

# Truth Project Thematic Report

## *Child sexual abuse in the context of schools*

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**truth**  
project



INDEPENDENT INQUIRY  
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

## Disclaimer

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This report contains descriptions of child sexual abuse. Reading the report can have an emotional impact. There are some support organisations that it may be helpful to contact if you have been affected by any of the content in the report: [www.iicsa.org.uk/help-and-support-0](http://www.iicsa.org.uk/help-and-support-0)

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We are also grateful for the contributions of the Inquiry's Victims and Survivors Consultative Panel (VSCP), the Inquiry's Research Ethics Committee, and the report's peer reviewers.

# *Executive summary*

## Introduction

The Truth Project is a core part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse ('the Inquiry') alongside public hearings and research. It was set up to hear and learn from the experiences of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse<sup>1</sup> in England and Wales. With the consent of participants, the Inquiry uses Truth Project information in a variety of ways, including for ongoing research and data analysis carried out by the Inquiry's Research Team. By doing so, Truth Project participants choose what they wish to share and make an important contribution to the work of the Inquiry.

Education is a central feature of children and young people's lives and development, with important consequences for their future lives and careers. Children have the right to receive education in a safe environment. However, some children experience abuse and harm. This report presents the Inquiry's research findings about experiences of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in the context of schools and the responses of institutions to such abuse. It describes the experiences of Truth Project participants sexually abused in the context of schools between the 1940s and 2010s, with the most recent case in our sample beginning in the early 2010s.

We have used the term 'in the context of schools' in this report to refer to child sexual abuse that occurred in schools or colleges,<sup>2</sup> or was perpetrated by a member of staff who worked in them, or other students. Schools include special schools, state and independent institutions, day and boarding (residential) schools and colleges.<sup>3</sup> Staff include teachers, headteachers and support staff such as administrators or caretakers and cooks. Sexual abuse that occurred on trips organised by the school or staff at the school was also included, as was sexual abuse perpetrated by staff working at sites/premises where such trips were held.

This is the sixth research publication in a series of thematic reports examining the experiences of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse that have been shared with the Truth Project. We have previously published research reports on child sexual abuse in religious institutions, children's homes, and residential care, custodial institutions, sports and healthcare.

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<sup>1</sup> Child sexual abuse refers to sexual abuse that began when the victim and survivor was under the age of 18 years.

<sup>2</sup> Sixth form colleges (for 16 to 19 years) and further education colleges (for 16 to 25 years and adult learning) provide a range of academic and vocational teaching and training.

<sup>3</sup> Excluding nursery schools/pre-school care for children from birth to 5 years old.

## Sample and methods

We have used a mixed methods approach, analysing both quantitative and qualitative information for this report. The quantitative information is based on a sample of 4,269 participants who took part in the Truth Project between June 2016 and June 2020. Of these, 691 individuals (16 percent) shared an experience of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of schools. Quantitative data from these participants are shown alongside the quantitative data from the 3,578 participants whose experiences of sexual abuse did not occur in the context of schools, to draw out themes, commonalities and differences.<sup>4</sup>

The qualitative information is drawn from 17 of the 691 Truth Project accounts relating to child sexual abuse in the context of schools. These 17 accounts were randomly selected within a sampling framework designed to ensure we included a range of characteristics and circumstances, covering the time period in which the sexual abuse occurred, victim age and victim sex.<sup>5,6</sup> The wider analysis of Truth Project accounts is ongoing and we will publish a full report with a bigger sample size covering different contexts of child sexual abuse at the end of the Inquiry.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Inquiry's Research Ethics Committee prior to the collection and analysis of the data and information is included in this report only where Truth Project participants have agreed to their accounts being used for research purposes.

## Key findings from the research

Sexual abuse occurred in a range of schools from state day schools to independent residential schools, and it happened to both girls and boys from a range of family backgrounds. While the analysis of Truth Project data is ongoing, this report highlights some specific features and characteristics from this research about child sexual abuse in the context of schools.

- The majority of perpetrators reported by participants sexually abused in the context of schools were male teachers or other educational staff. Perpetrators often manipulated and groomed children and young people, staff and parents in order to facilitate sexual abuse, and often had good reputations with staff and parents, or were seen as 'cool' by pupils. Some victims and survivors believed that they were in 'relationships' with the perpetrators, some of which extended for years after the participants had left school. These participants were conflicted for many years into adulthood about the 'relationship' and recognising it as sexual abuse. Some 6 percent of participants reported that they did not disclose the sexual abuse because they thought the perpetrator loved them.

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<sup>4</sup> The participants in this report are individuals who have chosen to take part in the Truth Project. This sample is not random, and therefore the statistics produced are not representative of the general population. The experiences of sexual abuse in the context of schools described in this report may not reflect current day experiences as the majority of cases for which we have details about the sexual abuse began prior to 1990. Nevertheless, we aimed to identify common themes among participants' experiences across all time periods that the accounts cover.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these 17 accounts form a subset of the overall qualitative sample, discussed further in *Truth Project Research: Methods* (King and Brähler, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> The term sex refers to the biological sex of participants as children when the sexual abuse occurred. Participants are also asked their gender as adults at the time of attending the Truth Project.



“ I'd thought, well, you know, I'd assimilated this experience and I was in control, but then you realise, when you are [the same age of perpetrator], that 15's – they're children. ... The, kind of – like I say, the, sort of, crashing realisation that ... no, it wasn't a relationship; I was groomed as a child and groomed into thinking that it was fun and secretive and that it was completely okay.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

- Fifteen percent of participants reported sexual abuse perpetrated by peers or older children, the second most frequently reported perpetrator type in the context of schools after teachers and educational staff.
- Sexual abuse perpetrated in residential schools was disproportionately higher in accounts from Truth Project participants compared to the proportion of these types of schools in England and Wales, and the percentage of children who attended them. A greater proportion of participants who were sexually abused in residential schools reported sexual abuse perpetrated by their peers, than participants who attended non-residential schools. They also reported higher proportions of physical abuse, psychological abuse and bullying. Perpetrators (staff and peers) in residential schools had constant access to children who boarded, both in and out of school time. Some participants reported that the only time they felt safe was when they were away from school.

