

## HEADTEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

**Title of Project:** Student and Staff Perceptions of Sexual Harassment and Image-Based Sexual Abuse in Secondary Schools since the Ofsted June 2021 Review

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**Supervisors:**

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**Ethics Committee Reference Number:** SHFEC 2025-040

### 1. Invitation

We invite students and staff at your school to take part in our research study. Your school's participation is at the discretion of yourself as the Headteacher, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. This information sheet explains the purpose of our study and what participation involves. It is intended to support your decision and answer any questions you may have. If anything is unclear, please do not hesitate to contact Lauren Sansom.

We are a research team from the University of Portsmouth. The project is led by Lauren Sansom, a PhD student investigating sexual harassment and abuse in educational settings. Dr Ana Gheorghiu (victim and offender perception), Dr Nina Attridge (educational psychology), and Dr Alessandra Fasulo (social interaction and children's language socialisation; qualitative methods) are supervising this project.

### 2. Study Summary

This study focuses on preventing peer-on-peer harmful sexual behaviour in secondary schools, which is important because every child deserves to experience education in a safe environment free from sexual abuse.

We are recruiting students and staff from several secondary schools in or surrounding Portsmouth. Participation in the research will require your students and staff to complete an online survey that will take approximately 5-10 minutes of their time.

### **3. What is the purpose of the study?**

The overarching purpose of this study is to investigate student and staff perceptions of peer-based sexual abuse in local secondary schools since the Ofsted 'Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges' in 2021. All schools will remain completely anonymous, and no negative judgement will be placed on schools regardless of what we find.

### **4. Why has my school been invited?**

Your school has been invited due to its location near Portsmouth and the insights your students and staff can provide on the topic.

### **5. Does my school have to take part?**

No, participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

### **6. What will happen to my school if we take part?**

If you decide for your school to take part, students and staff will be required to complete an anonymous 5-10 minute online survey. This survey will ask questions regarding their demographic information, perceptions of peer-based sexual harm at school, and views on reporting such incidents. If any student or staff member feels that answering questions related to sexual harm (e.g., sexism, sexual harassment, image-based sexual abuse) may cause them distress, we recommend they do not participate. Participants may skip any questions that they are uncomfortable with and can exit the survey at any time without providing a reason. Responses from partially complete surveys, such as those closed before submission, will not be included in the final dataset. Please be aware that due to the anonymous nature of the survey, once a completed response is submitted, it cannot be withdrawn, as we will not be able to identify individual participants.

### **7. Expenses and payments**

We will provide your school with a £100 book voucher or something of equivalent monetary value if your school would prefer as a thank you for participating.

### **8. Anything else my school will have to do?**

There is nothing else that your school must do for the completion of this study.

#### **9. What data will be collected?**

We will collect data on participants' demographic profiles (students: year group, gender, and ethnicity; staff: age, gender, ethnicity, and length of time working at the school), perceptions of sexism, sexual harassment, and image-based sexual abuse at school, and views on reporting such incidents. Staff will also be asked how they feel about handling harmful sexual behaviour.

We will collect data from multiple schools in the area anonymously, and thus will not be able to identify which school participants are at out of the six we aim to recruit. We plan to share our anonymous findings combined from multiple schools with Portsmouth City Council to provide a useful insight into future directions for tackling peer-based sexual harassment and abuse in education.

#### **10. What are the possible disadvantages, burdens and risks of your school taking part?**

Participating in this study may cause some psychological discomfort or distress due to its focus on sexual harm. We will work closely with your school to monitor student and staff wellbeing in the weeks following the survey, as their wellbeing is our top priority. To minimise distress, students and staff can skip any questions or withdraw from the survey at any time without providing a reason. We will also provide specialist support resources for anyone affected by the survey content.

#### **11. What are the possible advantages or benefits of your school taking part?**

We plan to feedback our collective findings, representative of all schools in the local area that have taken part in this study, to your school. This information may be helpful for your school to take into account on your own terms when reviewing your prevention and response strategies against peer-on-peer harmful sexual behaviour. We cannot give feedback about your school individually due to the anonymous nature of the survey.

#### **12. Will my school's data be kept confidential?**

Yes, your school's data will be entirely confidential. The unedited survey responses will be retained for a minimum of 10 years following the end of the study and will be disposed of securely. The survey software will record some basic information about your staff and students' device, including their IP address, but this information will be deleted after the data has been downloaded for analysis. Your school's responses will be stored on the computer servers used to run this online study, and downloaded to password-protected computers belonging to the research team. The data stored on

the online survey platform will be handled with appropriate safeguards and deleted from these servers once the data has been downloaded.

Your school's data may be temporarily processed, transmitted or stored by companies residing outside the European Union (e.g. Gorilla), during which time data will be handled with appropriate safeguards (e.g. contractual terms and technical security measures) to ensure the safety and security of your student and staff's data.

When the results of this study are disseminated (e.g., by publishing in academic journals), no identifying information will be shared, so that the data are completely anonymous. The anonymised dataset could be used in future research studies approved by a Research Ethics Committee. The data could also be made available to any funder of the researcher.

Anonymous data which does not identify your school, will be publicly shared at the end of the project and made open access. A CC-BY licence will be applied to this publicly shared data. This will allow anyone else (including researchers, businesses, governments, charities, and the general public) to use the anonymised data for any purpose that they wish, providing they credit the University and research team as the original creators. No restrictions will be placed on this shared anonymised data limiting its reuse to only non-commercial ventures.

### **13. What will happen if my students/staff don't want to carry on with the study?**

Your students and staff can stop the survey at any time by simply closing their browser. If they withdraw early from the study, their responses will be recorded but manually deleted and excluded from the final dataset. It is not possible to withdraw data after submission due to anonymisation.

### **14. What if there is a problem?**

If you have a query or concern about any aspect of this study, in the first instance you can contact the Principal Investigator, Lauren Sansom ([lauren.sansom@port.ac.uk](mailto:lauren.sansom@port.ac.uk)), if appropriate. If you would like to make a complaint, then you can speak to an academic member of staff; you can contact Dr Ana Gheorghiu ([ana.gheorghiu@port.ac.uk](mailto:ana.gheorghiu@port.ac.uk)) to detail your complaint.

If your concern or complaint is not resolved, you should contact the Head of Department:

Dr Mike Rayner ([mike.rayner@port.ac.uk](mailto:mike.rayner@port.ac.uk))

School of Psychology, Sport and Health Science (023 9284 8484)

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If the complaint remains unresolved, please contact:

The University Complaints Officer

023 9284 3642; [complaintsadvise@port.ac.uk](mailto:complaintsadvise@port.ac.uk)

#### **15. Who is funding the research?**

This research is funded by the Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) and the South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership (SCDTP). The researchers involved will not receive any financial reward for this study other than their normal salaries.

#### **16. Who has reviewed the study?**

Research involving human participants is reviewed by an ethics committee to ensure that the dignity and well-being of participants is respected. This study has been reviewed by the Science and Health Faculty Ethics Committee at the University of Portsmouth and has been given a favourable ethical opinion.

#### **Thank you**

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for considering volunteering your school for this research.