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GET IT RIGHT
FOR **GIRLS**

Challenging
misogynistic
attitudes among
children and
young people



Mary Matheson
Equality Committee Vice-Convener

In 2016, misogyny is a thriving form of communication. Adverts, song lyrics and belittling comments from influential public figures all play their part in promoting the increasingly casual use of misogynistic language across society.

Whether used knowingly or as a means of identifying with the ‘in crowd’, the attitude it promotes among the perpetrators and the impact it has on the targets can be both long lasting and serious.

This report shares our findings about misogynistic attitudes in education and offers advice on how we, as educators, can play a part in addressing this important issue.

Misogyny has no place in our schools or in the lives of our young people so let’s ‘Get it Right for Girls’ in the certain knowledge that by doing so, we also get it right for boys and for society.

“The culture of misogyny and sexist stereotyping on children and young people, both female and male, can be significant in hindering personal and social development...”

MISOGYNISTIC ATTITUDES AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

While there can be no doubt that there has been significant progress made in the journey towards gender equality within our society, much ground remains to be covered before we reach the desired destination.

In Scotland, the gender pay gap currently averages 11.5% (comparison of men’s full-time hourly earnings with women’s full-time hourly earnings, using the mean) or 32.4% (comparison of men’s full-time hourly earnings with women’s part-time hourly earnings, using the mean)¹. Meanwhile, only 29% of MPs, fewer than 35% of MSPs, 24% of councillors² and fewer than 36% of public board members are female³. In part, this gender imbalance within the contexts of employment and public life is a consequence of attitudinal prejudice. In the eyes of many in our society, women remain inferior to men.

The EIS is concerned about the prevalence of such attitudes within our schools, colleges and universities, and indeed, even in our nurseries. Clearly, misogyny - a dislike for, contempt of or belief in the inferiority of women - begins to take root in the early years of a child’s development, much of which is influenced by the home environment. Such attitudes, if unchallenged at home, or at school and college and beyond, can become firmly embedded.

The effect of such a culture of misogyny and sexist stereotyping on children and young people, both female and male, can be significant in hindering personal and social development in the short term, as well as having longer term damaging consequences for individuals and for society as a whole. With this in mind, it is important that EIS members are aware of the issue.

Some recent focus group research by the EIS has highlighted that misogynistic attitudes towards women and girls are evident in a variety of forms within educational establishments, from overt sexual bullying to casual sexist comments which some seek to trivialise as humour. Both boys and girls, and both men and women, can be the perpetrators of such behaviour, albeit by females to a lesser extent. Overall, women and girls are more likely to be the targets of such sexist behaviour.

The research findings suggest that educational establishments require more support to develop more consistent, coherent approaches to the promotion of gender equality and towards tackling the problem of the sexual harassment and bullying of young women and girls, and of boys and young men who are gay or who are judged by others to be failing to ‘conform’ to gender norms. The EIS is keen to make a contribution to ensuring that in every one of Scotland’s educational establishments, there is an ethos which is wholly gender inclusive.

This guidance is intended to support EIS members in addressing the issue at establishment level for the benefit of all learners, both female and male. It seeks to highlight the possible dangers of allowing misogynistic attitudes to prevail and to suggest some approaches which EIS members currently find useful in addressing the problem.

¹ <http://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/gap-statistics/>

² <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01250/SN01250.pdf>

³ <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/More-women-in-senior-roles-415.aspx>

LEGAL CONTEXT: THE EQUALITY ACT

The 2010 Equality Act identifies gender as a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are identified on the basis that those who share them are proven to be vulnerable to disadvantage within society. Schools and colleges are bound by the terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty, part of the 2010 Equality Act, to:

- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

THE ACT EXPLAINS THAT ADVANCING EQUALITY INVOLVES:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people;
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

These legal duties clearly have implications for educational establishments with regards to how they tackle misogyny.



RECOGNISING MISOGYNISTIC ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

Displays of misogyny among children and young people occur in a variety of forms and are demonstrated verbally, non-verbally and physically, in classrooms, corridors and social spaces within educational establishments.