“ Much of my time was spent avoiding them [perpetrators] which was difficult in such a closed environment.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

- Sexual abuse in independent and special schools was disproportionately higher in participants' accounts. There were also higher levels of physical and psychological abuse reported in these two school types, compared to state schools.
- Participants sexually abused in school contexts reported less penetrative sexual abuse, and less physical and psychological abuse but more bullying, compared to other institutional contexts.
- Fifty-four percent of the participants sexually abused in state schools were female. Over three-quarters of participants sexually abused in independent and special schools were male. Female participants accounted for almost 58 percent of the participants sexually abused in 'other' school types.
- Forty-two percent of participants sexually abused in the context of schools were aware of other victims of sexual abuse, which was higher than those sexually abused in other contexts at 23 percent. Almost a third of participants reported that other people were aware of the sexual abuse: 32 percent, compared to 26 percent in other contexts. In some instances this awareness was because participants were part of a group of children whom the perpetrator sexually abused, or because disclosures by other victims revealed the sexual abuse. Participants also talked about suspicion or rumours in schools surrounding the perpetrators, resulting in many missed opportunities for safeguarding.

“ I have often asked myself “Where were the teachers?,” how could pupils be in music rooms every break experimenting sexually without anyone knowing. We were just juniors.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

- For participants sexually abused in the context of schools, levels of disclosures during childhood were similar to those in other institutional contexts. When participants did disclose during childhood, it was more frequently to a person in authority within the institution compared to disclosures of sexual abuse in other institutional contexts. In some cases, when participants were asked by parents or teachers whether they were being sexually abused, they denied the sexual abuse to protect the perpetrator and/or the environment the perpetrator created. This was exacerbated by the perpetrators' manipulation of participants.
- As might be expected, the sexual abuse experienced in the context of schools had more impacts on schooling and employment than sexual abuse in other institutional contexts. More participants in this group talked about a lack of trust for those in authority compared to those sexually abused in other contexts.

#### Note on language

Please see Appendix A for a glossary which contains definitions of various terms used throughout this report.

# *Chapter 1*

# Introduction

**T**his chapter provides background information about the Inquiry, the Truth Project and the aims of this research.

## 1.1 Background to the Inquiry

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse ('the Inquiry') was set up as a statutory inquiry in March 2015. The Inquiry aims to consider the extent to which state and non-state institutions in England and Wales have failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation, and to make meaningful recommendations for change. Child sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person under the age of 18 to take part in sexual activities. It includes contact and non-contact sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and grooming a child in preparation for sexual abuse. The Inquiry has 15 investigations into child sexual abuse, focusing on child sexual abuse in a range of different institutions. Further information about how the Inquiry works and its Terms of Reference can be found on the [Inquiry website](#).

Where appropriate we have considered our research findings alongside those of the [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#) in Australia (which concluded in 2017), as it is the most recent comparable national inquiry addressing similar issues.

## 1.2 Background to the Truth Project

The Truth Project is a core part of the Inquiry alongside public hearings and research. It was set up to hear and learn from the experiences of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in England and Wales. It offers victims and survivors an opportunity to share experiences of child sexual abuse. People can participate in the Truth Project through a private session – either in person, over the telephone or via video-link – or by submitting a written account of their experience. By doing so, Truth Project participants make an important contribution to the work of the Inquiry. The Truth Project was piloted in November 2015 with the offer of private sessions commencing in June 2016. Up to the end of September 2020, over 5,000 people have come forward to share an experience. These experiences will influence the Inquiry's findings and help inform its recommendations for improving child protection in institutions across England and Wales. Further information about the Truth Project can be found on the [Truth Project website](#).

## 1.3 Using Truth Project data for research

Information gathered through the Truth Project provides the Inquiry with valuable insights into child sexual abuse. With the consent of participants, the Inquiry uses this information in a variety of ways including ongoing research and data analysis carried out by the Inquiry's Research Team. This is an important building block in helping the Inquiry develop recommendations to prevent child sexual abuse happening in the future and improve institutional responses to child sexual abuse. Further details about how and why Truth Project information is used for research can be found in the separate [Truth Project Research: Methods](#) report (King and Brähler, 2019).

### 1.3.1 Research questions

The Truth Project analysis explores two overarching research questions:

- What have victims and survivors shared about their experiences of child sexual abuse and the institutional contexts in which it occurred and how it was responded to?
- What similarities and differences are there in victims and survivors' experiences of child sexual abuse across time periods, groups and institutions?

This report seeks to explore the first research question and its themes and research sub-questions (as set out at the start of chapters 4 to 10) and specifically in relation to child sexual abuse experienced in the context of schools. With regard to the second research question, in this report we explore the similarities and differences in the experiences of child sexual abuse between participants abused in the context of schools.<sup>7</sup>

This report is the sixth Truth Project thematic report to be published. It describes Truth Project participants' experiences of sexual abuse in the context of schools. Our first thematic report focused on child sexual abuse in the context of religious institutions (Hurcombe et al., 2019), the second on child sexual abuse in context of children's homes and residential care (Soares et al., 2019), the third on child sexual abuse in custodial institutions (Darling et al., 2020a), the fourth on child sexual abuse in sports (Darling et al., 2020b) and the fifth on child sexual abuse in healthcare contexts (Zammit et al., 2020).<sup>8</sup> We will be conducting further analysis for the final report at the end of the Inquiry.

