



House of Commons
Women and Equalities
Committee

**Sexual harassment
and sexual violence in
schools: Government
response to the
Committee's Third
Report of Session
2016–17**

**First Special Report of Session
2016–17**

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The Women and Equalities Committee

The Women and Equalities Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Government Equalities Office (GEO).

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The following members were also members of the committee during the Parliament:

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Publications

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/womenandequalities and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the relevant [inquiry page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Judith Boyce (Clerk), Sharmini Selvarajah (Second Clerk), Emma Sawyer (Committee Specialist), Tansy Hutchinson (Committee Specialist), Holly Dustin (Committee Specialist), Shai Jacobs (Committee Specialist), Asaad Qadri (Inquiry Manager), Thomas Pudlo (Senior Committee Assistant), Mandy Sullivan (Committee Assistant) and Liz Parratt (Media Officer).

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First Special Report

The Women and Equalities Committee published its Third Report of Session 2016–17, [Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools](#), as HC 91 on 13 September 2016. The Government response was received on 9 November 2016 and is appended to this report.

Appendix: Government response

Inclusive and Tolerant Schools

Introduction

- 1) The Women and Equalities Committee (WEC) report on sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools was published on 13 September 2016.
- 2) The report made 14 recommendations in relation to a wide range of areas including Personal Social Health and Economic education (PSHE) and Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), cross-Government strategy, whole school approaches to tackling sexual harassment and sexual violence, teacher training and the monitoring and recording of incidents. There were specific recommendations for Ofsted around inspection and the training of inspectors.
- 3) Sexual harassment and sexual violence is unacceptable. It has serious implications for the mental health and well-being of children and young people. It has the potential to impact their educational attainment as well as harming their ability to develop happy relationships in the future.
- 4) Nobody should suffer discrimination, harassment or bullying because of who they are. We want to see a culture where *all* children and young people feel safe and able to meet their potential whatever their sex, ethnicity, nationality, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or background.
- 5) The Government welcomes the WEC's work and recommendations on this very important issue, and we are grateful to all those who provided evidence. The scale and impact of sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools set out by the inquiry shines a light on a worrying picture: sexual harassment and abuse of girls being accepted as part of daily life; primary school-aged children learning about sex and relationships through exposure to hard-core pornography and a prevailing culture in schools which seemingly condones sexual harassment as being “just banter”. It is clear that action is needed to make sure that all schools are equipped to respond appropriately and tackle these issues. There is cross-Government support for prioritising work to make significant progress in this area, including through the strategy addressing violence against women and girls.
- 6) Schools already have a range of duties which frame the positive action that they can and should be taking to build environments where all young people are supported to engage fully. These include:
 - The Equality Act, 2010
 - The Public Sector Equality Duty, 2011

- Statutory safeguarding guidance: Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), September 2016
- The delivery of Sex and Relationship Education in maintained schools
- The requirement to have behaviour and bullying policies

7) We know that the presence of a duty or guidance does not always mean that schools are properly aware of difficult issues or have the support they need to tackle them. We will support schools to build on these duties to develop a wider preventative approach to promoting inclusive, tolerant school communities through:

- Supporting schools to produce their own new codes of practice setting out the principles for a whole school approach to inclusion and tolerance to combat bullying, harassment and abuse of any kind, and considering what support and guidance schools might need to achieve this.
- Building our evidence base to better understand the scale and scope of the problem, as well as providing best practice examples of effective ways to work with boys and girls to promote gender equality and both prevent and respond to incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence.
- Setting up an advisory group to look at how the issues and recommendations from the select committee's report can be best reflected within existing DfE guidance for schools including KCSIE and our behaviour and bullying guidance.

8) Within this we will work with partners to reflect the specific issues raised by the committee.

9) As society changes schools are dealing with a range of developing issues, such as a rise in hate crimes. We do therefore want to make sure that we are encouraging whole school approaches through which schools can tackle the range of challenges they face.