EIS focus group participants reported a number of these:

- Casual use of mildly misogynistic language - 'girly' as an insult or pejorative term; 'man up' implying that masculinity is preferred to femininity
- Casual though often vindictive use of overtly sexualised and derogatory language - 'slut', 'skank' and 'whore' were widely used against girls or women staff
- 'Feminist' and 'feminism' considered as negative terms
- 'Feminazi' used to silence women and girls who speak from a feminist perspective
- Dismissive, contemptuous attitudes of some boys towards female pupils and staff, and towards their mothers (and sometimes acceptance or endorsement by male staff of such attitudes towards female colleagues)
- Objectification of women and girls on the basis of their looks
- Dismissive attitude that women and girls should have responsibility for menial domestic chores
- Mockery and derision when women and girls adopt non-stereotypical gender roles, for example as football fans, footballers, surgeons
- Criticism of young women who are sexually active compared with acceptance that young men are and/or should be
- Sexual entitlement issues arose in various guises - for example, overt sexual propositioning of girls and young women through to boys' pushing, grabbing and groping of girls
- Joking about the sexual abuse of and physical violence against, women and girls, or framing conversations about the issue in such a way as to blame victims
- Engagement with computer games which are demeaning in their portrayal of women and often normalise violence against women
- Sending/sharing through social media sexual images of women and girls either with or without consent
- Use of social media to target sexual innuendo at girls and young women.

“Casual though often vindictive use of overtly sexualised and derogatory language...”

DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES

Clearly misogynistic attitudes and behaviour carry with them some worrying consequences for both sexes, and those who identify as transgender or non-binary.

SEXUAL BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Much of what is described as misogyny constitutes bullying, the effects of which upon victims are well documented. Faced with sexual bullying which is offensive, abusive, intimidating and malicious in nature, and which represents an abuse of power, victims experience fear, anxiety and stress, loss of dignity, humiliation and low self-esteem. The threat that this poses to victims' health and wellbeing and on their educational outcomes, is undeniable.

Some of the behaviours which fall under the term 'sexual bullying' are actually criminal in nature - i.e. on a spectrum of harassment for which there are consequences in the adult world. Specialists in violence against women tend to denote behaviour which constitutes sexual bullying as harassment or assault. This is not designed to frighten parents or children but to create a culture of community sanctions or intolerance around such behaviour and thus prevent it.

There is also the threat of police involvement for individual behaviour in cases involving for example the non-consensual sharing of images or sexual assault, as well as reputational damage and possible legal redress within local authorities in which there is failure to uphold duty of care towards children.

GENDER POLICING

In addition, such treatment can result in individuals feeling pressured to conform to the expectations of those who perpetrate misogynistic attitudes and behaviour, rather than risk falling victim to it further. For example, research⁴ has highlighted that between age 11 to 15, girls and boys strive to develop identities which primarily conform to existing cultural norms in relation to social expectations of femininity and masculinity respectively. Boys and girls alike are quick to highlight negatively any deviation from established gender expectation by their peers either from members of the same or the opposite sex.

This gender policing and coping with the social backlash which follows lack of conformity, often in the form of peer-group bullying, requires great emotional effort on the part of young people. Many young people, both male and female, or those who identify as transgender or non-binary, who do not meet societal expectations in terms of gender suffer ongoing rejection, direct discrimination and abuse, the psychological effects of which can be deep-rooted and lasting.

LONG-TERM IMPACT ON SOCIETY

On a wider scale, the failure to challenge expressions of misogyny, either mild or marked, leads to the entrenchment of gender inequalities within society as a whole. Our children and young people are the parents, community members and employees of the future. Teachers and lecturers are their mentors and educators. Educational establishments must, therefore, have a role to play in counteracting misogynistic attitudes and behaviour among young people in order that they are not cemented further within homes and communities, workplaces and civic institutions.

"...victims experience fear, anxiety and stress, loss of dignity, humiliation and low self-esteem."