This report complements other work undertaken by the Inquiry, namely three of the Inquiry's legal investigations into Ampleforth and Downside independent Catholic schools, Ealing Abbey and St Benedict's School and Cambridge House, Knowl View and Rochdale and the ongoing investigation into sexual abuse in residential schools, which can be seen on the Inquiry's website. Research commissioned by the Inquiry into safeguarding in residential schools and a literature review examining research on child sexual abuse in residential schools conducted by the Inquiry's research team is also relevant to this report.

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<sup>7</sup> Comparisons between experiences across different institutions and time periods will be undertaken at a later point when we have the opportunity to carry out a fuller comparative analysis.

<sup>8</sup> Sexual abuse perpetrated across these institutional contexts are referred to as 'other contexts' in the remainder of this report.

## *Chapter 2*

# Schools and safeguarding

This chapter sets out an overview of some key contextual information relating to schools in England and Wales, as well as information on what is known about child sexual abuse in the specific context of schools.

Schools have a long history in England and Wales, which is summarised in Appendix B. Historical developments have led to a range of school types that differ according to whether they are funded by local authorities or directly by the government, their governance, level of independence, and the curriculum followed (see Appendix B for more detail). Schools are funded by the state (sometimes in combination with foundations or trusts) or by fees (known as private or independent schools). Both should be registered with the Department for Education, or Welsh Government.

Schools are overseen and regulated by the Department for Education in England and the Welsh Government in Wales. Parents are under a duty to educate their children (at school, at any other institution, or at home, providing the education is suitable for the needs of the child) and children have free access to state education for the ages for which it is compulsory. From the school term following a child's fifth birthday, education is compulsory (although parents have a right to educate their children at home). In England, children have to engage in some form of education or training, or apprenticeship<sup>9</sup> until they are 18 years old. In Wales, children can leave school at the start of the summer term of the academic year in which they turn 16 and do not have to go on to further education, though they can complete state-funded further education or an apprenticeship if they wish.

Primary education is generally taken between the ages of 5 and 11; secondary education from 11 to 16; and further education from age 16.<sup>10</sup> Independent schools are often called pre-prep (age 3 or 4 to 6 or 7), prep (age 7 or 8 to 11 or 13) and secondary (from age 11 or 13), or junior and senior schools.

In England, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) refers to the education of children with a disability or learning difficulty that means they need special educational provision. In Wales, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, which replaced the term special educational needs with 'additional learning needs' (ALN), regulates education for children with ALN (see Appendix B for more detail).

In the majority of schools in England and Wales, children attend on a day basis, however, in some schools children reside on the school premises. In schools where children reside, the length of time children stay (for example, for an entire term, or on a weekly basis going home each weekend) varies by school or by pupil within schools. Some schools have both children who attend on a day basis and pupils who reside at the school. Residential schools can be independent (typically fee-paying), or state (where the educational element is funded by the state and the boarding element is paid for privately) boarding schools. Some residential schools specifically provide for students with SEND or ALN.

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<sup>9</sup> Apprenticeships are a form of employment where the apprentice completes work including on-the-job skills development and training for the majority of the time, and off-the-job training and education for one day a week, for example via attendance at a college or school.

<sup>10</sup> In some areas there is a first, middle and high school system. Schools may be first or infant schools (age 3 to 7) and then primary schools (from 7 to 11). Some schools call themselves 'all through', where education is provided to both primary and secondary age pupils. Some secondary schools include sixth forms typically for young people (16 to 19 years old) completing academic studies. Sixth form colleges (for 16 to 19 year olds) and further education colleges (for 16 to 25 year olds and adult learning) provide a range of academic and vocational teaching and training.

The number of schools in England and Wales is shown in Table 2.1. The majority are state-funded, approximately 10 percent of schools in England and Wales are independent schools and 4 percent are special schools. The proportion of pupils at independent schools in the UK has ranged from 5 percent in the 1950s and early 1960s, to a peak of 8 percent in the mid 1960s, remaining around 7 percent since then (Bolton, 2012). There are 349 Pupil Referral Units in England (Department for Education, 2020b), and in 2019 there were 22 in Wales (Welsh Government, 2019). There were 313 colleges in England in 2018, and 14 in Wales (GOV.UK, 2020a; Association of Colleges, 2018).

**Table 2.1 Number of schools and colleges in England and Wales in 2020**

Type of school/college	No. of schools in England	No. of schools in Wales
State-funded primary*	16,784	1,225
State-funded middle†	–	22
State-funded secondary‡	3,456	183
Special¶	1,051	41
Independent	2,331	75 (in 2019**)

Sources: Department for Education (2020b), National Assembly for Wales (2019), StatsWales (2020)

\* Just over a third (35 percent) of these schools are academies or free schools (Department for Education, 2020b). Academies receive funding directly from the government and are run by an academy trust. They have more control over how they do things than community schools. Academies do not charge fees (GOV.UK 2020b). Academies were introduced in England in 2000, after the time period where the majority of participants' accounts took place.

† Middle schools are defined in English and Welsh law as being schools in which the age range of pupils includes pupils who are aged below 10 years and six months, as well as those who are aged over 12. In England, middle schools are deemed to be either primary or secondary schools and are recorded as primary or secondary in the school numbers.

‡ Just over three-quarters (77 percent) of these are academies or free schools (Department for Education, 2020b).

¶ These include all special schools regardless of the means of funding.

\*\* Independent schools data for Wales was not published for 2020. The data collection was not completed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Table 2.1 above includes both residential and non-residential schools. The number of residential schools is shown below in Table 2.2. Approximately 2 percent of schools in England and Wales are residential. Around 1 percent of children attended residential schools between the mid 1970s<sup>11</sup> and 1990s (Department of Health, 1998 cited by Little et al., 2005).

**Table 2.2 Number of residential schools in England and Wales**

Type of residential school	No. of residential schools in England (2020)	No. of residential schools in Wales (2019)
State	47	22
Special	133	
Independent	448	

Sources: GOV.UK (2020b); StatsWales (2020)

<sup>11</sup> Calculated using Independent Schools Information Service (1978) and special school census data (National Archives, 1977).