A whole school approach

Recommendation 1

The Government and schools must make tackling sexual harassment and sexual violence an immediate policy priority (paragraph 48).

Recommendation 4

The Department for Education should develop, publish and publicise national guidance on adopting a whole school approach to reducing and preventing sexual harassment and sexual violence in all primary and secondary schools. This guidance should be published so schools can implement it in September 2017 (paragraph 92).

Recommendation 5

The Government should create a statutory obligation in the forthcoming Education Bill for all schools, primary and secondary, to develop a whole school approach to preventing and tackling sexual harassment and sexual violence. We also recommend that the Department for Education remind all school Governors of their legal

obligations to address sexual harassment and sexual violence in school. Guidance and support on how to achieve this most effectively should be provided to Governing bodies (paragraph 94).

Recommendation 9

The obligation on schools to prevent and address sexual harassment and sexual violence that we called for in paragraph 94 must include independent schools (paragraph 124).

Government Response

10) We firmly support the 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.

11) We know that there are excellent examples of schools that have implemented whole school approaches to tackle either sexual harassment and sexual violence, or inclusion and tolerance more broadly, and we are keen to learn from and build on the success of these approaches.

12) There are other forms of harassment; cyber bullying, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim and other hate crimes; which appear to be on the rise, and this is contributing to a cultural context in schools where intolerance feels more prevalent.

13) The legal framework, through existing statutory duties and guidance on equalities, safeguarding, curriculum and behaviour is already strong. However, we agree with the committee that there is more that we can do to be clear about how it applies to the issues set out in the report and supports the implementation of a whole school approach.

Legal duties

14) The existing statutory framework for schools contains some strong expectations which should frame and prompt school action to tackle harassment and bullying.

Equality Act and PSED

15) The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for a school to discriminate against a pupil or prospective pupil by treating them less favourably because of a protected characteristic, which includes sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.

16) The Act introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in 2011 which applies to all schools, including maintained and independent schools, academies, and maintained and non-maintained special schools. Under the PSED 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.

Statutory school policies and guidance

17) Schools must have regard to the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). KCSIE sets out, among other things, the safeguarding duties of all staff in schools and colleges, the role of the designated safeguarding lead, forms of abuse and neglect, the main safeguarding concerns schools and colleges should be aware of, the management of the safeguarding process within the school or college and the specific responsibilities of the governing body and proprietors.

18) The guidance is updated regularly to take account of current safeguarding issues. The July 2015 KCSIE guidance was clear on schools' duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This included the requirement for school and college staff to be appropriately trained and also made clear the process for staff to raise *any* safeguarding concerns (which would include sexual harassment and sexual violence). Page 12 of the 2015 guidance provided additional information on specific safeguarding issues including, among other things, gender-based violence, sexting, teenage relationship abuse and gangs and youth violence.

19) The recently revised KCSIE guidance (published 5 September 2016¹) has gone further. This guidance was consulted upon between 22 December 2015 and 16 February 2016. The guidance makes clear that a child is capable of abusing another child (peer on peer abuse). It sets out that governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with. The policy should reflect the different forms peer on peer abuse can take, make clear that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter" or "part of growing up". It should be clear as to how victims of peer on peer abuse should be supported.

20) Paragraph 78 of KCSIE sets the duty on governors and proprietors to ensure that their institution's child protection policy reflects different gender issues when dealing with peer on peer abuse, including girls being sexually touched/assaulted or boys being subject to initiation/hazing-type violence.

A review of guidance

21) Despite these recent revisions, we recognise that the findings of the inquiry suggest we may need to reconsider the specific focus the guidance gives to this issue. We will invite sector specialists to join an advisory group to review existing DfE guidance including KCSIE and behaviour and bullying guidance and consider how the committee's concerns and recommendations can be taken on board. We will convene the group at the earliest opportunity and look to review both sets of guidance as a priority.

22) We will also ask the advisory group to consider what further advice and guidance schools might need to help them understand how their existing responsibilities fit together to provide a basis for tackling sexual harassment and sexual violence, and what those sources of advice might be.

