Misogyny in Schools: a whole school approach

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Public Health

Swindon
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Definition of Misogyny

A person who hates, dislikes, or is prejudiced against women.

A misogynist; characterized by hatred of or prejudice against women; misogynistic.
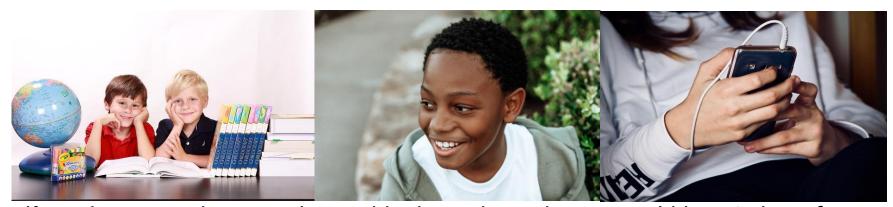
Oxford English dictionary

Why tackling and preventing misogyny is important:

- Gender stereotypes affect young people's views, choices and aspirations. It impacts their behaviour towards others and influences the choices they make under the pressure to fit in.

- Education is a key place where stereotypes about men and women can be actively challenged.

- Challenging sexism and homophobia mutually reinforce each other because of the misguided assumptions that boys who aren't acting 'in masculine ways' will be gay, or won't live up to their full potential unless they 'man up'.

- Gender inequality and gendered social norms – the beliefs that a person's sex should involve certain behaviours or roles in society – contribute to entrench patterns of violence against women and girls.

- Gender stereotypes start for younger children, for instance, with ideas about what jobs men and women can do. As they progress, gender stereotypes can lead to a social norm that says that girls and women are worth less than men, they are sexual objects who should be sexually available to men.

Schools are in an ideal position to take a whole-setting approach to tackle misogyny

This guide, aimed at both primary schools and secondary schools includes:

- tips around a whole-school approach to preventing and tackling misogyny

- class resources and teacher training options

- Appendix 1: What should be covered in Relationships, Sex and Health Education

If you have any tips or tools to add, please let us know – we'd love to hear from you: SwindonHealthySchools@swindon.gov.uk

Tips to preventing and tackling misogyny (part 1)

- Develop a whole school approach to misogyny rather than solely addressing it in PSHE. PSHE delivery is part of a whole school approach (see the related resources later on in this guide).

- Tackling issues like misogyny or harassment isn't about one-off workshops – it's about joining the dots across the whole curriculum and community.

- Examples include engaging with parents, strengthening healthy relationships education and ensuring support around mental health and wellbeing is available and signposted to.

- Online misogynists can focus on financial gain and target those worried about finances. Therefore, financial wellbeing and providing an affordable school is also another example of a whole-school approach to this issue.

Tips to preventing and tackling misogyny (part 2)

- Take a whole-school approach to avoiding gender stereotyping and expectations of gender. All staff and governors should champion this in their roles.

- Lost Boys State of the Nation, emphasises the importance of defining healthy masculinity and supporting boys in developing positive values and behaviours. How can you do this in your school?

- A topic for your next staff meeting/inset day could be: "how do we enable girls to continue to thrive, whilst supporting boys to be a partner and ally to this, rather than being threatened by it?"

- We need to discuss extremism openly amongst staff and with pupils, as radicalisation tends to happen when people are left alone with their thoughts and turn to extremes to feel validated and heard.

Resources

PSHE Association Resources

Some of the PSHE Association Teaching resources and related learning are free and some have a fee or are available for members only.

On-demand training course 'Pornography: what and how to teach'

Teaching about consent and healthy relationship behaviours counters messages that normalise unhealthy relationship behaviours. See:

Key stage 1-2 guidance and lesson pack on teaching about consent

Key stage 3-5 guidance and lesson pack on teaching about consent

Key stage 1-4 Belonging and community: addressing discrimination and extremism lesson pack

PSHE Association offers the following guidance: Addressing misogyny, toxic masculinity and social media influence in PSHE education

Talk Relationships for secondary schools includes:

- a whole-school approach framework
- free elearning courses to support:
  - teachers to feel confident when delivering sex and relationships education and responding to abusive behaviours
  - school leaders to take a whole-school approach to sex and relationships education
- a series of lesson plans created by sex and relationships education experts from the PSHE Association and the NSPCC
- a dedicated helpline to provide advice and guidance to secondary school educators who deliver sex education.