For the purposes of the analysis described in this report, we have categorised schools in two different ways.

- Firstly, schools are divided into state, independent, special and 'other' schools. Every school fits into just one of these categories.
- Secondly, we have split schools into residential or non-residential. Again, every school is coded into just one of these two categories.

There is overlap between the two methods of categorisation. For example, a residential special school will be categorised as a special school in the first method, and as a residential school in the second method. An independent school that does not have boarding students will be categorised as independent in the first method and non-residential in the second.

## 2.1 Child sexual abuse in school contexts

In this section we highlight research on what is known about child sexual abuse in the specific context of schools. Schools provide opportunities for teachers and school staff to have access to children and young people. Sexual abuse within school contexts occurs when perpetrators abuse their power and the trust of others. Vulnerability to sexual abuse can also increase in some school contexts which involve children spending time away from home such as school trips, or extended time in extra-curricular activities such as sports or music. In residential schools, staff often have access to areas of student life, such as showering and sleeping, that staff in non-residential settings do not have.

### 2.1.1 Positions of trust and 'relationships'

School staff have a duty of care towards all the children and young people they supervise to do what is reasonable in order to safeguard a child (Children Act 1989, Section 3). They are in a position of trust and power, which is underpinned by the authority and power of the teacher role. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 addressed issues relating to sexual abuse perpetrated by someone 'in a position of trust' (Sections 16–24) and made it an offence for someone over 18 years of age in such a position to have, cause, incite or engage in sexual activity, or a 'relationship' with a person under the age of 18, even if it is consensual. This applied to all staff in school and college settings and acknowledged the vulnerable position students are in, whether or not the person teaches that specific child. Prior to the Act, the age of sexual consent (16 years) was the only law in effect, although teachers could be subject to disciplinary procedures depending on the specific school.

A 2013 YouGov survey of 1,915 adults in Great Britain showed that the majority of respondents (93 percent) felt that sexual 'relationships' between adults and underage learners are unacceptable. However, the results were more divided for children aged 16 to 18 years, with 47 percent of respondents believing it should be legal for a teacher in their twenties or thirties to have a sexual relationship with a pupil between the age of 16 and 18 at a school where they teach, and 40 percent of respondents believing such relationships should be illegal (YouGov, 2013). The YouGov survey also showed that one in six people knew of such 'relationships' back when they were at school. During 2009 and 2010, almost two-fifths (38 percent; n=4,642) of all the allegations that were referred to local authority designated officers involved school staff, with just over one-fifth (22 percent, n=1,029) of these being of a sexual nature (York Consulting, 2012).

The use of the term 'relationship', as opposed to 'sexual abuse', in the context of child sexual abuse in schools, highlights potential misconceptions of what is considered inappropriate. Although knowledge and understanding of grooming strategies and behaviours has evolved over time, 'sexual abuse' and 'relationships' can be conflated particularly when the victim is an adolescent. Research suggests that this is influenced by a belief that adolescents, especially those above the age of consent, are more sexually aware and have more agency and autonomy than younger children (see Hallett, 2017; Melrose, 2013). However, perceptions such as these can encourage and perpetuate a victim-blaming narrative. Research highlights the importance of avoiding a culture of blame (Woodiwiss, 2018) by understanding that adolescents who believe that they are in a 'relationship' with the perpetrator may not recognise the abusive nature of their interactions with the perpetrator (Harper and Scott, 2005). The Sexual Offences Act removed the ambiguity surrounding such 'relationships', but it postdates the majority of sexual abuse reported to the Truth Project.

These issues are further complicated by whether the perpetrator is male or female (Geddes et al., 2013). For example, Geddes et al. (2013) noted that female perpetrators received less severe sentences compared to male counterparts, and male victims were also less likely to report sexual abuse of this nature, linked in part to erroneous social constructs around masculinity. It is clear there is a complex interplay of factors that include, for instance, issues of power (between adults and students or between students), age, sex and gender identity. The combination of these factors influences how sexual abuse is understood by an individual, as well as society.

### 2.1.2 Harmful sexual behaviour

School settings can also increase opportunities for sexual abuse and other harmful relationships and behaviours to develop between peers. The term 'harmful sexual behaviour' refers to sexual behaviours of children and young people under 18 years of age that are "*developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others and/or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult*" (Hackett et al., 2019:13). Hackett (2019) suggests that sexual behaviour exists on a continuum ranging from normal, inappropriate, problematic, abusive to violent. In the qualitative sample used for this research, participants shared experiences at the abusive and violent end of the continuum, which involved coercion, threats, manipulation and a lack of consent, and are discussed in subsequent chapters.

The term 'harmful sexual behaviour' has been adopted recently, however, there was guidance and literature on sexual abuse committed by children and young people available prior to the definition of harmful sexual behaviour. In their rapid evidence assessment on discourses about child sexual abuse, Lovett et al. (2018) noted that this issue has attracted attention since the 1990s (for example, Green and Masson, 2002).<sup>12</sup> The 1991 version of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* contained brief guidance about young people who sexually abuse (Masson, 1998). In 1992, an inquiry report by the National Children's Bureau argued that young people who perpetrated sexual violence should be channelled through child protection rather than criminal justice (Masson, 1998). The 1999 version of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* contained further guidance on abuse (including sexual abuse) by children and young people. The guidance stated that a coordinated approach should be taken on the part of agencies (including education), and that the needs of children and young people who abuse others should be considered separately from the needs of their victims (Department of Health, Home Office, and Department of Education and Employment, 1999). Since then, competing theoretical

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<sup>12</sup> Calculated using Independent Schools Information Service (1978) and special school census data (National Archives, 1977).

approaches in child protection and youth justice have debated whether young people should be designated vulnerable and in need of support or identified as sexual offenders (Smith et al., 2014; Masson, 1998).