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Policies on behaviour and bullying

23) Sexual harassment and sexual violence can manifest in ways which do not always surface as poor or disruptive behaviour. The WEC report describes a culture in schools where sexual harassment and sexual violence is normalised, with victims less likely to identify behaviour as abusive and therefore less likely to report it. Teachers may also not always recognise the harmful impact these behaviours can have, particularly when left unchallenged. Tackling this should be an integral element of developing a whole school approach.

24) In addition to the legislation above, schools are also required to have in place policies on behaviour and bullying which should support and promote the inclusive and tolerant environments we would like to see develop through whole school approaches.

25) All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy which outlines measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying. Schools are free to develop their own anti-bullying strategies but they are held clearly to account for their effectiveness through Ofsted.

26) We are determined that every child feels safe at school and is able to work and study without disruption. That is why we have made this a priority and taken decisive action to put teachers back in charge of the classroom by giving them the powers they need to tackle poor behaviour and discipline.

27) The Government has already made great strides in empowering teachers to crack down on bad behaviour, making clear teachers can use reasonable force to maintain behaviour, extending their searching powers and allowing teachers to impose same-day detentions.

28) Recognising more still needs to be done, the previous Secretary of State appointed behaviour expert Tom Bennett to lead two reviews of behaviour. The first is complete and focused on initial teacher training and is part of the wider initial teacher training review. The review reports and the Government's response were published on 12 July. The second is on behaviour management in schools with a particular focus on leadership, culture and systems used to tackle disruptive pupil behaviour. The review will report in the autumn and we will consider the committee's recommendations as part of developing this work.

29) To support schools, the Department for Education has previously published guidance on preventing and tackling bullying. Whilst this makes reference to different types of bullying (special educational needs and disability (SEND), race and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T)) and offers information on where to seek further support in relation to these, it does not currently cover incidents of sexist bullying. Therefore, as stated above we will convene a sexual harassment and sexual violence sector advisory group to support us in reviewing this guidance immediately, with the intention of updating to existing materials early next year. We will ensure the updated guidance directly references sexist bullying and signposts to further sources of support.

PSHE and SRE

30) As well as supporting behaviour management, the Government published guidance in 2013 on PSHE education. This guidance confirmed that PSHE is an “important and necessary part of all pupils’ education. All schools should teach PSHE, drawing on good practice, and this expectation is outlined in the introduction to the national curriculum.” So PSHE should be taught as part of the national curriculum, and academies are encouraged to teach it as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

31) Sex and relationship education is compulsory in maintained secondary schools and many academies and free schools choose to teach it as part of their statutory duty to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Where schools teach SRE they must have regard to statutory guidance.

Inclusive and tolerant schools: codes of practice

32) The legal framework is already strong, but we agree with the committee that there is more that we can do to be clear about how it applies to the issues set out in the report. We also want to look at how to support and challenge schools to address those issues in the context of wider work to ensure that schools are thinking about how to make themselves inclusive and tolerant places where barriers are removed and dealt with so that all pupils have the same opportunities to succeed.

33) Schools need to decide how best to address issues, taking into account their particular circumstances. We have considered the recommendations carefully in respect of whether there is more that can be done to support schools in doing that and we believe that creating an additional duty for all schools to develop a whole school approach to preventing and tackling sexual harassment will not ensure the system-wide change that we, the committee and schools seek to achieve.

34) Instead, we propose a holistic school-based approach, which will support schools to tackle this issue. We will do this through three new areas of work: supporting schools to produce their own new codes of practice, building our evidence base, and setting up an advisory group (as outlined above in paragraphs 23 and 24).

35) We will support schools to produce their own new codes of practice setting out the principles for a whole school approach to inclusion and tolerance to combat bullying, harassment and abuse of any kind, in a way that brings together or is reflected in existing policies.