https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/services/talk-relationships

It's Not Love: teaching resources about positive relationships for KS3 explores the themes of healthy and unhealthy relationships, including behaviours relating to interpersonal relationship abuse (peer on peer and familial). The resources seek to prevent harmful sexual behaviours and coercive control that may lead to adult domestic violence and abuse in intimate partner relationships

https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/schools/its-not-love

It's Not OK for secondary schools helps young people recognise concerning behaviour and identify characteristics of abusive and exploitative relationships. The lesson plans, films and accompanying activities cover what behaviour to look out for and how to respond to it.

https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/schools/its-not-ok

All of the above are free of charge

Chameleon PDE Misogyny Toolkit

This teacher's toolkit focuses on the issue of misogyny, and particularly the influence of online misogynists.

The toolkit contains:

- detailed teacher notes about how to address this with students, and in particular how boys can be kept engaged
- teaching packs with at least 4 hours of lesson content: 'misogyny, causes and consequences', and 'women's safety'
- slides from the webinar so training can be cascaded to teams in school.

Further information and to book on to a free webinar that comes with this package of support: [Chameleon PDE PSHE resource - Tackling Misogyny Teacher's Toolkit](#)

UK FEMINISTA

Free e-module training for school staff on tackling sexism in schools: [Home | UK-Feminista](#) This includes three 30 min modules.

[How to take a whole school approach – UK Feminista](#)

The whole school approach toolkit of UK Feminista's offers tips on the following:

- Put in place a framework
- Train and equip staff
- Support pupils

brook

Brook has an offer for the whole school approach to tackling misogyny for secondary schools. Note that there is a charge to this. Further information:

Misogyny is a complex issue. To challenge it effectively, young people need to develop a strong understanding of healthy relationships, gender norms, and the impact of harmful stereotypes.

Brook say, "Our student sessions, like Online Misogyny or Gender Stereotypes, are a great foundation. But their impact is so much greater when they're part of a bigger picture – whether that's linking to consent education, digital safety, or healthy relationships. And to really embed this work, our professional trainings like Teaching Consent or Understanding Masculinity give staff the confidence to have these conversations consistently, while also meeting safeguarding responsibilities.

We've also seen how powerful it is when parents are part of the conversation, which is why we offer flexible sessions to help them navigate topics like online misogyny or relationship boundaries at home.

If you're interested, we could map out a progression – for example, Gender Stereotypes in Year 9, Online Misogyny in Year 10, and Relationships Equality in sixth form – alongside staff CPD and parent engagement. Contact training@brook.org.uk if you'd like to chat about what this could look like for your school"

Further information can also be accessed here: www.brook.org.uk/education/teaching-about-misogyny-masculinity-and-stereotypes/

Blog on [Understanding Toxic Masculinity: How to have more Positive Views on Masculinity - Life Lessons](#)

Guide on addressing the issues outlined in the Netflix series, *Adolescence*: The guide actually suggests avoiding terms like 'toxic masculinity' (despite this, the concepts in the above blog are still useful to read). This guide is for teachers rather than for class delivery. It includes:

Section 1 - Headlines: Adolescence and anti-misogyny

Section 2 - Cultural context: gender equality and online ideologies

Section 3 - How do we address these issues in schools?

Section 4 - Resources and support. [Download the guide](#).

Online misogyny briefing for teachers: This resource explains what is meant by the manosphere, why manosphere communities thrive, case studies, 5 tips to counteract misogynist views, links to an interactive parents guide to tackling misogyny. Of note, the 5 tips in this guide cover how to:

- understand the possible attractions of online misogyny
- understand the content
- avoid kneejerk reactions
- ask open questions
- remain patient and supportive.

www.flipsnack.com/internetmattersorg/online-misogyny-and-young-people-internet-matters/full-view.html

Childnet has designed a pack of online safety activities to use with 13-18 year olds. The activities, designed around the online experiences of women and girls, explore topics such as misogyny, online sexual harassment, and victim blaming.

Access the resource: [Exploring online experiences: life online for women and girls](#)

1decision has recently launched a free interactive assembly presentation on misogyny, which would be suitable for your KS2 pupils.

