



21 April 2021

Dear Headteacher and Chairs of Governors,

Everyone's Invited (www.everyonesinvited.uk) has given a voice to many victims of sexual violence, abuse and harassment in schools and universities across the UK and further afield.

Many of the testimonies describe behaviour by students and staff which has trivialised and normalised poor and on occasions illegal conduct. The impact of this creates a culture that undermines safeguarding and has not made school a safe place for all children and young people.

As you do individually within your schools, the Education Commission of the Archdiocese of Southwark take the testimonies and any potential allegations very seriously. Catholic Social Teaching underpins the work of Catholic Education, as expressed here:

"The basis for the theme of Human Dignity, the bedrock of Catholic Social Teaching, is that humans were created in the image and likeness of God. Regardless of any factors or reasons we can think of, individuals have an inherent and immeasurable worth and dignity; each human life is considered sacred" (Framing the principals of Catholic Social thought – William J Byron 1999)

Maria Miller MP oversaw a report into sexual harassment in 2016 while Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee. She suggested that Ofsted investigate the allegations as part of a "deep dive" inquiry into how complaints of sexual abuse were handled in schools. This report is now being cited as a possible outcome to Everyone's Invited.

Perhaps it is timely to remind colleagues that all staff and governors are required to read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912593/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_part_1_Sep_2020.pdf)

This activity remains a box tick on the current inspection framework. Governors ought to read the whole document. We respectfully draw your attention to paragraphs 29 and 30 which more than implies that each school needs to have a policy and procedure for peer on peer abuse.

Can I take this opportunity to remind all that Firm Foundations (free to all foundation governors, directors and members of local academy committees) has excellent modules on child protection and safeguarding. Many of the issues in focus here are addressed by these materials. Patrick Harrison can help with providing logins if any of members of your governing body have 'lost' them.

Some children's organisations are asking for a review of the sex education provided in schools in order to educate all young people about sex and healthy relationships and create a culture of mutual respect. The principles outlined in the diocesan policy statement on RSE and the curriculum guidance materials published by Catholic Education Service fully support an approach to RSE that affirms the dignity of individuals and the vital importance of healthy relationships.

<https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Education-in-Human-Love-Policy-Statement-for-RSE-October-2020.pdf>

<http://catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/relationship-sex-education>

We recommend that school leaders reassure pupils, students and parents through the following actions:

- Consider an age-appropriate assembly to pupils and students;



- Remind students and staff that they may report any concerns they have to (DSL, Pastoral lead) or alternatively they can contact the NSPCC at 0800 200 5000 or via their online reporting system <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/report/report-abuse-online/>. Should they feel they cannot disclose to an adult or the NSPCC, they could inform Childline www.childline.org.uk or the Police;
- That you ensure your school Risk Registers reflect a risk of allegations being made against a member of staff or student on or off the school premises, and any safeguarding incident occurring to a staff member or student whilst attending a school planned event;
- You may like to consider reviewing any incident reported previously to ensure all appropriate action has been taken;
- It is suggested that parents are informed of the positive action your school is taking.

Should you require any further advice or guidance then please contact Sharon Docherty at the Education Commission sharondocherty@rcaos.org.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Hughes'.

Dr Simon Hughes
Diocesan Schools Commissioner and Director of Education