36) We will work with a broad range of partners on how schools can identify and reflect the key principles in promoting tolerance and inclusion, as well as any associated tools or resources that schools may need as a framework to support them to implement a whole school approach.

37) Where a school chooses to adopt a code of practice it would need to be designed to respond to the needs in that particular school. We would expect that the support developed would cover how schools can include the following in their codes of practice:

- the range of issues that school leaders can include when setting out what is acceptable in the context of inclusive and respectful school communities;

- how those issues can be reflected in proportionate expectations of staff, pupils and governors - including what should be done when they become aware of a problem or issue;
- how pupils might be engaged with the expectations;
- how parents can be involved and informed;
- how external agencies can be involved - including reporting and referral of incidents where appropriate;
- the support that can be made available for young people as well as staff if they are aware of a problem; and
- how a whole school approach can bring together existing policies so that there is effective recording and reporting without duplication or additional burden.

38) We will invite educational experts, unions, head teachers, sexual harassment and sexual violence sector specialists, the PSHE Association, safeguarding specialists, and other sector specific experts such as LGBT, race and bullying experts to join us in working through the framework of support for schools.

39) To further inform the framework we will consult with young people, through sector organisations, to capture and explore the views of young people on sexual harassment and violence in schools but also around tolerance and inclusion more generally.

Building our evidence base

40) As the select committee report states, there is very limited evidence available in this area. We plan to undertake research to better understand the scale and scope of the problem as well as providing best practice examples of effective ways to work with boys and girls to promote gender equality and both prevent and respond to incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

41) In order to better understand the scale of the problem we have included specific questions on both sexist and racist bullying in the next wave of the NFER Teacher Voice survey and the Department's own surveys of post-16 institutions and of pupils and their parents/carers. These surveys are nationally representative and are run twice a year. We expect the findings from these questions to be available in February/March 2017.

42) The GEO is developing a work programme aimed at identifying and disseminating research evidence and best practice on engaging men and boys with gender equality, with a particular focus on effective engagement with boys in school around healthy gender relationships.

43) We also propose to establish a programme of qualitative research into the attitudes and behaviours of young people to better understand the underlying drivers of inequality and harassment among young people and provide more in-depth information about so-called "low-level" behaviours, intolerance.

Governors

44) A whole school approach to tackling sexual harassment and sexual violence needs to involve all staff as well as governors. In line with the committee's recommendation, the next iteration of the Governor's Handbook will remind all school governors about their legal obligations and how they relate to addressing sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools.

Independent schools

45) The WEC makes a specific recommendation about addressing sexual harassment and sexual violence in independent school settings through inspectorates checking the extent to which schools monitor, record and take action on such behaviour. Inspectorates already do this in relation to all safeguarding incidents, under frameworks agreed with government, as part of their checking school's compliance with the independent school standard. The standard requires the school to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, and to take account of the requirements of statutory guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education. As stated elsewhere in this response, the department will consider whether KCSIE should have more detailed guidance on schools' approach to this issue.

Clear definitions

Recommendation 7

As part of the whole school approach guidance we have recommended, the Government should ensure all schools receive clear definitions of what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence. Schools also need information on how to record, monitor and respond to incidents, including when to report them to the police. All schools should collect this data. It should be collated nationally and published annually (paragraph 111).

Government response

46) As part of our work supporting schools to develop a code of practice for a whole school approach to inclusion and tolerance we will be working with sector experts to provide more clarity on what constitutes "low level" sexual harassment that might not meet the threshold for criminal behaviour, but are unwelcome and create an intolerant and intimidating environment.

47) This work will be informed by our planned qualitative research with children and young people into their attitudes and behaviours, and also by our consultation with children and young people on the development of the school code of practice. This will ensure that children and young people are at the heart of defining what behaviour constitutes sexual harassment to them.

48) The codes of practice will also consider what support schools might need on recording, monitoring and responding to incidents. We do not, however, at this stage propose to require all schools to collect data for national collation and comparison. We would prefer that schools base their recording and monitoring of incidents on their own professional

judgement, rather than a set of prescribed criteria that can be misinterpreted and misrepresented, and will necessarily always exclude some incidents which are nonetheless serious. Ofsted consider schools' records as part of their inspections.

