SUBMISSION FROM GIRLGUIDING SCOTLAND

GIRLGUIDING SCOTLAND: ENDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN SCHOOLS

Girlguiding Scotland is calling on the Scottish Government to take urgent action on the widespread but often hidden issue of sexual harassment in schools. In September we joined with Girlguiding and Girlguiding Cymru, to call on education ministers in Scotland, England and Wales to tackle this issue. Since then our petition has gathered nearly 5,000 signatures.

WHAT WE’RE CALLING FOR:

- Compulsory, high-quality Sex and Relationships Education covering consent, online abuse, gender equality and healthy relationships.
- All schools to have a duty to prevent and tackle sexual harassment and be held accountable
- National guidance to ensure schools know how to take a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment

OUR RESEARCH:

Research from Girlguiding’s annual Girls’ Attitude Survey has shown that sexual harassment is a top concern for girls and young women.

- Girls told us that sexual harassment in schools is widespread: 59% of girls and young women aged 11-21 say they have experienced sexual harassment at school, including sexual taunts and unwanted touching

- Girls said that the impact of sexual harassment is having a negative impact on their lives: 75% said anxiety about potentially experiencing sexual harassment affects their lives in some way including 25% saying that this prevents them from speaking up in class

- 90% of girls and young women want the Government to take action on issue

Find out more about the Girls’ Attitude Survey [here](#).
What our members say:

Susie, 18, is a Girlguiding Scotland member from Glasgow.

For Susie, secondary school was a frightening place and felt worlds away from the safe and supportive primary environment. Sexual harassment was rife and became an everyday part of school life, where girls were just expected to avoid certain parts of the building that were notorious for getting grabbed or cat-called.

“I was groped in corridors more times than I can remember. One corridor in particular was horrendous and everyone hated it - I had so many awful experiences there. When I was 15 a guy followed me and grabbed my ass whenever my back was turned. I also remember one time in particular, when I was 11, walking past a group of guys and they suddenly blocked the way and grabbed me till I almost had to punch my way past them. After I got through I started crying and remember feeling awful - it just felt so horrible. A girl followed me to ask if I was ok - I was mortified that she’d seen what happened. It was weird, as a girl you were expected just to put up with it, to admit it upset you reflected badly on you and not the boys.”
When asked about the support from teachers, Susie reiterates that all responsibility was placed on the girls: “Every winter we had something called social dance classes, where we’d be taught ceilidh dancing and things like that. You’d be partnered with a boy and, through the course of the dance, move from boy to boy. It was just a given that every time you got to the next boy he’d make a comment at you. It was so well known that the teachers brought in a rule that girls could wear leggings and long sleeve tops to those classes instead of our usual PE shorts and t-shirts. There was never a suggestion that the boys should stop making the comments - it was that the girls should cover up more. Looking back I realise how totally outrageous that attitude was!”

As Susie went through school things got slightly better - as she felt better able to stand up to the boys who tried it on, however doing this ran the risk of being further publically humiliated. “I remember walking down a corridor and a guy shouting ‘nice arse, want a shag’, I turned round and gave him the finger, so he replied ‘who said I was talking about you’. It was always lose-lose.”

“It was absolutely rife but teachers never said anything. I think a lot didn’t know how, it was too awkward for them, and I think a lot of the female teachers worried it would happen to them too - that the boys would harass them too. Wow - school really was a frightening place to be.”

Katie Horsburgh, Girlguiding Scotland member and Advocate has also created video sharing girls’ experiences of this issue which you can view here.