In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of, and research into, sexual harassment and sexual abuse experienced within school settings, including harmful sexual behaviour (Beckett et al., 2019; Ward and Rodger, 2018). The Women and Equalities Committee 2016 report on sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools found that sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools was a significant issue, with evidence showing that the majority of perpetrators were boys, and the majority of victims were girls. The report also stated that such behaviour had occurred in schools for many years (HM Government, 2016). Recent research has found that peer sexual abuse within schools is far more common than allegations of sexual abuse made against school staff (Firmin, 2018). One study found that over a third of female students experienced some form of sexual harassment and almost a quarter experienced unwanted sexual touching from predominantly male peers at school (National Education Union and UK Feminista, 2017). A recent study by Allnock and Atkinson (2019) looked at sexual harm resulting from harmful sexual behaviour in schools using focus groups with young people and education staff. The study identified a number of school responses to sexual harm which acted as direct barriers to disclosure and reporting by young people. These included a lack of positive relationships with teachers or pastoral staff, the perception of complacent school attitudes towards enforcing policies on sexual harm and insensitive handling of disclosures.

Current research into professionals' responses to harmful sexual behaviour and sexual abuse perpetrated by children found that more work is needed to improve workers' knowledge, skill and confidence in identifying and responding to harmful sexual behaviour that occurs online and in person (Clements et al., 2017). Recent years have seen the development of a harmful sexual behaviour framework (Hackett et al., 2019; Hackett et al., 2016), guidance on sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (All Wales Practice Guide, 2020a; Department for Education, 2020a, 2018). Safeguarding issues also extend to the digital world, which now makes it easier for anyone to communicate with, and potentially sexually abuse, students (Promethean, 2018). Accordingly, online safeguarding guidance has been developed for England (Department for Education, 2017) and the Welsh Government 'online safety zone' containing information and resources (All Wales Practice Guide, 2020b; Welsh Government, 2020b).

## 2.2 Safeguarding in schools

Schools play an important role in safeguarding children from sexual abuse. Current safeguarding practice acknowledges that safeguarding and children's welfare are everyone's responsibility, using approaches that are developmentally appropriate and in the best interests of the child (Department for Education, 2020a; Wales Safeguarding Procedures, 2020). Key safeguarding guidance for how school and college settings in England and Wales should safeguard their students is set out in *Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges* (Department for Education, 2020a) and *Keeping learners safe* (Welsh Government, 2020a) respectively. In both England and Wales, all staff in schools and colleges should be trained on their organisation's safeguarding and behaviour policies for both staff and pupils, as part of their induction; they must receive ongoing training and updates; and understand their individual safeguarding responsibilities and duties. Staff should also be aware of how to respond to a child who discloses sexual abuse and manage appropriate levels of confidentiality.

Recent research has emphasised the importance of wider context in understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm (including sexual abuse) beyond their families (Firmin, 2017). The concept of 'contextual safeguarding' recognises that the different relationships that young people form in different settings can feature violence and abuse. Schools are identified as one such setting, which can establish social norms that inform young people's experiences. Safe and protective school settings are thought to support the formation of safe and protective relationships.

### 2.2.1 Key safeguarding developments in schools

The role of schools in safeguarding children and young people has increasingly been addressed in legislation and guidance. Safeguarding policies and practices within schools have developed within the wider societal context of safeguarding. This was prompted in part by a number of high profile child deaths<sup>13</sup> following abuse. Such cases increased the urgency for tighter child protection legislation, such as a recognition of the need to improve the coordination of safeguarding at local levels, and prompted several reviews of the child protection system (for example, Munro, 2011; Laming, 2009). These reviews recommended an overhaul of the children's social care system, and shaped the legislative framework.

The Children Act 1989 came into force in 1991 and gave every child in England and Wales the right to be protected against abuse. It established the Paramountcy Principle: that a child's welfare is paramount in decisions pertaining to that child. The Act addressed the welfare of children accommodated in boarding schools, colleges and independent schools, placing on these institutions a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child accommodated within them.

The Education Act 2002 (Section 175) requires governing bodies in schools and colleges in England and Wales to make suitable arrangements so their institution can safeguard children and promote their welfare. The regulatory system for independent day and boarding schools was set out in the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003. National minimum standards for boarding schools and residential special schools in England were introduced in 2002. Similar measures were introduced by the Welsh Assembly in 2003.

The Children Act 2004 had a focus on ensuring that safeguarding duties were carried out in partnership between agencies including educational establishments. The 2004 Act also placed a duty on the governing bodies of schools and colleges to designate an appropriate senior member of staff to have responsibility for child protection. In England, this role is the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), and in Wales it is the designated senior person (DSP).<sup>14</sup> The duties of these roles include holding the lead responsibility for child protection issues, being the main contact point for safeguarding concerns, providing support, liaising with headteachers about supporting children, and deciding if a referral should be made to the police or social services (NSPCC, 2017). The development of this role was an important step towards acknowledging the important role schools can play in that effort. The Teachers' Standards (2012), which apply to newly qualified teachers, teachers and headteachers in maintained and special schools, stated that teaching staff have a professional duty to safeguard children's wellbeing as well as maintain public trust in the teaching profession (Department for Education, 2020a).

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<sup>13</sup> Maria Colwell, aged 7, killed by her stepfather in 1973; Jasmine Beckford, aged 4, killed by her stepfather in 1984; Victoria Climbié, aged 8, killed by her great aunt and her partner in 2000; 'Baby P' who was killed in 2007 by his mother and her partner.

<sup>14</sup> This will change to a designated safeguarding person (DSP) under the Keeping Learners Safe 2020 guidance.

