

Inspections to look at how schools and colleges work to prevent sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence

Ofsted has today published updated education inspection handbooks, clarifying how inspectors will assess how schools and colleges confront sexual harassment, abuse and violence among children and young people.

The updates follow Ofsted's recent ['Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges'](#), which found that sexual harassment has become 'normalised' for children and young people. The report recommended that school and college leaders should develop a culture where all kinds of sexual harassment are recognised and addressed, including with sanctions when appropriate.

The changes to the handbooks will take effect when routine inspection resumes in September. Inspectors will expect schools and college leaders to assume that sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence are happening in and around their school, even when there are no specific reports, and to have put in place a whole-school approach to address them.

Inspectors will also consider how schools and colleges handle allegations and incidents of sexual abuse between children and young people when they do occur.

Inspectors will look at the preventative measures schools and colleges have put in place to guard against sexual harassment and abuse, including behaviour policies, pastoral support and the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum.

Ofsted will also expect schools and colleges to be alert to factors that increase children's potential vulnerability to sexual abuse, and to understand and address the barriers that could prevent a child or young person from reporting an incident.

Where schools and colleges do have not adequate processes in place, it is likely that safeguarding will be considered ineffective. This can impact on the 'leadership and management' judgement and the overall grade is likely to be 'inadequate'.

Sean Harford, Ofsted National Education Director said:

The findings from our recent review have revealed just how commonplace sexual harassment has become in schools and colleges. So, even when there are no specific reports, schools and colleges must assume that it is taking place and plan to address it accordingly. Our updated handbooks are clear about how we will

assess the approach schools and colleges have taken to tackle these issues head-on.

We will expect schools and colleges to have created a culture where sexual abuse and harassment is not acceptable and never tolerated. And where pupils are supported to report any concerns about harmful sexual behaviour and can feel confident they will be taken seriously.

Inspectors will not investigate individual allegations of harmful sexual behaviour, but will ensure that they are reported to the appropriate authority, if this has not already happened.

Ofsted has also updated and clarified how it will report on careers guidance. All secondary schools are expected to provide effective careers information, education, advice and guidance (CIEAG), in line with the statutory [‘Careers guidance and access for education and training providers’](#). As part of this, it is important that schools understand and meet the requirements of the ‘Baker clause’, which came into force in January 2018. If a school is not meeting the requirements of the clause, inspectors will state this in the inspection report. They will consider what impact this has on the quality of CIEAG and the subsequent judgement for personal development.

Ofsted inspection handbooks: