



29 June 2021

Dear parents and carers

Re: Against sexual abuse

At SVS we want to ensure that we do everything possible to continue to Safeguard our students using a range of measures and interventions. As you may be aware, figures in the latest government report makes it disturbing just reading so many stories from young people from all over the country on the website “Everyone’s Invited”. This site has been set up to help schools, parents and carers implement measures to prevent sexual harassment.

Sandwell Valley School recognises the need to play a role in supporting young people in addressing, overcoming and preventing experiences of sexual harassment and abuse.

We want everyone to feel safe and to do this; we would like parents and carers to continue to work in partnership with our school. We would like your views as parents and carers on what else you feel our school can do on top of what we are already doing to support you?

Leaflets have been enclosed for your information on the steps we can all take to address this, which we hope you will find useful.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)
Mim Hall
Principal

Sandwell Valley School safeguarding approaches in preventing sexual abuse

- We listen; we create appropriate forums in which students can discuss this, not only when it's a high profile media story.
- We have trained and experienced staff who have supported many individuals dealing with these issues. They are deeply personal experiences, so you might not know who or how or when this has happened.
- All staff do Safeguarding and Child Protection training, every year. Our pastoral staff do specialist training in dealing with sexual violence.
- We follow all the advice and protocols set out in Keeping Children Safe In Education.
- We promote a vigilant and supportive culture, in which self-esteem, respect and being a positive bystander are championed.
- We work with organisations and we signpost students to the support they offer, ensuring we attend to the needs of our diverse student cohort of all backgrounds, faiths, races and genders.
- We do Sex and Relationships Education (PSHE), from Year 7 through Year 13, including consent, harassment, sex and media, healthy relationships. All sessions include how to get help and signpost external organisations. You can read the overview of our PSHE provision upon request.
- We engage Student Voice in planning PSHE, including Sex and Relationships Education.
- We deliver training on IT safety for students and staff.
- We use IT monitoring system Smoothwall to identify inappropriate downloads of materials
- Students are able to use a confidential online counselling system called Tootoot which operates 24/7 to report concerns anonymously.
- We have a therapy dog and weekly counselling sessions.
- We provide support for individuals through the Pastoral Team, including our mentors, the School Nursing Team, our safeguarding team and student social workers.
- We work with the police, the local Safeguarding (MASH) Team and the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) proactively and in response to incidents.
- We are never complacent and we always seek to improve our provision for young people.

Children are valuable and are all very important and special to us - We don't want to ignore these issues

See our website for policies: www.sandwellvalleyschool.com

Sandwell Valley School safeguarding approaches in preventing sexual abuse

PARENTS AND CARERS CAN YOU HELP

We would like to encourage all parents to try the following:

Have a difficult conversation

- Talk to your son or daughter about sexual behaviours. It's not going to be easy – but *not* doing it is far worse.
- Tell them that, as with other things in life, there are some people who behave appropriately and some people who don't and there is a possibility that they will see and hear people behaving badly about sex.
- Explain that this can include people sharing nude images, using sexual terms to bully and upset and, in the worst cases, asking you to do things you're not comfortable doing.
- If they're a bit older - take the conversation a little further. Ask them about their experiences of sexual behaviours in school. Have they received naked photos? Do they hear sexual terms used as abuse? What do they think about the culture around girls and boys?
- Open up a dialogue that gives them the space to talk and you the opportunity to listen. Don't be afraid to be specific but equally don't make them feel as though you're accusing them of anything.
- You're trying to do two things. The first is to give them information that will help them if they encounter a problem. The second is to let them know that you understand the issues and you are interested and concerned about them.

Establish some boundaries

- The next, potentially even more difficult, challenge is to be clear about your boundaries.
- In our rush to be chilled, laid-back modern parents who are 'cool' about sex, we have sometimes forgotten to provide our children with basic ground rules.
- Tell them that sharing naked images is a bad idea and that it's completely unacceptable to share one with anyone who hasn't asked to receive it.
- Of course, your boundaries won't always stick - but without them young people have nothing to push against and no sense of a safe space. You literally set their compass and you want to make sure that it's pointing in the right direction.
- Should you wish to speak to us about any difficulties or challenges you are facing with your children please do not hesitate to contact Sandwell Valley School.