# Schools in England focus more on tackling misogyny amidst funding and social challenges



Teachers in England are increasingly concerned about tackling misogyny and sexism in schools, a new report by the Children’s Commissioner reveals, highlighting that such social issues now overshadow worries about falling educational standards. Dame Rachel De Souza, who leads the Commissioner’s office, will use a conference to spotlight that schools are prioritising combating social problems over core instruction in basic subjects like English. The 110-page report, drawing on responses from nearly 90% of schools contacted across England, shows that secondary schools are almost twice as worried about sexism and misogyny as they are about the curriculum itself.

The findings suggest schools are deeply troubled by challenges outside their traditional remit, notably social services funding, online safety, and pupil wellbeing. Dame Rachel emphasises this broader context, pointing out that 81% of secondary schools see insufficient funding for local social services as a barrier to student achievement. Child and adolescent mental health services also rank as a top concern for schools, with 70% of primary and 78% of secondary schools flagging the issue. Moreover, secondary schools express more concern about the funding of external services than their own budgets. The attendance crisis remains paramount, with 39,000 children reported as receiving no education, prompting Dame Rachel to call fixing school attendance the government’s "single biggest issue."

This heightened focus on social issues coincides with troubling data on academic outcomes and student wellbeing: over a third of pupils fail to pass GCSEs in English and maths, fewer than two-thirds report enjoying school, and nearly one million children were referred to mental health services. Additional social challenges are stark, including 95,000 children with a parent in prison and 164,000 living in temporary housing. Dame Rachel frames her report as a blueprint for a new wave of education reform, spotlighting the complex, intertwined barriers today’s pupils face.

The report’s emphasis on sexism and misogyny aligns with broader concerns voiced by educators and unions. Surveys by the NASUWT teachers' union reveal that 70% of female teachers have endured misogyny in schools, describing a culture rife with sexual harassment and intimidatory behaviour by male pupils. Some teachers report that boys influenced by the ‘incel’ subculture or figures like Andrew Tate openly refuse to engage with female teachers, reflecting a worrying entrenched sexism within school environments. The National Education Union’s general secretary, Daniel Kebede, has called for an independent inquiry into this rise of misogyny among boys and young men, underscoring concerns about easy access to aggressive online pornography and the insufficient government response to regulate harmful content.

Data from Vodafone’s commissioned research suggests that online platforms exacerbate this climate, with 70% of teachers observing an increase in sexist language over the past year. The study also noted widespread exposure to misogynistic material due to social media algorithms, with 69% of boys encountering such content and 42% of parents overhearing sons repeat degrading remarks about women. A poll involving 6,000 secondary teachers reported that over one-third had witnessed misogynistic behaviour from pupils recently, and 40% felt underprepared to manage the issue.

Efforts to address the problem are emerging at local government levels: London’s Mayor, Sadiq Khan, has written to all primary schools in the city urging action against the “pernicious influence” of misogynistic figures like Andrew Tate. City Hall has funded a £1 million programme educating children in healthy relationships and respect, offering online training for teachers and workshops for pupils aimed at reducing violence against women and promoting equality.

Despite growing awareness, the challenge remains formidable. The intersection of social issues, funding shortfalls in key public services, and harmful online influences creates an environment where schools struggle to focus solely on education delivery. Dame Rachel’s report underscores the urgent need for a coordinated approach that supports schools not only in teaching essential academic skills but also in tackling misogyny, safeguarding mental health, and addressing the social conditions that impede young people’s success.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15074677/Schools-sexism-misogyny-diversity-curriculum-Childrens-Commissioner.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yr0zw65lro)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15074677/Schools-sexism-misogyny-diversity-curriculum-Childrens-Commissioner.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15074677/Schools-sexism-misogyny-diversity-curriculum-Childrens-Commissioner.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yr0zw65lro)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/apr/16/female-teachers-misogyny-schools-culture-sexual-harassment-classrooms-incel), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crm3x92mpdxo), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/apr/05/teachers-union-leader-calls-for-inquiry-into-misogyny-among-young-men-in-uk)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/02/06/sexist-language-increasing-schools-boys-misogyny-online/), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yr0zw65lro)
* Paragraph 6 – [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c62ryze4g2qo)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15074677/Schools-sexism-misogyny-diversity-curriculum-Childrens-Commissioner.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/apr/16/female-teachers-misogyny-schools-culture-sexual-harassment-classrooms-incel), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/apr/05/teachers-union-leader-calls-for-inquiry-into-misogyny-among-young-men-in-uk)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15074677/Schools-sexism-misogyny-diversity-curriculum-Childrens-Commissioner.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/apr/16/female-teachers-misogyny-schools-culture-sexual-harassment-classrooms-incel> - A survey by the NASUWT teachers' union revealed that 70% of female teachers have experienced misogyny in UK schools. The poll highlighted a significant culture of sexual harassment and misogyny in classrooms, with nearly 60% of respondents reporting such experiences from pupils. The union expressed concern over the influence of the 'incel' subculture on teenage boys and the lack of government initiatives to address this issue. Teachers reported various forms of misogyny, including intimidatory behaviour, comments about ability, and sexual and physical violence.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crm3x92mpdxo> - A poll by the NASUWT teaching union found that almost three in five teachers believe social media use has negatively affected behaviour in schools. The survey of 5,800 UK teachers identified influencers like Andrew Tate as contributing to increased misogyny and sexism among pupils. Teachers reported instances where boys, influenced by such figures, refused to engage with female teachers. The Department for Education acknowledged the issue and is supporting teachers to tackle the impact of harmful online content on children.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/02/06/sexist-language-increasing-schools-boys-misogyny-online/> - Research commissioned by Vodafone found that 70% of teachers have observed a rise in sexist language in classrooms over the past year, with 69% of boys encountering posts promoting misogyny online. The study highlighted that AI-powered algorithms on social media platforms often expose boys to harmful content, even when searching for unrelated material. Additionally, 42% of parents reported hearing their sons make inappropriate comments influenced by online content, including sexual, violent, or degrading remarks about women and girls.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yr0zw65lro> - A survey commissioned by BBC News indicated that more than a third of secondary teachers reported witnessing misogynistic behaviour from pupils in the past week. Approximately 40% of these teachers felt ill-equipped to handle such conduct. The survey, which involved 6,000 secondary teachers, underscores the growing concern over misogyny in schools and the need for effective strategies to address it.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/apr/05/teachers-union-leader-calls-for-inquiry-into-misogyny-among-young-men-in-uk> - Daniel Kebede, general secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), called for an independent inquiry into the rise of sexism and misogyny among boys and young men in UK schools. He expressed concern over the ease with which pupils access aggressive pornography and the influence of figures like Andrew Tate. Kebede criticised the government's lack of intervention and urged for regulation of big tech companies to prevent young people from accessing harmful material.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c62ryze4g2qo> - The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has written to every primary school in London urging them to counter the 'pernicious influence' of misogynists like Andrew Tate. City Hall has funded a £1 million programme to educate children about healthy and respectful relationships, aiming to reduce violence against women and girls. The initiative includes online courses for teachers to deliver classes and workshops for children aged nine to 11, focusing on recognising harmful behaviour and promoting equality and respect.