



# Blackfen School for Girls

Raising aspirations - releasing potential

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Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you today on something which has been very high profile in the media over the last few days – sexual harassment and abuse in education settings. I know how much the reports, accounts and testimonies we have seen have affected us all. As a result, the government have set up a new helpline to support potential victims of sexual harassment and abuse in education settings.

The dedicated number, run by the NSPCC, went live today to provide both children and adults who are victims of sexual abuse in schools with the appropriate support and advice. This includes how to contact the police and report crimes if they wish. The helpline will also provide support to parents and professionals too.

The government has also asked Ofsted to undertake an immediate review of safeguarding policies in state and independent schools. The review will look at the extent and the severity of the issue and ensure schools have appropriate processes in place to allow students to report concerns freely, knowing these will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and appropriately. As Head Teacher I am fully supportive of this review.

Ofsted will make sure there is sufficient guidance on how schools should deal with sexual harassment and violence allegations, and whether the current inspection regimes in both state and private schools are strong enough to address concerns and promote the welfare of children.

Ofsted will work with representatives from social care, police, victim support groups, school and college leaders and the Independent Schools Council. The review will conclude by the end of May 2021 and will seek to establish where safeguarding arrangements and processes are good and have worked well and where improvements are needed.

This Government is committed to ensuring victims feel supported to refer the most serious allegations to the police via the helpline, safe in the knowledge that everything possible will be done to bring offenders to justice. As a school, we are also committed to this.

No child or young person should have to experience abuse. But if something isn't right, they should speak to someone they trust to raise concerns, whether that's family, a friend, teacher or social worker, helpline or the police.

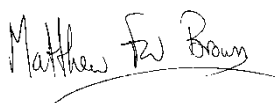
As Head Teacher at Blackfen school and as a parent I am extremely troubled and shocked reading the accounts and testimonies of people – young and old – and their experiences in educational settings both recently and in the past. Sexual harassment and sexual violence is not tolerated in

society and in schools. It is abhorrent. We know that we must do all we can to educate young people that such behaviour is not acceptable.

The dedicated NSPCC helpline number is 0800 136 663, which will be live from today (Thursday 1 April).

In light of new and updated guidance to schools which will be published soon, I would like to reassure parents and carers and young people that we will be reviewing all our processes and procedures, and the impact of these, over the coming week, to ensure that we know that school continues to be a safe environment for all the community.

Yours sincerely,



**Matthew Brown**  
**Head Teacher**