The emphasis on collaboration and multi-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children was further strengthened by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. *Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* (HM Government, 2018) is the statutory guidance to safeguard and promote children's wellbeing, which applies to all staff in England who work with children. Further non-statutory guidance relevant to safeguarding in schools, much of it developed after the 2010s, is also available.

The Welsh Government also had duties under the Education Act 2002 and the Children Act 1989 and 2004 to safeguard pupils in schools. *Keeping learners safe* (Welsh Government, 2020a) set out the approach and legislative duties to protect children specifically in schools, and key safeguarding guidance in Wales comes from the Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019 that are based on the principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The Welsh Government's *National Action Plan Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse* (Welsh Government, 2019) sets out what the government will do to prevent child sexual abuse, and protect and support children who have been sexually abused. Schools are recognised as a significant site within this plan.

### 2.2.2 Safer recruitment and regulation of staff in schools

The concept of checking the suitability of those who worked with vulnerable groups has been in place since 1926, with many legislative developments from the 1980s. The Education Reform Act of 1988 established requirements for the safer recruitment of teachers and other staff in school settings in England and Wales. It gave the Secretary of State powers to make regulations, prohibitions and restrictions on the employment of teachers and other staff in school settings. A series of Education Regulations (for example, the Education (Prohibition from Teaching or Working with Children) Regulations 2003), and legislation (such as Section 142 of the Education Act 2002) developed provisions relating to the barring and restricting of teachers and individuals who work with children in educational settings, on the grounds, for instance, that the person's name is on the list of people considered unsuitable to work with children kept under the Protection of Children Act 1999 (Section 1). Statutory guidance in England (Department for Education, 2020a) and Wales (Welsh Government, 2019) outline responsibilities, duties and procedures for responding to allegations of abuse by teachers and staff.

The Disclosure and Barring Service process under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (and the Independent Safeguarding Authority previously before this) was designed to build on, and replace, the previous barring processes.<sup>15</sup> It was an attempt to establish a more consistent process for vetting individuals who wished to work or volunteer with children (and vulnerable adults). The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 (CJCSA) introduced a definition of 'work with children' and gave courts the power to issue disqualification orders as part of a sentence for those who commit offences against a child, including teaching and school staff. It created two new offences of: knowingly applying for work with children when barred; and of knowingly employing an individual to work with children when they are barred.

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<sup>15</sup> The Protection of Children Act (POCA) list and List 99 (information held under s142 of the Education Act).

Teachers' conduct is further regulated by the Teaching Regulation Agency. It was established in 2018 to regulate the teaching profession, including misconduct hearings, and to maintain a database of qualified teachers, alongside the Department for Education, which now oversees teacher recruitment and development (GOV.UK, 2020c). In Wales, the Education Workforce Council (EWC) aims to improve teaching standards and professional conduct, and safeguard those at school as well as keep the trust of the public. Their role includes 'investigating and hearing cases' that involve 'professional misconduct, incompetence or criminal offences' of registered professionals (Education Workforce Council, 2020).

### 2.2.3 Inspections of schools

Schools in England and Wales are regulated and inspected, not only to assess education standards, but also to ensure that children are safe. The Office for Standards in Education was established in England by the Education (Schools) Act in 1992. In 2007, the remit was expanded to include children's services work relating to social care and the courts, which resulted in the name change to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Ofsted's role is to inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages and to inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people in England. Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales, was established under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 to inspect schools, education and training in Wales and to advise and guide the Welsh Government on quality and standards. It is independent of the Welsh Parliament but funded by the Welsh Government. Care Inspectorate Wales carries out the inspection role of mainstream and special residential schools, which focus on improving service quality and meeting wellbeing needs.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI, 2020) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools that are members of seven independent membership associations (see section 106 of the Education and Skills Act 2008). Ofsted inspects independent schools that are not members of an association. Ofsted and the ISI inspect the residential aspect of boarding schools in England (called a boarding welfare inspection), with Ofsted inspecting all residential special schools in this respect on an annual basis. Care Inspectorate Wales inspects the boarding welfare element of residential schools within Wales, with inspections often run at the same time as Estyn's inspection.

This overview has shown that much of the safeguarding legislation and the provision of detailed practice, guidance and policies that specifically relates to school settings has mainly taken place relatively recently and within a wider context of trying to improve safeguarding for children in all areas of life.

## *Chapter 3*

# Sample and methods



**T**his chapter provides information on the Truth Project dataset and the sampling framework used for this report. The information for this report has been gathered from victims and survivors who shared an experience of child sexual abuse with the Truth Project between June 2016 and June 2020.

We have used a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative information in the analysis undertaken for this report.

- Quantitative information comes in the form of numbers and percentages. The quantitative research findings are provided through descriptive statistical information about all 691 Truth Project participants who reported being sexually abused in the context of schools, and who provided their accounts to the Truth Project up until the end of June 2020. These cases are compared with the 3,578 accounts from participants whose experiences of sexual abuse did not involve a school context.
- Qualitative information takes the form of quotes, text and themes. Qualitative research findings are derived from a detailed analysis of 17 of the 691 Truth Project accounts. We have made it clear in the text where we are specifically referring to quantitative or qualitative information.

Comparisons between experiences of sexual abuse in the context of schools across different time periods are not addressed in this report. Instead, we present the general commonalities and differences between those sexually abused in the context of schools and those sexually abused in other contexts. We also present comparisons between different school types (see section 3.2).

The experiences of sexual abuse in the context of schools described in this report may not reflect current day experiences as 85 percent of cases for which we have details about when the sexual abuse began occurred prior to 1990, and 8 percent occurred in the 1940s and 1950s.

We recognise that the research findings included in this report do not reflect all experiences of sexual abuse in the context of schools and are only indicative of the specific experiences of those who chose to share their experiences with the Truth Project. Research findings in this report should not therefore be taken as representative of the wider population of victims and survivors.