49) The qualitative research into the attitudes and behaviours of young people set out above will give us an indication of how well schools are responding to this call for action to create more inclusive school communities.

Guidance and monitoring

Recommendation 2

We recommend that Keeping Children Safe in Education should directly reference sexual harassment and sexual violence. It should refer schools to a whole school approach as the most effective means of tackling this problem. Specialists working in the field of sexual harassment and violence against women and girls should be consulted on the best ways to draft these revisions to KCSIE (paragraph 73).

Recommendation 3

Ofsted and Government guidance on bullying should be amended immediately to include direct reference to sexual harassment and resources for how to deal with it (paragraph 80).

Recommendation 8

In order for Ofsted to successfully monitor schools' progress in this area, it must update its training and guidance by September 2017 so all schools are inspected on how effectively they are preventing and dealing with sexual harassment and sexual violence (paragraph 119).

Government response

50) As stated above KCSIE is a living document that is regularly updated to reflect current safeguarding issues, and has recently been updated to reflect gender-based violence and different gender issues when dealing with peer on peer abuse, including girls being sexually assaulted. As outlined above, in response to the committee's recommendations we will be setting up an advisory group of specialists from the sexual harassment and sexual violence sector to review KCSIE as well as looking at DfE's behaviour and bullying guidance. We will consult on any proposed changes at the earliest opportunity.

Ofsted response

51) Ofsted has amended its school inspection handbook, which applies to section 5 inspections from September 2016, so that this matter is covered explicitly. As part of the inspection, inspectors will request that the following information is available at the start of the inspection: "records and analysis of bullying, discriminatory and prejudicial behaviour, either directly or indirectly, including racist, sexist, disability and homophobic

bullying, use of derogatory language and racist incidents.” Ofsted does not publish guidance on bullying. It will, however, have regard to any guidance to schools issued by the Government when conducting inspections.

52) As part of Ofsted inspections, inspectors will expect to see schools promoting clear messages about the impact of bullying and prejudiced behaviour, in all its forms, and pupils working with the school to tackle and prevent occurrences of bullying. They will expect schools to adopt an open culture which actively promotes all aspects of pupils' welfare, and for pupils to understand how to keep themselves and others safe in different situations and settings.

53) Ofsted provides extensive training for inspectors on safeguarding, which includes gender-based violence and domestic violence. Inspectors also receive training on LGB&T which includes sexual harassment. In addition to the standard training inspectors also attend Ofsted conferences which include sessions on key issues, such as safeguarding. For example, the most recent conference in September included a session on child exploitation, which featured a case study of sexual harassment of a 14 year old girl. There are no plans for additional specific training on sexual harassment and violence, but Ofsted will continue to review its training regularly and adapt it as appropriate in the future. Ofsted will also ensure that all inspectors are sighted on the committee's report and findings.

PSHE and SRE

Recommendation 10

We recommend that PSHE and SRE are made statutory subjects as part of the new Education Bill (paragraph 151).

Recommendation 14

The Government should immediately update its guidance on SRE to include teaching about pornography. The new guidance should offer advice to schools about how to approach this topic in an age-appropriate way. It should also include suggestions of how schools can work in partnership with parents to address the impact of pornography on children's perceptions of sex, relationships and consent (paragraph 213).

Government response

54) PSHE can help to provide pupils with the key skills and knowledge that can ensure their future success. We know that many schools and teachers already recognise the importance of good PSHE education and know that healthy, resilient, confident pupils are better-placed to achieve academically and be stretched further.

55) The PSHE Association has produced a suggested programme of study as guidance for teachers, and continues to provide wider support by highlighting other sources of expertise. They also provide a quality assurance service for other providers of resources, further strengthening the confidence of teachers when selecting appropriate materials.