⁴ Hill & Lynch: 'The intensification of gender-related role expectations during early adolescence' (1983), and Crouter, Manke & McHale: 'The family context of gender intensification in early adolescence', Child Development (1995)

8 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In particular, the inter-relationship between misogyny and violence against women and girls continues to be of concern to the EIS. Violence against women is an extreme, but alarmingly commonplace, expression of misogynistic attitudes. Research⁵ has shown a strong link between attitudes towards gender and the perpetration of violence against women. For instance, men and boys who hold traditional attitudes about gender roles, believe in male authority and/or have 'sexually hostile attitudes' or 'victim blaming' attitudes towards women, are more likely to perpetrate violence against their intimate partners than those who do not subscribe to such views. Meanwhile, available data from the World Health Organisation suggests that nearly one in three women worldwide may experience sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.⁶

Violence against women is a term used by the Scottish Government to define a range of actions which harm or cause suffering and indignity to women and children. In the context of violence against women, 'violence' has a broader meaning than the normal dictionary definition. It encompasses a range of behaviours which can be physical in nature, but they also include emotional, psychological and sexual abuse, and behaviour which is coercive and controlling in nature.

They include but are not limited to:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, within the general community or in institutions, including: domestic abuse, rape, incest and child sexual abuse
- Sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in the public sphere
- Commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography and trafficking
- Dowry related violence

- Female genital mutilation
- Forced and child marriages
- Honour crimes.⁷ These actions are mainly, though certainly not exclusively, carried out by men against women and children, and at times, may be sought to be justified within some communities on the grounds of religious, social or cultural reasons. The different forms of violence have their roots in gender inequality and in the imbalanced power relations between men and women in society. They are therefore understood as gender-based violence and are interlinked.

This does not mean that women do not use violence or carry out the actions described above. Nor does it mean that men are not the victims of these actions. It merely recognises that statistically men are commonly the perpetrators, and women and children the victims.

The EIS as a trade union is committed to gender equality and the associated eradication of violence against women. We recognise the evidence which suggests that the prevention of violence occurs by tackling the root cause of the problem. That is to say that changing attitudes (primary prevention) and fostering community level intolerance and sanctions towards such misogynistic behaviours are required, a vision which has been promoted and enhanced by the Scottish Government's strategy, "Equally Safe: Preventing Violence against Women and Girls".⁸

We wish our members to regard the eradication of violence against women as a collective aim which is pursued within education through ethos, curriculum, and policy and practice within our establishments, in ways which solidly promote gender equality and seek to prevent young women and girls becoming, or continuing to be, victims of gender violence.

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⁵ See prevention on intimate partner violence, P.19 http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44350/1/9789241564007_eng.pdf?ua=1

⁶ http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/VAW_Prevalence.jpeg?ua=1

⁷ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/violence-women>

⁸ <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Making-Scotland-Equally-Safe-e2f.aspx>

GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE ECONOMY

A permissive approach to misogynistic attitudes and behaviour among children and young people will serve to further solidify existing gender inequalities within the economy. Allowing the perpetuation of dismissive, contemptuous attitudes towards women to go unchallenged will contribute to the continuation of occupational segregation within employment and the wider economy, and to the persistence of the associated gender pay gap. At present, female-dominated occupational and industrial sectors are low-paid and undervalued. According to statistics compiled by the feminist organisation Engender, in the UK currently:

- **62% of unpaid carers are women**
- **Twice as many female carers as male carers receive benefits, at a rate of only £1.70 per hour**
- **Twice as many women as men rely on benefits and tax credits**
- **Women are 95% of the lone parents who receive income support**
- **Women earn 12% less than men as full-time workers and 32% less than men part-time⁹**
- **Only 15% of senior police officers, 10% of UK national newspaper editors and 8% of Directors of FTSE firms are women.¹⁰**

Occupational segregation on the basis of gender occurs within the teaching profession also. Statistics obtained from the 2014 Scottish Government Teacher Census illustrate this as outlined in the table below.¹¹

