



Friday, 11th June, 2021

Dear All,

We feel a deep sense of shame that Rossall School is one of almost [3,000 UK schools](#) referenced at least once within the 16,500 anonymised testimonies included on the *Everyone's Invited* website.

Every testimony constitutes a tragedy and so it is an association that is devastatingly sad. I take this opportunity to apologise to any present or past pupil who may feel that they have been let down by the School either directly or indirectly. This is not a moment which I have any intention of allowing to pass by in silence, for to do so would be a betrayal of those young people within our communities who have already suffered so much.

The personal courage of those who have bravely shared their testimonies on the website *Everyone's Invited* must now result in a collective effort to ensure that all young people feel safe, whether they are in school or beyond. This campaign has highlighted both the enormous scale of the problem which society now faces and the utterly devastating consequences that coercive and abusive behaviour has inflicted upon so many young people. It is the case that online pornography has had an especially pernicious impact upon children but many of the testimonies recorded on this particular website detail events that arose from cultural sexism and society's normalisation, or tolerance, of language that is abhorrent insomuch as it promotes a disrespectful attitude towards others. Objectification serves only to dehumanise.

All schools are grappling with issues that result from this deep rooted societal malaise but they have a responsibility to demonstrate leadership and commit to being part of the solution. In April, the government asked Ofsted to undertake a rapid review of sexual harassment in schools and colleges after many thousands of anonymised testimonials were published on *Everyone's Invited*. The resultant report entitled *Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges* observes that 'The issue is so widespread that it needs addressing for all children and young people'. It concludes that all schools need to 'act as though sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening, even when there are no specific reports'.

Here at Rossall, we are adopting a Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy which models a whole-school approach designed to ensure an educational context which minimises the risk of such behaviour; particularly when children are socialising outside school and are susceptible to extraneous influences. We have recently revised our sex and relationship teaching in light of both the government's new statutory guidance and this policy. The testimony of so many young people has served to demonstrate the importance of ensuring an unremitting focus upon issues such as coercive behaviour and consent.



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Workshops, discussions, external speakers and dedicated curriculum time are all designed to provide the best possible opportunity for our children to be kind, compassionate, respectful and empowered. Schools must work together with families on this issue and it is the case that the government needs to think very carefully about the measures which now need to be put in place to protect young people. The commodification of sex within a digital age is just one area which the government has yet to legislate upon effectively.

Rossall has safeguarding protocols and procedures in place and governors review these annually. We listen to our children and their voice is reflected in the steps that we take to continuously improve all aspects of our provision. Our statutory policies comply with ISI reporting standards and OFSTED standards for boarding schools and these may be downloaded from our website. Our most recent qualitative ISI inspection (2019) noted the excellent quality of pastoral care within the school and yet we are in no way complacent. As you are aware, we are determined to challenge any behaviour which falls short of the very high expectations which are enshrined in the ethos and values of this community.

Distance of time does not serve to ameliorate the incredible pain felt by those who have experienced any form of peer-on-peer abuse and it is important for individuals in all schools to come forward if they are affected by these issues. We work very closely with external authorities such as the Safeguarding Children Partnership for Lancashire and we seek their support and guidance. All schools have a duty to treat disclosures with discretion and sensitivity and a legal responsibility to report any allegations of criminal behaviour to the police.

To conclude, we seek inspiration from the remarkable words of those who have done so much to highlight harassment and abuse over recent months:

To reconcile is to understand both sides, to listen and try our best to understand people's experiences, thoughts, and actions. Reconciliation does not mean to 'forgive and forget' but to 'forgive and go forward'. Together we are building on the mistakes of the past and working towards reconciliation and creating a new future.

Everyone's invited

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeremy Quartermain". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Jeremy" on the left and "Quartermain" on the right, connected by a flourish.

Jeremy Quartermain
Headmaster



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