You can request it here: [Sample Assembly Packs](#)

Healthy Relationships Bookmarks and Posters

Swindon Soroptimists have developed a bookmark to help secondary schools in Swindon promote positive relationships. A poster is also available.
Swindon Soroptimists is the local club of an international, volunteer organisation that works through actions and advocacy to improve the lives of women and girls.
One of their ongoing key themes and projects is violence against women and to that end the 'Love Is / Love Is Not' bookmarks have been created to highlight the good and bad examples of relationship traits.
The bookmarks were previously distributed to all secondary schools in Swindon and Wiltshire.

Download a copy of the bookmark here.

Further copies of bookmarks and posters may be requested by schools, for use in PSHE lessons. Please contact Lydia Cardew, Project Officer with Swindon Soroptimists lcardew@yahoo.co.uk 01672 810214.

Further information and services

Information about further RSHE resources and relevant services is available on the Swindon Healthy Schools website: www.swindonhealthyschools.org/resources/RSHE%20resources%20February%202025.pd

School nursing
Remember that pupils can be referred to school nursing for support relating to any of these issues. You can make a referral by emailing: SwindonSchoolNurseTeam@swindon.gov.uk

Further support includes:
BeU Swindon provide mental health support teams in schools including 1:1 support, group support and also provide an online resource: Sandbox. https://beuswindon.co.uk/

Appendix 1: What should be covered in RSHE relating to misogyny?

Laying the foundations at KS1 and KS2

- At this age, aim to develop respectful attitudes by focusing on learning that supports inclusion and belonging.
- At KS1, 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 KS2, including gender stereotypes and how these can be unfair.
- Then at upper KS2, pupils could explore how these stereotypes can negatively impact 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.

The following topics are included in the DfE **statutory Relationships and Health Education guidance** for KS1 and KS2:

Respectful relationships:
- the importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs.
- that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority.
- what a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive.

Online relationships:
- people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not.
- the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online.
- how to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met.

Being safe: how to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so.

Internet safety and harms
- why social media, some computer games and online gaming, for example, are age restricted.
- that the internet can also be a negative place where online abuse, trolling, bullying and harassment can take place, which can have a negative impact on mental health.
- how to be a discerning consumer of information online including understanding that information, including that from search engines, is ranked, selected and targeted.
- where and how to report concerns and get support with issues online.

Statutory guidance for KS3 and 4

The following topics are included in the DfE **statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education guidance** for KS3 and 4:

Respectful relationships, including friendships:
- how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice).
- that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs.
- the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal.

Online and media:
- their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online.
- about online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online.
- what to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online.
- the impact of viewing harmful content.

The statutory guidance also requires that young people are made aware of 'relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught', including: violence against women and girls; extremism/radicalisation; hate crime.

Mental wellbeing

- how to critically evaluate when something they do or are involved in has a positive or negative effect on their own or others' mental health.

Internet safety and harms

- the similarities and differences between the online world and the physical world, including: the impact of unhealthy or obsessive comparison with others online (including through setting unrealistic expectations for body image), how people may curate a specific image of their life online, over-reliance on online relationships including social media, the risks related to online gambling including the accumulation of debt, how advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online.
- how to identify harmful behaviours online (including bullying, abuse or harassment) and how to report, or find support, if they have been affected by those behaviours.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024

The statutory KCSIE guidance stresses that '*schools and colleges play a crucial role in preventative education*' and that this is most effective in the context of a whole school approach that '*creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobic and sexual violence/harassment*'.

KCSIE outlines the importance of '*a planned programme of evidence-based RSHE delivered in regularly timetabled lessons and reinforced throughout the whole curriculum*'.

KCSIE lists the areas of statutory RSHE of key importance to safeguarding. These are also particularly relevant to addressing toxic masculinity and misogyny in the classroom:

- healthy and respectful relationships

- boundaries and consent

- stereotyping, prejudice and equality

- body confidence and self-esteem

- how to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour

- the concepts of — and laws relating to — sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so called 'honour'-based violence such as forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and how to access support, and what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable.

The KCSIE guidance also reminds us that: *"The Prevent duty should be seen as part of schools' and colleges' wider safeguarding obligations. Designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) and other senior leaders in education settings should familiarise themselves with the revised **Prevent duty guidance** for England and Wales, especially paragraphs 141-210, which are specifically concerned with education."*