



Teaching resource guidance

The NSPCC's Underwear Rule campaign helps parents of 5-9 year-olds keep their children safe from abuse. It takes a potentially tricky subject and gives parents the tools to talk about it in an engaging and age-appropriate way.

These teaching resources support teachers and practitioners to deliver the same 'stay safe' messages to children.

The central message of PANTS (which acts like a green cross code for staying safe from abuse) is:



These downloadable resources include:

- an easy-to-use lesson plan and presentation that's age-appropriate for young children
- activities for the lesson

On our website you will find:

- a letter for parents and text for a newsletter
- guidance regarding curriculum links in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- a reading list
- support for parents or children with learning difficulties

By using this resource schools are able to:

- support children to seek help and safety
- challenge myths surrounding sexual abuse

Sexual abuse can have a detrimental effect on all areas of a child's life, including their ability to take part in school activities. And while 'sexual abuse' isn't mentioned explicitly in the materials, all the lessons within the resource have been designed to help children stay safe.

The lesson has been written to meet the requirements for personal and social curricula in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Introduction to the lesson plan

The Underwear Rule teaching resource consists of one core lesson that is suitable for Early Years/Foundation/PS1-4 and Key Stage 1. It is written in an easy-to-follow format, giving learning objectives, resources and methodology.

For teachers who feel they would like, or need, to devote more time to PANTS, we've provided a range of activities in the Additional Resources.

Further information can be found on the sexual abuse pages of the NSPCC website.

Preparation

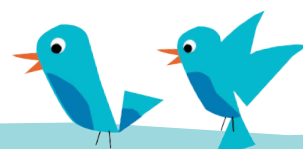
Before carrying out the lesson, we'd recommend teachers let parents know that it is being covered and take the time to understand sexual abuse and its impact. Some ways of achieving this:

- Senior staff should raise awareness with parents and carers that they will be teaching the Underwear Rule – a template letter can be viewed [here](#).
- You may want to provide leaflets for parents to help them consolidate the Underwear Rule lesson at home. Leaflets can be downloaded from [here](#). You can also order posters from the same place. Leaflets are available in different languages or for parents of children with learning difficulties.
- Senior staff should discuss with staff any concerns raised and highlight sources of support and information, including refreshing child protection procedures, and listening to disclosures.
- Attend a short training course – a one hour slot during planning sessions, or specialised training, delivered locally or from national providers.
- A video to explain the Underwear Rule to deaf children is available [here](#).

Classroom practice

The topic covers some sensitive issues and can be challenging for both children and staff. It's important to remember that some children in your group/class may have experienced abuse, or might know someone who has.

It's important to remind children of who they can talk to or where they can get help if they need. Remind the children of who, in the school, they can talk to. It is important that staff are available to talk and prepared for any disclosures that might be made.



Abuse in schools

Most sexual abuse isn't reported, detected or prosecuted. Most children don't tell anyone that they're being sexually abused. It's a crime usually only witnessed by the abuser and the victim.

Recognising the signs that indicate a child might be suffering from abuse is challenging. Working out what's going on – especially if the child won't talk or is too young to communicate what's happening – can be very difficult.

What signs might I see?

- Changes in the child's behaviour – all children are different and behave in different ways, but you may notice changes in behaviour over time
- Changes to school achievement and progress
- Talking about sexual acts or using sexually explicit language
- Sexual contact with other children or showing adult-like sexual behaviour or knowledge
- Becoming withdrawn or clingy
- Changes in personality
- Becoming more insecure than previously observed
- Using toys or objects in a sexual way
- Changes in eating habits
- Inexplicable fear of particular places or people
- Regression to younger behaviours
- Becoming secretive or reluctant to share things with you

In isolation, each of these might be part of a child's normal development. But if you see your child behaving in more than one of these ways, it may be a sign of something more serious and you should raise a concern with your designated senior child protection lead.

The Preventative Curriculum in Schools

Ongoing NSPCC (NI – Keep Safe) research demonstrates that child abuse, bullying and domestic violence to have a pervasive and detrimental impact on children and young people.

Schools are seen as having an important role in the delivery of the preventative curriculum, teaching children the knowledge and skills they need to protect themselves from all forms of abuse.

It is suggested that abuse is still under-reported by children. This is a problem that is often compounded by barriers to seeking help, including not being listened to or believed by adults.

The Underwear Rule teaching resource aims to help schools, teachers and children to address some of these issues. This supports the preventative curriculum and a school's legal obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of its pupils.

Duty to report

Schools have a duty to report concerns about abuse to their Designated Senior Child Protection lead (DSCP), and to follow guidance in their child protection policies. Further sources of help can be found by accessing social services, the police or the NSPCC.

If you think a child is in immediate danger:

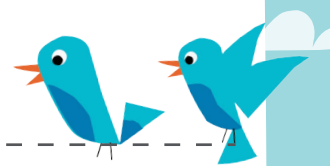
Don't delay – call the police on 999, or call the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000, straight away.

If you're worried about a child, but unsure how severe the problem might be, you should still talk to us.

Our counsellors are trained to help, and to spot the possible signs of abuse or neglect.



Abuse in schools



What can schools do?

Schools can provide children with the skills to recognise abusive behaviour and understand that abusive relationships are never acceptable or right.

Schools can support children by:

- Introducing a whole school ethos that demonstrates that abuse in all its different forms is unacceptable
- Responding to disclosures and child protection concerns quickly and efficiently
- Promoting a listening school ethos
- Offering appropriate support for children and staff dealing with abuse
- Offering children opportunities to build self esteem and confidence and to develop respectful relationships
- Working with outside providers to develop a broad range of curriculum enhancement activities
- Participating in high quality child protection training for children and staff
- Highlighting children's rights

Reporting concerns

While the Underwear Rule teaching resources do not talk explicitly about abuse, the activities and topics covered might raise issues or provide opportunities for children to talk about concerns or worries they have.

Each school will have its own policy and procedures for dealing with child protection issues, but it is important that each member of staff understands their responsibility to report concerns, and the procedures they will need to follow if they are told about or suspect abuse.

Abuse is one of the very worst things that can ever happen to a child, but it's not always easy to pick up the signs, and often a child might not even know that what's happening is wrong.

Additional information on how to report abuse can be found [here](#) on our website.

Responding to disclosures

As a result of the issues raised, a child might disclose that they're suffering from abuse, or are aware of it happening to others. Any disclosure of abuse should be treated as a potential child protection concern, and reported to the designated child protection lead in line with the school's procedures.

Points to remember when listening to and dealing with disclosure:

- Actively listen, do not look shocked or disbelieving.
- Stay calm.
- Take what the child is saying seriously.
- Do not ask for detail.
- Reassure the child that they are doing the right thing.
- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Tell the child that you'll have to share this information.
- Explain what will happen next
- Record the information as quickly as possible – facts not opinion.
- Sign and date everything you record.

If you're unsure of the procedures speak to your designated child protection lead, social services or the NSPCC.

For further information please visit the following links on the NSPCC website:

[What is sexual abuse?](#)

[Research and resources](#)

[Signs, symptoms and effects of sexual abuse](#)

[What to do if you suspect sexual abuse](#)

[Reporting abuse](#)