56) As set out above, we will look at how what is taught in PSHE and SRE can fit into a whole school approach and reflected in codes of practice. We are conscious that the

existing SRE guidance was last updated in 2000 and the case for further action on PSHE and SRE delivery is actively under review, with particular consideration to improving quality and accessibility.

Data

Recommendation 6

We recommend that police data record the incidence of sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools specifically. This would allow for better analysis of the prevalence and increase/decrease of this problem (paragraph 107).

Government response

57) The Government is committed to tackling sexual violence and expects every report to be treated seriously from the point of disclosure, every victim to be treated with dignity and every investigation and every prosecution to be conducted thoroughly and professionally.

58) The Home Office continues to work with the police to look at ways to improve police investigations of rape and ensure that their guidance on investigating and prosecuting rape is implemented in every police force area.

59) The Home Office expects local police to be engaging with schools, and other local services, on a range of issues affecting communities, including child sexual abuse (CSA) and child sexual exploitation (CSE), sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence and recording crimes accordingly.

60) The Home Office expects police to record all sexual offences that are reported to them, no matter where the offence took place. The Home Office rules have been updated to make clear that all sexual offences in schools, including those which amount to pupils sending indecent images, must be recorded. The Home Office has worked with police forces to record more detailed information relating to individual crimes, including better identifying the place crimes are committed (for example in schools).

61) From April this year, two mandatory collections were added to the Annual Data Requirement (ADR) to record the number of notifiable offences involving child sexual abuse (CSA) and child sexual exploitation (CSE) against victims. This is to improve our understanding of the scale and nature of CSA and CSE reported to the police. From April 2017 it will become mandatory for forces to record the number of incidents involving CSE.

62) The Home Office has supported the publication of data on rape for every police force in the country as a basis for improving recording and investigations of rape and ensuring that guidance on investigating and prosecuting rape is implemented in every police force area.

Teacher training

Recommendation 11

As part of its ongoing review of Initial Teacher Training, we recommend that the Government assess the most effective ways to ensure all school staff are well trained to deal with and prevent sexual harassment and sexual violence. The Government should report back to us with their findings and plan of action by March 2017 (paragraph 161).

Government response

63) All Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses must ensure that trainee teachers can meet the Teachers' Standards, which includes managing behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment by:

- having clear rules and routines for behaviour in classrooms, and taking responsibility for promoting good and courteous behaviour both in classrooms and around the school, in accordance with the school's behaviour policy;
- having high expectations of behaviour, and establishing a framework for discipline with a range of strategies, using praise, sanctions and rewards consistently and fairly;
- managing classes effectively, using approaches which are appropriate to pupils' needs in order to involve and motivate them;
- maintaining good relationships with pupils, exercising appropriate authority, and acting decisively when necessary.

64) Teachers must also have regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions, and show tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.

65) On 12 July 2016, the Department published a new framework of core content for ITT, developed by an independent group of experts chaired by Stephen Munday CBE. The aim is to improve the consistency and quality of ITT courses by supporting teacher trainers and trainees to have a better understanding of the essential elements of good ITT content. It specifies content on behaviour management and emphasises that providers should instruct trainees on the legal responsibility they have as teachers with regard to safeguarding, including how to refer safeguarding concerns within a school.

66) In addition, Tom Bennett, a behaviour expert, chaired a separate expert group that has developed core content on behaviour management for initial teacher training which is included in the broader framework of the core content that was developed by the Munday group. Tom Bennett's report on behaviour management was also published on 12 July.

67) The updates to ITT, however, will only impact on those new to teaching, and not our existing and experienced teachers. The evidence is clear that most successful education systems in the world are characterised by strong systems of professional development, high levels of lesson observation and ongoing performance management.

68) Decisions relating to teachers' professional development rightly rest with schools, head teachers and teachers themselves, as they are in the best position to judge their own requirements. The Government is supporting this by creating the conditions for high quality professional development to thrive in all schools so that all teachers have the opportunity to improve and develop throughout their careers.

