



Harmful Sexual Behaviours Information for Parents

Why?

- Part of our commitment to safeguarding pupils and families
- Our work in this area is an extension of anti bullying and e-safety and these areas are closely linked
- Create a visible culture where all forms of abuse, including on-line, are not tolerated
- Partnerships with parents is crucial – especially as children get older and are exposed to and are influenced by greater quantities of online content

What are Harmful Sexual Behaviours?

Children's sexual behaviours exist on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate or problematic;

Behaviours progress on a continuum –but addressing inappropriate behaviour can prevent escalation;

'Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature'

- sexual comments / stories / name-calling
- sexual "jokes" or taunting
- physical behaviour /touching,
- can occur online and offline / sharing sexual photos and videos

This can create an atmosphere that, if not challenged, 'normalises' inappropriate behaviours and provides an environment that may lead to sexual violence.



Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is a term used to describe sexual actions that are outside what is safe for a young person's stage of development.

It includes actions that can harm either the child or young person themselves, or another person. It can include:

- frequently and intentionally accessing age-inappropriate sexual material online
- using inappropriate language
- undertaking mutual sexual activity they are not ready for with peers
- sending and receiving illegal images
- sexual interactions where there are significant power differences, lack of consent, or with force or threats
- engaging in abusive or sexually violent sexual behaviour online or offline.

Ofsted safeguarding review: findings

- The government commissioned Ofsted to undertake a review of sexual violence and harassment in schools and colleges.
- The subsequent report was widely reported and is available on the internet <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>
- Focus for the review
 - harmful sexual behaviour
 - advice for schools and colleges on youth produced sexual imagery
 - the law relating to consensual sexual relationships between children and young people.



Ofsted safeguarding review: findings

- 22% of girls aged 7-12 have experienced 'jokes' of a sexual nature from boys;
- 90% of girls and 50% of boys aged 12+ said that being sent unwanted explicit pictures or videos happened "a lot" or "sometimes";
- 92% of girls, and 74% of boys said that sexual harassment and sexist name-calling occurs so frequently that it has become "commonplace";
- That taught Relationships, Sex and Health Education was – *'too little, too late'*;
- Review recommends education leaders act on the assumption that sexual harassment is happening in their schools, even if they do not think they have a problem.



What does research tell us?

- Under 18s are responsible for at least a third of recorded sexual offences against children and young people in the UK.
- Boys in early adolescence, around the time puberty starts, tend to display the most harmful sexual behaviour although younger children and girls do sometimes engage in these behaviours too.
- Girls tend to be over-represented amongst the victims of harmful sexual behaviour.
- Those with learning disabilities and autism also tend to be over-represented amongst young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour.
- Around half of young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour have experienced sexual abuse themselves.
- The vast majority of young people do not persist with these behaviours into adulthood.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools

Schools should be aware of the importance of:

- *making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up;*
- *not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”;*
- *challenging behaviours (which are potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.*



Ofsted review: recommendations for schools



'School and college leaders should create a culture where sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are not tolerated, and where they identify issues and intervene early to better protect children and young people.'

In order to do this, they should assume that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening in their setting, even when there are no specific reports, and put in place a whole-school approach to address them.'

Consensual sexual relationships

Some situations are statutorily clear:

- a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity;
- incidences of sexual behaviour involving children under 13 should be considered as a potentially criminal;
- the age of consent is 16;
- sexual intercourse without consent is rape;
- creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of under-18s is illegal (often referred to as sexting). This includes children making and sharing sexual images and videos of themselves.



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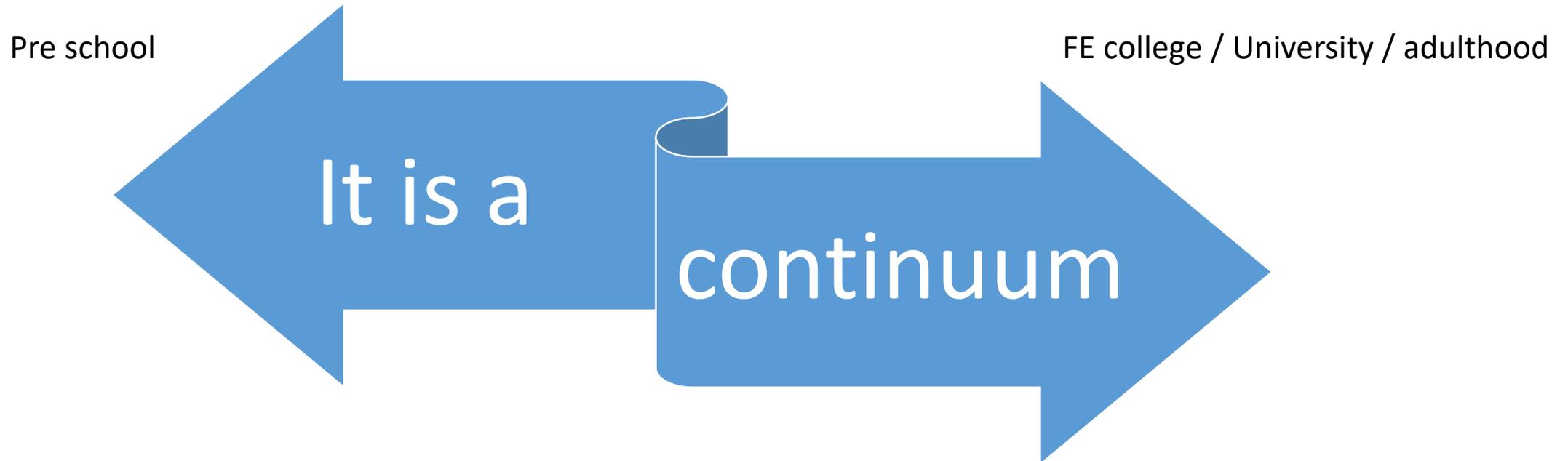
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Does it really happen? Really? At Primary school?



