

March 2023

MISOGYNY, TOXIC MASCULINITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE

As it is International Women's Day on March 8th this issue looks at addressing misogyny, toxic masculinity and social media influence.

Schools are increasingly concerned about the impact of online influencers that promote misogynistic and other deeply problematic ideas. This content presents a significant safeguarding challenge given it can be permissive of: discriminatory behaviours and attitudes (including racist, antisemitic, homophobic, transphobic, and misogynistic attitudes); sexual harassment and abuse; abuse in relationships; and victim-blaming narratives.

This all comes at an age when young people may be particularly insecure and vulnerable to persuasive messages. For example, much of this content taps into insecurities about body image and agency. The focus on money, success and power also plays on financial and status insecurities that may lead to risky and even illegal behaviours.

Teaching about these topics safely:

- Avoid focusing the lesson on specific influencers, websites or groups that promote harmful attitudes. This is important, as you cannot assume even the most popular influencers are known by all pupils. Speaking about a specific influencer or influencers might prompt suggestions from students of additional less well-known influencers and encourage those previously unaware to check them out — thereby providing a potentially inspiring role model and affecting how advertising and algorithms influence their future viewing. Speaking in general terms also helps pupils to understand that this advice applies to any problematic influencers in future, not just those currently causing concern.
- This should be delivered by appropriately trained, prepared teachers using safe, effective materials: Anyone teaching this complex content should be given the training and pedagogical understanding to teach it safely and well.
- Establish a safe learning environment: establishing a safe learning environment with pupils before teaching takes places is crucial.

Tips for laying the foundations at Key Stages 1 & 2:

- With younger pupils, the aim is to develop respectful attitudes by focusing on learning that supports inclusion and belonging rather than covering specific types of discrimination, such as misogyny.
- At key stage 1 this might include exploring how everyone is equal and deserves to be treated with respect. Also, recognising and celebrating people's similarities and differences.
- This may extend to learning about stereotypes in early key stage 2, including gender stereotypes and how these can be unfair.
- Then at upper key stage 2, pupils could explore how these stereotypes can have negative effects on a person's behaviour, aspirations, and feelings about themselves.
- Teaching should also reflect younger children's early experiences online and begin to develop digital literacy skills to identify trusted sources, false information, and negative influences.
- This will all help to prepare pupils for more specific learning about discrimination (including discrimination based on gender) in the later primary years and in secondary school, as they access digital platforms with increasing independence.

PSHE education can play a crucial role in tackling the issue as it develops understanding about healthy relationships, respect, self-esteem, digital literacy, economic wellbeing, critical thinking, and recognising and challenging negative influences. And, importantly, when taught well it explores the links between these areas within the context of a coherent, spiral curriculum. Many of our schools use Jigsaw.



For each year group there are the following themes

- BM (Being Me in My World) 'Who am I and how do I fit?'
- CD (Celebrating Difference) Respect for similarity and difference. Anti-bullying and being unique
- DG (Dreams and Goals) Aspirations, how to achieve goals and understanding the emotions that go with this
- HM (Healthy Me) Being and keeping safe and healthy
- RL (Relationships) Building positive, healthy relationships
- CM (Changing Me) Coping positively with change

Many schools also use Ten:Ten Life to the full

The following topics would help to support work in this area:



- EYFS
- My Body, My Rules
- KS1
- Physical Contact
- Lower KS2
- Safe in My Body
- Upper KS2
- Types of Abuse

Incidences involving these issues will usually be considered within child-on-child abuse and should always be taken seriously.

Please see section 7.8 and 7.9 of your school's Safeguarding Policy for more details.

KEY REMINDERS

- Lanyards must be worn at all times.
- Please ensure you sign in and out of school at all times.
- Do not let visitors follow you into reception behind you as you walk in
- Ensure you lock your computer screen when you walk away from your device

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEADS

<p>St Anthony's</p>	<p>St Charles'</p>	<p>Endsleigh Holy Child</p>	<p>St Vincent's</p>	<p>Our Lady & St Peter's</p>	<p>St George's</p>	<p>Trust Safeguarding Lead</p>
<p>St Mary Queen of Martyrs</p>	<p>St Thomas More</p>	<p>St Richard's</p>	<p>St Peter's</p>	<p>St John of Beverley</p>	<p>St Mary's MW</p>	<p>St Mary & St Joseph</p>

Directors of the Trust with a responsibility for Safeguarding

Michael Gallagher

James Sargeant