

Template Letter to Schools – To be sent by students, alumni or parents to secondary schools

A crucial first step in ending Public Sexual Harassment (PSH for short) is to educate the next generation of children about this everyday violence. Please use this template in order to encourage YOUR school to do more in tackling public sexual harassment. You should take out the red parts and fill them in with your own details. If possible, please let us know that you have reached out to your school and their response by emailing us at ourstreetsnow@hotmail.com.

One school at a time, we can change society.

We deserve to feel safe and be safe in public space.

Dear (insert name of the committed teacher, head teacher, head of house),

Introduce yourself: listing name and relation to the school (eg.student/alumni/parent). I am contacting you about an extremely important issue, the fact that two-thirds of schoolgirls in the UK face Public Sexual Harassment (PSH for short)¹.

Statistically, your female students are more likely than not to have faced this violence. In fact, **a third of schoolgirls experience PSH while wearing their school uniform** (Plan UK, 2016)². Your students are being sexually harassed while on their way to and from your school. This can have a profound impact on girls' mental health and social behaviour, making them relate to themselves and with others differently. After suffering from PSH, the girls' relationship with their peers and the school are negatively altered, as well as the ways they inhabit other public spaces. It goes without saying that this is limiting their lives, aspirations and educational success.

If comfortable and able, give examples of how public sexual harassment is an issue for students in this particular school and the impacts it can have (e.g. I know that my daughter and her friends have repeatedly complained to me about the harassment they face on the way to school). Please make sure you have the explicit consent of the people whose experiences you are sharing.

Confronting the reality of PSH and teaching your students about this violence is a crucial part of this process. **42% of girls don't tell anyone about their experience of sexual harassment** (Plan UK, 2016), leaving them feeling confused, isolated and often blaming themselves. Furthermore, teaching your male students about the impacts of PSH and tackling its normalisation in society is the only way to eradicate this violence.

¹ <https://plan-uk.org/street-harassment/its-not-ok>

² <https://plan-uk.org/street-harassment/its-not-ok>

As you may know, as of September 2020 the UK government has made sex education compulsory (with some allowances on the timing due to the current pandemic). This curriculum explicitly states that schools must make clear that **“sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and are not an inevitable part of growing up”**³. As PSH is the most common form of gender-based violence, it is absolutely essential for RSE classes to discuss and explore this topic.

Up until now, however, the issue has been largely ignored. Our Streets Now - the nationwide campaign to end public sexual harassment - showed on their report that **only 14% of students surveyed had been taught about PSH**⁴. This clearly falls short of the new government guidelines. I hope that your school will lead the way in rectifying this.

If comfortable, including personal message here, perhaps about how this education might have helped you navigate the experience or not blame yourself.

As a school, I know you take your duty to safeguard students incredibly seriously. Giving both the Government RSE Guidance and your safeguarding duty, **I would urge you to take action against PSH in your school**. One avenue for help in this area is **Our Streets Now**. On the 2nd September 2020, it launched ‘Our Schools Now’⁵, a project whose aim is to educate every child in this country about PSH. Using the voices of pupils to guide the project, Our Schools Now have created:

- A Lesson Pack with three detailed lesson plans to guide teachers when delivering PSH-education to their students. This Lesson Plans follows the Government's Statutory RSE curriculum.
- A teacher discussion worksheet to help bring about change at school.
- A PSH Resource Pack, filled with engaging information, definition of key terms related to PSH, artwork and advice to help teachers and students engage with the issue.

The aforementioned material also includes findings on how to improve reporting mechanisms in your school, from creating an anonymous system to clearer policies and signposting.

I cannot stress enough what a massive difference in educating children about PSH could make to the lives of women and girls across the UK. **I would love for this school to lead the way in raising a generation of children who understand the prevalence and impact of public sexual harassment.**

It would be fantastic to hear your general thoughts on the matter, including how committed your school is towards PSH-education and what precise measures you are implementing towards this issue.

Looking forward to hearing back from you.

Very best wishes,

Insert name

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908013/Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf

⁴ <https://www.ourstreetsnow.org/our-schools>

⁵ <https://www.ourstreetsnow.org/our-schools>