69) We brought together an expert group of teachers, head teachers and academics to develop a new Standard for Teachers' Professional Development. The Standard was published on 12 July 2016 and it should be used by anyone working in, and with, schools to enable them to identify and participate in high quality professional development opportunities.

Research into boys and young men

Recommendation 12

We welcome the Government's interest in supporting boys and young men to be part of the solution to the problem of sexual harassment and sexual violence. We recommend that the Government fund research to establish the most effective ways to achieve this (paragraph 170).

Government Response

70) We recognise that young people are influenced by the behaviours and attitudes they experience in all aspects of their lives, including in school. Prevailing stereotypes about traditional gender roles - where men are expected to be powerful and sexually assertive, while women are judged on their physical appearance and sexual availability to men - form the basis of unhealthy and disrespectful relationships. In a school environment, where young people often seek social status through the assertion of more 'adult' identities, where peer pressure and group norms can be felt intensely, and where many have yet to develop maturity and resilience, this can result in groups norms and individual behaviours that are disrespectful at best and abusive at worst.

71) It is important to be clear that most teenage boys are not abusive to their partners. However, they are beset with social and cultural messages that encourage them to act in sexually dominant ways, and to collude with other males who do so. We are concerned about the impact this may have on boys' emotional development and mental wellbeing, and about how they are often 'policed' through homophobic bullying and coercive group norms.

72) Girls may also collude with or contribute to negative social norms, but they are far more likely than boys to experience sexual harassment within school as well as out of it. The committee heard some very disturbing evidence about the sheer volume of sexually predatory and abusive behaviour experienced by young girls.

73) The successful *Disrespect NoBody* campaign, that we launched earlier this year, was the second phase of the acclaimed teen relationship abuse campaign *This is Abuse*. The campaign challenges young people's understanding of what constitutes abuse within a relationship, including newer issues facing young people like sexting. It uses a range of

digital and audio adverts which address many different forms of relationship abuse and situations including in same sex relationships. Some contained gender-neutral messaging, others depicted male victims and female perpetrators.

74) To support the campaign, the PSHE Association produced a new resource for teachers, support workers and other professionals working with young people. The guide uses the campaign adverts to help professionals facilitate discussions with teenagers on what constitutes abuse in all types of relationships – including relationships involving lesbian, gay, bi and transgender (LGB&T) young people. The resource can be downloaded for free by teachers and schools to prompt discussions about abuse or harassment among teenagers.

75) We want all young people to grow up able to fulfil their aspirations free from abuse or the pressure to conform to limiting identities on the basis of their gender or any other characteristic. In order to shift the underlying social norms and attitudes that underpin inequality and abuse we want to use the best evidence available to educate and support young people to be resilient to influences that can result in harassment and sexual violence.

76) The GEO is developing a programme of work aimed at identifying and disseminating research evidence and best practice on engaging men and boys with gender equality, with a particular focus on effective engagement with boys in school around healthy gender relationships. This will include insight research and an academic seminar looking at men as change agents for gender equality.

77) In addition, and as referenced above, we are planning to carry out qualitative research with children and young people to look at their attitudes and behaviours, which will further inform this work.

Facilitating specialist sector expertise

Recommendation 13

The Government should create a fund to support specialist sector organisations to use their expertise to help schools tackle sexual harassment and sexual violence (paragraph 190).

Government response

78) There are already a number of funding streams that specialist sector organisations are able to bid for to deliver support to schools to tackle disadvantage or discrimination.

79) We have also recently announced £4.4m of funding going directly to sector organisations from two anti-bullying grants programmes run through both the DfE and GEO. These address bullying across a number of areas including working with schools on hate-related bullying, and homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying with a particular expectation to understand the influences and similarities with gender-based bullying.

80) Given the above, we are not planning a specific sexual harassment and sexual violence sector fund, however as part of the work to support schools develop codes of practice we will look at the sort of external support and training schools might seek to draw on and how to access it.