### 3.1 Sampling

Within the dataset of participants who shared their experience with the Truth Project, cases of child sexual abuse were included if they occurred in the context of schools. Context here refers to both the location and the perpetrator of the sexual abuse. Our criteria for school locations include:

- day schools (state and independent)
- boarding schools (state and independent)
- special schools for children with SEND
- religious affiliated schools
- specialist schools, for example for focusing on music or sport
- further education colleges
- pupil referral units.



Cases were also included where sexual abuse was perpetrated by an individual working for or on behalf of a school. This includes:

- teachers (including supply,<sup>16</sup> headteachers, teaching assistants, teaching support staff)
- house masters/mistresses
- boarding house staff/care staff (including school nurse, counsellor)
- peripatetic staff (for example music teachers who come in to schools only to teach music, or sports coaches that come specifically for coaching)
- ancillary staff (for example cleaners, grounds staff, cooks, lunchtime supervisors)
- other students including those who were under the age of 18
- school transport staff
- staff at centres where schools had taken students for school trips.

Cases where sexual abuse took place during after-school activities (for example in after-school clubs run by school employed staff) or during school trips or activities were included. This includes school-related activities outside of school premises or grounds. Sexual abuse perpetrated by students, visitors to the school, parents/volunteers (for example to support school events or trips as part of school activities), or instructors at locations where school trips were held was also included. Cases relating to these types of perpetrator are considered part of the school context as schools would be involved in checking such individuals' suitability and the policies and procedures on safeguarding relating to them.

Cases were also included where sexual abuse was facilitated online in the context of the school (for example if the sexual abuse happened or was facilitated via online communication between the child and a teacher, school staff member or another student). However, reflecting the fact that the majority of the accounts from participants sexually abused in the contexts of schools predate the 2000s, only a small number of participants reported types of sexual abuse that occurred online.

Sexual abuse in approved schools<sup>17</sup> was not included as approved schools were included in the Truth Project custodial institutions report. Sexual abuse occurring in the following settings was also excluded:

- nursery schools/pre-school care, as the primary purpose of these is not education
- classes and schools for which the primary purpose is to teach religious education, for example Sunday schools and madrasas
- abuse in familial or non-institutional contexts perpetrated by school staff but where the perpetrator's role had no bearing on or was unrelated to the abuse
- after-school care (for example childminders)
- home school settings
- private tutors.

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<sup>16</sup> A supply teacher provides temporary cover for teachers who are absent from work.

<sup>17</sup> Approved schools were institutions established in 1933 to provide education and training on a residential basis for children up to the age of 16. The majority of their residential population had been convicted of a criminal offence, but a few were sent there due to welfare concerns. Approved schools no longer exist but participants who were sexually abused in approved schools have shared experiences with the Truth Project.

## 3.2 Quantitative sample and methods

Of the 4,269 people who shared an experience of child sexual abuse with the Truth Project (in person, by phone, in writing or via video-link) between June 2016 and June 2020, and consented for their accounts to be used in research, 691 (16 percent) described sexual abuse that took place within the context of schools. We have generally used three categories of comparisons (see Figure 3.1):

1. Comparison between participants who were sexually abused in the context of schools with participants whose experiences of sexual abuse did not involve a school context.
2. Comparison by school type, with schools categorised into state, independent, special (for children with SEND) and 'other'.
3. Comparison by school type, with schools categorised into residential and non-residential (where there was enough information to make this categorisation).<sup>18</sup>

The majority of independent and special schools in the quantitative sample are residential, while the majority of state schools are non-residential.

Tables containing data relating to this report are available in Appendix C, with the salient points drawn out within the body of the report.

As the participants included in the analysis and described in this report are individuals who chose to take part in the Truth Project, the sample is not random, and therefore the statistics produced are not representative of the general population. Differences noted between those sexually abused in the context of schools and those sexually abused in other contexts and between different types of schools in this report should not be interpreted as reflecting differences within the general population of victims and survivors. Any differences noted between those sexually abused in the context of schools and those sexually abused in other contexts and school types should also not be interpreted as being statistically significant, as tests of significance<sup>19</sup> have not been carried out.

It should also be noted that some participants who experienced sexual abuse in the context of schools also spoke about additional episodes of sexual abuse that occurred in other contexts. However, the figures presented in this report relating to characteristics of the sexual abuse (such as the nature of the sexual abuse, perpetrator, or its duration) only relate to the episode(s) of sexual abuse that took place in the context of schools, unless stated otherwise.

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<sup>18</sup> Residential schools can be state and independent and for children with SEND; hence, there is overlap between the two types of categorisation.

<sup>19</sup> Tests of significance are typically used to assess whether a result is likely to have occurred by chance. If a result is found to be statistically significant it is likely to be real, rather than to have occurred by chance. However, such tests can only be used on certain types of data.

Figure 3.1 Categories of schools used for analysis



### 3.3 Qualitative sample and methods

The sample for qualitative analysis was selected by listing all Truth Project accounts that related to the context of schools. From this list, we selected 17 accounts<sup>20</sup> for in-depth analysis to ensure a wide range of characteristics and circumstances within each of the following categories:

- time period in which the sexual abuse occurred
- age of victim and survivor when the sexual abuse began
- sex of victim and survivor when the sexual abuse began.

The characteristics of the sample used for this report are detailed in Table 3.1. As described above, the majority of participants described sexual abuse that took place in the contexts of schools prior to 1990. This is reflected in the spread of the cases selected for the qualitative sample.

The framework approach was used as the method for the qualitative analysis. Further details of this approach can be found in the separate report, *Truth Project Research: Methods* (King and Brähler, 2019).

### 3.4 Ethics and research strengths and limitations

All social research conducted or commissioned by the Inquiry is subject to approval from the Inquiry's Research Ethics Committee.<sup>21</sup> The Truth Project research is subject to rigorous ethical scrutiny as the data collected are highly personal and sensitive. In order to safeguard these data, each component of the research process was reviewed in line with strict ethical standards by the Inquiry's Research Ethics Committee. Ethical approval was obtained prior to the collection and analysis of the data.

