# Sexual offences in Norfolk schools rise sharply with youngest victims aged under six



Concerns surrounding sexual offences in schools have reached alarming levels in Norfolk, as highlighted by a recent investigation revealing that 444 sexual offences have been reported since 2020. The data, obtained through a Freedom of Information request, has prompted Norfolk's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Sarah Taylor, to express her "grave concerns" regarding the situation. The reported figures show that nearly 70% of the victims were girls, with primary schools witnessing 14% of these incidents. Disturbingly, some allegations involve children under six accused of serious crimes such as rape and sexual assault.

The figures paint a troubling picture of peer-on-peer abuse, particularly among younger children. The statistics reveal that while 63 offences occurred in primary schools, a staggering 297 were reported at secondary schools. Notably, the majority of suspects were aged between 11 and 15, highlighting a disturbing trend of increasingly young offenders. Comparing these figures to past data, between 2016 and 2020, Norfolk Constabulary documented 279 sexual offences on school grounds, which indicates a significant rise in reported incidents over recent years.

In addressing the current crisis, Taylor has been actively engaging with education leaders and Norfolk County Council's children's services to develop a comprehensive action plan aimed at tackling sexual violence within schools. The PCC has emphasised the need for long-term changes to create safer educational environments, stating, “That even one child might suffer such serious sexual offences while in what should be one of the safest of places, school, is a grave concern.” This sentiment is echoed by Scott Lyons, a teacher and secretary of the Norfolk branch of the National Education Union, who warns that external factors must be examined as they appear to be influencing the sexualised behaviour of children, particularly those under ten years old.

Adding to these concerns is the fact that many incidents of sexual violence go unreported, potentially making the current figures merely the tip of the iceberg. A previous report indicated that between 2018 and 2020, over 6,300 sexual assault and harassment cases were reported in and around schools across England and Wales, with around 40% of suspected perpetrators aged between 10 and 17. Such data underscores the pervasive nature of sexual misconduct in educational settings and the urgent need for preventative measures.

To combat these issues, Norfolk Police are set to launch a new scheme aimed at equipping schools with educational resources to address behaviours that lead to allegations of sexual offences. This initiative marks a continuation of efforts, including the recently concluded Bystander Intervention Programme, which trained students and school staff to actively challenge inappropriate behaviour. This programme, which ran from February 2022 to July 2024, reached over 14,000 students across 116 educational institutions in the region.

The necessity for enhanced safeguarding measures has never been more apparent, especially given that nearly half of all recorded sexual assault victims in Norfolk are under 18, with a significant number aged ten or younger. Practitioners in the education sector are calling for an urgent review of safeguarding protocols and an emphasis on teaching consent to schoolchildren, aiming at instilling respect and understanding from a young age.

As the dialogue continues, it is crucial for educational authorities to engage proactively with the issue, considering the wider societal influences that contribute to these disturbing trends. The hope remains that comprehensive interventions will pave the way for a safer future for all students, ensuring that schools can indeed be the safe havens they are meant to be.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4grzkkpdwdo), [[2]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/crime/20718707.revealed-nearly-300-sex-offences-recorded-norfolk-school-grounds-past-five-years/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4grzkkpdwdo), [[2]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/crime/20718707.revealed-nearly-300-sex-offences-recorded-norfolk-school-grounds-past-five-years/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4grzkkpdwdo), [[3]](https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/nearly-half-of-all-rape-and-sexual-assault-victims-in-norfolk-9404638/), [[4]](https://www.channel4.com/news/revealed-over-6000-sex-offences-reported-in-and-around-schools-in-three-years)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4grzkkpdwdo), [[5]](https://www.norfolk-pcc.gov.uk/news/bystander-intervention-programme-tackles-sexual-harassment-in-schools/), [[6]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/education/20650178.38-norfolk-schools-university-named-students-accounts-sex-abuse/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4grzkkpdwdo), [[3]](https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/nearly-half-of-all-rape-and-sexual-assault-victims-in-norfolk-9404638/), [[4]](https://www.channel4.com/news/revealed-over-6000-sex-offences-reported-in-and-around-schools-in-three-years)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4grzkkpdwdo), [[3]](https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/nearly-half-of-all-rape-and-sexual-assault-victims-in-norfolk-9404638/), [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56558487)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4grzkkpdwdo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/crime/20718707.revealed-nearly-300-sex-offences-recorded-norfolk-school-grounds-past-five-years/> - Between 2016 and 2020, Norfolk Constabulary recorded 279 sexual offences on school grounds, as revealed by a Freedom of Information request. The majority of suspects were aged 11-16, with 98% of known perpetrators being male. Despite the high number of incidents, only 91 cases resulted in a positive resolution. Schools have been urged to enhance their safeguarding measures and promote the importance of consent among students.
3. <https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/nearly-half-of-all-rape-and-sexual-assault-victims-in-norfolk-9404638/> - Between September 2023 and September 2024, Norfolk Police recorded 3,280 rape or sexual assault offences, with nearly half of the victims aged under 18. Of these, 1,120 were aged between 11 and 17, and 400 were aged 10 or under. The data indicates a significant number of young victims, highlighting the need for increased support and intervention for vulnerable children.
4. <https://www.channel4.com/news/revealed-over-6000-sex-offences-reported-in-and-around-schools-in-three-years> - From 2018 to 2020, over 6,300 allegations of sexual assault and harassment were reported in and around schools across England and Wales, averaging at least five offences daily. Notably, 40% of suspected perpetrators were aged between 10 and 17, with some as young as four. These figures underscore the widespread nature of sexual misconduct in educational settings and the urgent need for comprehensive preventive measures.
5. <https://www.norfolk-pcc.gov.uk/news/bystander-intervention-programme-tackles-sexual-harassment-in-schools/> - The Bystander Intervention Programme, funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk, ran from February 2022 to July 2024. It trained over 14,000 students and more than 2,000 staff across 116 schools and colleges to become active bystanders against sexual harassment. The programme aimed to instil confidence in students to challenge inappropriate behaviour and foster a safer school environment.
6. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/education/20650178.38-norfolk-schools-university-named-students-accounts-sex-abuse/> - A list compiled by the 'Everyone's Invited' movement includes 38 Norfolk schools and the University of East Anglia, based on testimonies from current and former students about sexual abuse experiences. The list highlights the prevalence of sexual misconduct in educational institutions and the need for systemic change to protect students and address the culture of silence surrounding such issues.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56558487> - Over 8,000 allegations of sexual violence and abuse have been reported by school pupils on the 'Everyone's Invited' website. The BBC reports that 'rape culture' is a pervasive issue in schools, with many perpetrators being peers or from the same social groups. The findings have prompted calls for comprehensive reviews of safeguarding practices and the implementation of effective measures to combat sexual misconduct in educational settings.