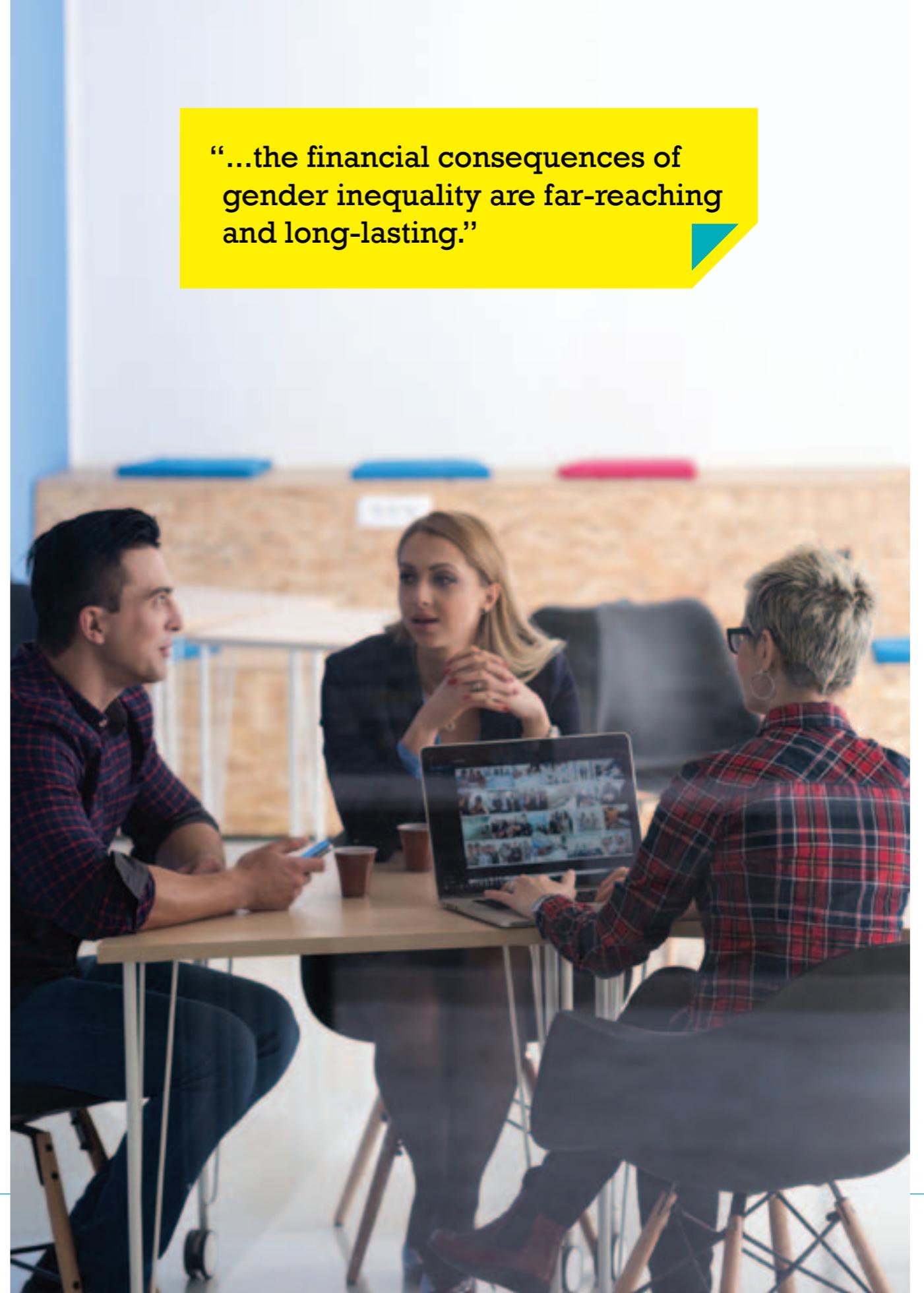
	Female %	Male %
Primary all grades	91	9
Primary Headteachers	87	13
Primary deputes	88	12
Part-time primary teachers	95	5
Primary supply teachers	91	9
Secondary all grades	63	37
Secondary Headteachers	39	61
Secondary deputes	54	46
Part-time secondary teachers	82	18
Secondary supply teachers covering a vacancy	60	40
Local authority directors of education	34	66

Women's lower earnings over a lifetime usually lead to lower savings, smaller pensions and less economic independence than men; therefore the financial consequences of gender inequality are far-reaching and long-lasting.

