and_sexual_offences/soa_2003_and_soa_1956/#a11 [accessed 11/17]

⁴ "It's just everywhere: A study on sexism in schools – and how to tackle it", National Education Union and UK Feminista, 2017.

⁵ "It's just everywhere: A study on sexism in schools – and how to tackle it", National Education Union and UK Feminista, 2017.

⁶ Girls' Attitudes Survey', Girlguiding UK, 2015.

⁷ '2010 poll on sexual harassment in schools', End Violence Against Women Coalition, 15 October 2010. Accessed at: <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/2010-poll-on-sexual-harassment-in-schools>

Appendix 2:

Girls speak out about sexual harassment

Below are three quotes from girls who have been sexually harassed at school.

Questions:

- What makes this sexual harassment?
- How do you think the girl experiencing this harassment might feel?
- How do you think the school should respond?

"The boys began to think it was hilarious to lift up the girls' skirts. Us girls felt we had to laugh along as well, despite feeling humiliated."

- A) _____
- B) _____
- C) _____

"Some of the boys make comments on a lot of the girls in our years' bodies and the girls just have to ignore it because no one thinks it's a big deal. The boys also slap the girls' butts and touch their breasts without any consent."

- A) _____
- B) _____
- C) _____

"A boy touched my bum and tried to touch my boob. I felt uncomfortable and I didn't tell him because I was scared but I tried to ignore him."

- A) _____
- B) _____
- C) _____