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Two pupils are in reception class. They approach a member of staff to say that they have kissed and are now getting married.

In the week of the school disco, pupils are overheard in the cloakroom talking about other pupils who are going on a date / going to kiss / are boyfriend and girlfriend.

An older pupil is wearing PE clothes that are tight and reveal their midriff. Other pupils have begun to make comments about it. The individual pupil is spoken to about appropriate clothing but the parents do not think this is right and defend their child's right to be proud of their body.

The other pupils are spoken to about the comments they have made. A parent subsequently complains that this is not fair and that 'the other child will get what's coming'

Influences – where it could start

Children and young people are increasingly exposed to a variety of sexual content through the internet. The accessibility of potentially harmful sexual information, imagery and pornography causes concern from professionals, parents and carers.

e.g.

Many young people are on TikTok. On TikTok there are explicit links to websites that display hard-core pornographic images and videos.

Many pupils play computer games that are not age appropriate such as **Grand Theft Auto**. The characters in these games often use language that is sexually explicit.

Many images are planted in a young child's mind unintentionally e.g. News feeds on mobiles and tablets. The Child will then 'normalise' these images over time.

So what do we do? As a school...

Provide opportunities for children to play in different sized groups. Plan activities that promote turn-taking.

Encourage boys and girls to play alongside one another and avoid gender stereotyping.

Ask children what they like or dislike about an activity. Help them express their thoughts and feelings in different ways and listen to the views of others.

Where possible, allow children to decide whether or not they want to join in with an activity. Help them to say “no” if they don’t want to do something.

Talk about the ways that people are different and similar. For example we may have different hair, eye or skin colour but we all eat, breathe and have feelings.

Talk about personal space and explain that some people might like more or less than others. Teach children that it’s OK to say “no” if they don’t want someone to touch them.

So what do we do? As a school...

Empower children to have individuality and help them understand that everyone is unique.

Praise children for demonstrating honesty, kindness, and respect for others.

Give children opportunities to voice their opinions and encourage them to listen to other people's views.

Help children understand that "no" means "no" and make sure they know who to talk to if they are ever uncomfortable with something they have been asked them to do.

Work with children to resolve conflicts and help them understand how others might be affected.

Talk to children about bullying in all its forms and make sure they know how to get help if they need it.

So what do we do? Beyond school...

Avoid stereotypes of all kinds, especially those that refer to male and female roles in society
e.g. the mother stays at home and has a subservient role as opposed to equal status
girls and boys activities / colours / hobbies etc...

Challenge behaviour that can appear as 'cute' or innocent
e.g. Very young children stating that they have a boyfriend/girlfriend

Talk about PANTS etc... when the children learn about healthy relationships

Support the RSE lessons in the summer term – we will put on a session for parents beforehand to support you to talk about the issues with your children

Encourage your children to discuss their internet usage with you and monitor what they are searching and viewing

Risks / Behaviours

Parents / Carers and professionals will often focus on the platform, rather than recognising it is behaviour that poses the risk to children online...

Risk may be present as a result of...



The child's own behaviour



The behaviour of others

Why do children watch pornography?

Learn
about sex

Explore
sexual
identity

Peer
Pressure

For a
'laugh'

Curiosity

To be
disgusted

Push
boundaries

'Freak
out'
friends

FOMO
(Fear of
missing out)

By
accident

Survey of over 2,000 children & parents, by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC)

51%

Of 11-13 year olds
said that they had
viewed
pornography at
some point

66%

Of 14-15 year olds
said that the first
time they watched
pornography it was
accidental

75%

Of the
parents/carers did
not think their
child had viewed
pornography

7 years

Children as young
as 7 admitted to
having viewed
pornography at
some point

Advice and online support

<https://parentzone.org.uk/home>



<https://www.internetmatters.org/>



<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>



Final thoughts...

- Devices used in rooms adults are present.
- Discuss 'friends'.
- Use parental controls.
- Explain that you're not trying to control them but want to agree upon a set of ground rules.
- Try to stay up to date with internet trends and best practices.
- Talk to children about the risk of disclosing personal information.
- Have open discussions about topics like - bullying, cyberbullying, body image, grooming, sexual exploitation, gangs and radicalisation.