In addition, a lack of financial resources or economic independence can make it harder for women experiencing violence or abuse in an intimate relationship to move on; and financial inequality can create another dimension to domestic abuse in situations where one partner seeks to control the other through controlling resources.

A gendered economic landscape such as this is both unjust and economically imprudent. Education has to play its part in the transformation of this uneven territory.

“...the financial consequences of gender inequality are far-reaching and long-lasting.”



⁹ <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Making-Scotland-Equally-Safe-e2f.aspx>

¹⁰ <http://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Engender-briefing-1-Women-politics-and-power.pdf>

¹¹ Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland, No.5 2 Edition <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/12/7590/1>

MISOGYNISTIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE

Another consequence of a culture which allows contempt for women to go unchecked is disproportionately low levels of participation by women in public life.

Across political parties, misogynistic attitudes towards women in public life, as reflected in media coverage, continue to undermine the democratic process. While this is a consequence of gender inequality, it also further contributes to the perpetuation of the raft of gender inequalities which exist within the wide variety of social and economic contexts previously discussed.

In the UK, female politicians are routinely subjected to sexist comments in the press and other media. Women MPs and MSPs are frequently marginalised by meagre

newspaper and media broadcast coverage in comparison to that afforded to their male counterparts and, often, to their wives' wearing of fashion and such like.

Such demeaning treatment of women in this way has a damaging impact on the participation of women in public life, and therefore, on society in general. Only 29% of MPs and fewer than 35% of MSPs in Scotland are female, and only 24% of councillors¹² and fewer than 36% of public board members¹³. Clearly, there is a need to address this stark under-representation of women in public life and the negative attitudes which inhibit women's much needed participation. Gender balanced participation is essential for bringing about gender sensitive policy within our public institutions.



“Only 29% of MPs and fewer than 35% of MSPs in Scotland are female”

¹² <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01250/SN01250.pdf>

¹³ <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/More-women-in-senior-roles-415.aspx>



“...there is a need to address this stark under-representation of women in public life and the negative attitudes which inhibit women's much needed participation...”

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES TO COMBAT MISOGYNY AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Undoubtedly, all sectors of the education system have a part to play in challenging existing gender inequality and in striving for equality.

EIS focus group discussions on the issue highlighted a number of strategies that may be deployed at establishment level to address gender inequality.

Policy and practice

- Whole school policy (which articulates with local authority service plans in the case of schools), the precise language of which specifically addresses issues related to gender equality and violence against women, and how establishments will tackle this
- Careful analysis of data by gender - e.g. suspension rates, attendance, attainment, support for learning referrals - to inform policy and practice and identify inadvertent discrimination.

Ethos

- School mission statements aligned with local authority mission statements which reflect commitment to gender equality and to which pupils have contributed
- Sensitivity to existing and safeguarding against further gender stereotyping, of both girls and boys, from early years through to secondary - reflected in for example classroom resources, assigning of roles and responsibilities, and class groupings
- Regular and open discussion with pupils on issues related to gender equality for example: use of language which is derogatory towards women, violence against women and pornography
- Assemblies which explicitly focus on the issue
- Consistent approaches to the problem by all female and male staff across the school

- Teachers challenging 'group-think' among children and young people in relation to conventional attitudes towards gender
- Peer to peer anti-sexism education
- Agree with pupils a list of derogatory words and phrases that are unacceptable with all knowing the reasons why
- Discussions around subject choice.

The curriculum

- Explicit exploration of the topic within subjects such as Modern Studies, Religious Education, English, History, Drama, Personal and Social Education and Art
- Tackling of gender issues as they relate to body image, size, self-esteem and confidence through Health and Wellbeing
- Learning designed to address issues such as gender equality, body image, media portrayal of women and human trafficking
- Cross curricular work themed around 16 Days of Action highlighting violence against women in November and International Women's Day in March
- Consider how misogyny as gender stereotyping may be impacting on student subject choice and take steps to tackle this.



“Regular and open discussion with pupils on issues related to gender equality”

CPD provision

- Equality and diversity training for teachers and support staff which explicitly includes content on gender equality and violence against women
- Adequate information and guidance on equality legislation
- Guidance on legal issues around the sharing of images and accompanying child protection issues
- Greater links between equality issues, including gender equality, and the Professional Update process.

