

Sexual harassment and misogyny: a statement from St Helen and St Katharine and Abingdon School.

St Helen and St Katharine and Abingdon School share a commitment to the personal development of their students in the widest possible sense. Both schools promote a culture of mutual respect and equality and celebrate diversity. We are working together to support the students in our care and to share best practice in order to establish an environment in which students from both schools can develop positive relationships.

The issues of sexual harassment, misogyny and sexism have been brought to the forefront by the testimonies shared on the Everyone's Invited website and by the subsequent Ofsted review and report published in June 2021. We are committed to a close collaboration to address these issues and to implement the recommendations of the report. We are working to strengthen the measures we have in place in terms of training of staff and support for students. We have an ongoing review of the curriculum, safeguarding processes and PSHCE/PD to ensure that they meet the needs of the students in our care.

We foster strong messages of respect throughout our everyday school lives, through assemblies, chapel talks, lectures and discussions as well as PSHCE/PD. We are looking to increase the opportunities for our students to learn together how to navigate the complex landscape of relationships.

Both schools have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and misogyny and will always investigate any allegations that are raised. There are mechanisms in place at Abingdon and St Helen and St Katharine for students to raise any concerns and they are encouraged to make full use of them. Both schools have extensive support networks for students through independent school counsellors and their pastoral care systems. We appreciate that we, alongside society as a whole, have a lot more to do to address the issues of sexual harassment and misogyny in our wider community.

We recognise that navigating teenage years can be very difficult for some students, particularly with the additional pressure they feel as a result of social media. But that said, we expect high standards of conduct in all areas of school life, including collaboration beyond the curriculum and travel to and from school via the Joint Bus Service. The safety and wellbeing of our students is at the core of the mission of both schools.

We want our students to be able to enjoy their teenage years, to develop as individuals in a community where they are respected and they respect others. We fully appreciate our responsibility to guide our students, and together with parents, to make sure they understand the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and mutual respect. We look to all members of our communities to embrace the shared responsibility that we carry for the welfare of one another.