

Dear Parents & Carers,

Marshland Sexual Harassment and Violence Update

You may have seen or read in the news about a review recently published by OfSTED into sexual harassment and violence in school and colleges. A copy of the report can be found at; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>

OfSTED found that sexual harassment and violence is so prevalent within school age children, that schools must assume that it happens within their setting. The review concluded that sexual violence and harassment happens throughout society, not just in schools and it is everybody's responsibility to tackle it. Based on the assumption that "it can happen here" we are taking steps to address this issue as a school.

What is Sexual Harassment and Violence?

Sexual Harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that can occur online and offline, inside and outside of school. We reference sexual harassment in the context of child-on-child acts. Sexual harassment is likely to violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Sexual harassment can include:

- Sexual comments, such as telling stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, and calling someone sexualised names
- Sexual "jokes" or taunting
- Physical behaviour such as deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes, displaying pictures/photos of a sexual nature
- Online sexual harassment including consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude images, sharing unwanted explicit content, sexualised online bullying, unwanted sexual comments and messages including on social media, sexual coercion and threats.

Sexual Violence is anything referred to under the *Sexual Offences Act 2003* and includes the following:

- Rape
- Assault by penetration
- Sexual Assault
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent

As a school, we take all matters very seriously. We have focused on developing an action plan to tackle potential issues of sexual harassment and violence within the school setting and community, both online and offline.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight strategies we will be using throughout the year to promote “staying safe” and educating our students in the issues around sexual harassment and violence.

Our strategy includes:

- Training of all school staff in awareness of sexual harassment and violence
- Further in-depth training for our Pastoral Managers
- Tutor time activities and Assemblies
- Issues surrounding sexual harassment, violence and consent covered within our PSHE curriculum taught to all years, in an age-appropriate manner
- External specialist speakers, including the police, delivering key messages to students
- Student focus groups to identify what the potential key issues may be in school
- Student questionnaires seeking their experience of the issues
- A questionnaire to all parents seeking their thoughts on the issues raised
- A range of material displayed around school highlighting key issues and links to sources of help
- Sharing good practice with other schools within the community and West Norfolk Academies Trust
- Establishment a dedicated email address “safe@marshlandhigh.co.uk” so students can report any concerns at any time
- Updating our behaviour policy to include sanctions for acts of sexual harassment and/or violence
- Re-educating those students that perpetrate acts of sexual harassment and violence

As you can see from the steps we are taking, we view this issue seriously.

Where acts of sexual harassment and/or violence are brought to our attention, we will always act upon it. If this has taken place outside of school, we will work with students, family, the police and the Local Authority as necessary. Where an act takes place within school, we will follow our procedures and policies to investigate and issue a relevant, proportional sanction up to, and including, permanent exclusion from our school.

As a school that prides ourselves on the level of pastoral care we provide for our students, we will at all times support any victim of this type of activity and work sensitively with those involved.

We expect a culture where children feel safe, and are prepared not to stand for such acts, where they feel school will listen and then deal appropriately as issues arise, no matter how small they seem. Any act of sexual harassment or violence is a very serious matter.

If you would like any further information, or to discuss any of these issues, you can email office@marshlandhigh.co.uk marking it for my attention.

Yours faithfully

Mr Tom Duce, Deputy Headteacher