Partnership working

- Supporting parents to understand the issues, particularly with regards to the use of social media for the purposes of sexual bullying and harassment, and as a child protection issue
- Meaningful and sustained engagement with voluntary organisations whose specialist knowledge can help embed anti-sexism education across the whole school
- Visits from the police to highlight the seriousness of sexual bullying, misogynistic abuse on social media and violence against women
- Education Scotland addressing the issue of gender equality within HGIOS (How Good is our School?) and inspection and review.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR EIS MEMBERS

USE this guidance as the basis of discussion on the issue of misogynistic attitudes among young people at EIS branch level

RAISE any emerging issues with the school management team

SEEK review of current establishment policy and practice where required in light of the advice

CONSULT with the local EIS Equality Rep and/or the Local Association or Branch Secretary in the event that additional advice/support is needed

REQUEST access where necessary to relevant Professional Learning opportunities

SHARE any examples of strongly gender inclusive practice with the EIS Equality Department

CONTINUE to monitor policies in terms of their effectiveness in eradicating gender discrimination and promoting equality.



USEFUL CONTACTS

EIS Equality Reps

EIS Equality Reps can offer advice on a range of equality issues, including those related to gender.

for contact details of your Equality Rep:
www.eis.org.uk/eqcontacts.htm



Zero Tolerance

Zero Tolerance is a Scottish charity working to end men's violence against women by promoting gender equality and by challenging attitudes which normalise violence and abuse.

www.zerotolerance.org.uk



Engender

Engender is a Scottish feminist organisation campaigning for equal opportunities for men and women, equal access to power and resources, and equal safety and security from harm.

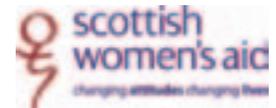
www.engender.org.uk



Scottish Women's Aid

Scottish Women's Aid is the lead organisation in Scotland working towards the prevention of domestic abuse. We play a vital role campaigning and lobbying for effective responses to domestic abuse.

www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk



White Ribbon Scotland

White Ribbon Scotland is a campaign to involve men in tackling violence against women. It is a joint initiative by a coalition of individuals and groups of men around Scotland.

www.whiteribbonScotland.org.uk





Emma Ritch, Executive Director, Engender

“The education of girls and young women is hampered by the misogyny that pervades Scotland’s schools and colleges. Attempts to encourage girls to consider taking male-dominated subjects, prepare for non-traditional occupations or careers, or to develop the confidence to start their own businesses, are constrained by the sexist “banter”, sexual harassment, and sexualised bullying that many girls experience. Some progress towards gender equality has been made, but significant challenges remain.

Before we can effectively challenge norms about girls’ and boys’ and men’s and women’s roles in life, we must call time on misogyny in places of education. Teachers, lecturers, school administrators, and local authorities all have a role in making that happen.”



Laura Tomson, Co-Director, Zero Tolerance

“From subtle stereotyping to gendered insults and sexual harassment, misogyny functions to support gender inequality and take power from women and girls. As they go through school, misogynistic attitudes teach girls that they are worth less than boys, that they have fewer rights and limited career choices. The impact on girls’ wellbeing and life chances can be immense. Misogyny is not ‘boys being boys’ and it is never ‘just a bit of fun’.

Nobody wants to think of their own behaviour as misogynistic. But sexism and stereotypes permeate our society, and pretending they don’t affect us doesn’t make them go away. We all need to question our assumptions, language and behaviours. Those working with children and young people have a particular opportunity to both demonstrate and encourage positive, respectful treatment of women and girls.”



Larry Flanagan, EIS General Secretary

Sexist language and behaviour is unacceptable in school and college communities. Whilst educational establishments cannot eradicate the misogyny which exists in our society, they can and do play a vital role in challenging it; they do so by promoting a culture of equality and respect, in which all children and young people are able to flourish and no-one is limited by their gender.

Misogyny has no place in the Scottish education system. We know that teachers care deeply about equality and social justice, but where misogynistic attitudes prevail, such values can be undermined.

It is time for everyone to try harder to Get It Right for Girls.



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