Information is included in this report only where Truth Project participants have agreed to their accounts being used for research purposes. All information analysed for this report was anonymised prior to analysis and all identifying information has been removed. Further information about ethics and consent can be found in Appendix D of this report.

When considering the research findings in this report, it is worth bearing in mind a number of strengths and limitations. These are summarised in Table 3.2.

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<sup>20</sup> This number provides a proportion of the planned overall sample of around 60 to 70 accounts we expect to include in the full qualitative analysis work. It also reflects an appropriate proportion of the anticipated number of participants who will take part in the Truth Project before the end of the Inquiry. A complete sample of around 60 to 70 accounts is anticipated to provide a large enough number to reach 'saturation'; in a research context this refers to the point at which the addition of further accounts would not provide new categories in analysis (Katz et al., 2017; Bowen, 2008). More than 50 is considered to constitute a large sample in qualitative participant-based research (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Sandelowski, 1995)

<sup>21</sup> The Inquiry's Research Ethics Committee is formed of external academics and experts as well as internal staff. The Committee is internal to the Inquiry, but independent of those commissioning and delivering its research.

**Table 3.1 Qualitative sample characteristics**

Characteristic	Category	No. of participants
Time period of sexual abuse	Pre 1950s	1
	1950s–1960s	4
	1970s–1980s	7
	1990s–2000s	5
	2010s onwards	0
Age when sexual abuse began	11 years and under	7
	12 years and older	10
Sex of victim and survivor	Female	8
	Male	9
Type of school	State	9
	Independent	4
	Specialist school/college	2
	Not known	2
Residential, or non-residential	Residential school	4 boarders 3 attended on day basis
	Special/emotional, special and behavioural difficulties (ESBD) residential school	2
	Non-residential school	8
Perpetrator(s)	Teacher	11*
	Clergy also acting as a teacher	2*
	Relative (adult) of teacher	1*
	Peer(s)	3*
Sex of perpetrator(s)	Male	15*
	Female	2*

\* Refers to the number of participants who reported these details and not the number of perpetrators.

**Table 3.2 Limitations and strengths of the research**

	Limitation	Strength
Overall sample	All findings are based on a self-selecting sample of those who have come forward to the Truth Project and cannot be held as representative of the general population of those sexually abused in healthcare contexts.	The Truth Project dataset comprises thousands of victims and survivor experiences. The quantitative sample of participants who have experienced sexual abuse in the context of schools is large (N=691).
Quantitative analysis	A full comparison across different time periods, or participant groups (such as ethnicity) has not been carried out. Comparisons made between school types and schools and other institutions do not take into account differences in the composition of these groups, for example, demographic differences such as gender.	Analysis is primarily descriptive and looks at the general commonalities and differences between those sexually abused in the context of schools and those sexually abused in other contexts, and by school types. Where possible, breakdowns by certain variables are included.
Qualitative analysis	The qualitative research findings are based on a small group of participant accounts.	The qualitative sample has been selected to present a diverse range of experiences and voices within the context of schools. In-depth and detailed analysis of accounts is possible by concentrating on a smaller number.
Data	Truth Project sessions are participant led and not all participants talk about all, or the same, aspects of child sexual abuse.	Accounts reflect the issues of particular importance to participants rather than more directed accounts (if a particular structure to the session had been imposed by the interviewer).

## *Chapter 4*

# Information about participants sexually abused as children in the context of schools

This chapter provides socio-demographic information about participants who shared their experiences of sexual abuse in the context of schools with the Truth Project, as well as details of the types of schools they attended. Using qualitative data, it also provides a description of the family and early life backgrounds of the participants and the role of schooling in participants' lives. It addresses the research sub-question:

- Who has come forward to the Truth Project to share an experience of child sexual abuse in the context of schools?

## 4.1 Demographic information about Truth Project participants

### Quantitative information

#### *Information about participants at the time of sexual abuse: schools and non-schools contexts*

Participants sexually abused in the context of schools tended to be older when the sexual abuse began than those sexually abused in other contexts (see Figure 4.1). Eighty-two<sup>22</sup> percent of participants sexually abused in the context of schools were aged eight or older when the sexual abuse began, a greater proportion compared to the 49 percent of participants sexually abused in other contexts. Around a third, or 34 percent, of participants sexually abused in the context of schools first experienced sexual abuse between the ages of 12 and 15 years, compared to 16 percent of those sexually abused in other contexts.

#### *State, independent, special and 'other' schools*

A high proportion of participants were aged eight and older at the time of the sexual abuse for all four categories of school, with the highest proportion of participants in this age bracket reported for independent schools at 89 percent and special schools at 87 percent, compared to 79 percent for state schools and 68 percent for 'other' schools. A higher proportion of participants in special schools were aged 12 to 15 at the start of the sexual abuse at 38 percent, compared to state schools at 33 percent and independent schools and 'other' schools, which both had 32 percent of participants in this age bracket.

#### *Residential and non-residential schools*

Given that the majority of residential schools were independent or special schools, it is unsurprising that the findings are similar to the one above. Eighty-nine percent of participants in residential schools were aged eight or older at the time of the sexual abuse, which was a higher proportion than 80 percent of participants aged eight or older at the time of the sexual abuse in non-residential.

#### *Information about participants at the time of participating in the Truth Project*

Table 4.1 shows demographic information about participants at the time of participating in the Truth Project. Fifty-five percent of those who experienced sexual abuse in the context of schools identified as male, higher than the 26 percent of participants sexually abused in other contexts who identified as male.

<sup>22</sup> When combining multiple categories rounding will account for any disparity between the number within the text and the figures.



Figure 4.1 Age sexual abuse began, schools compared to other contexts

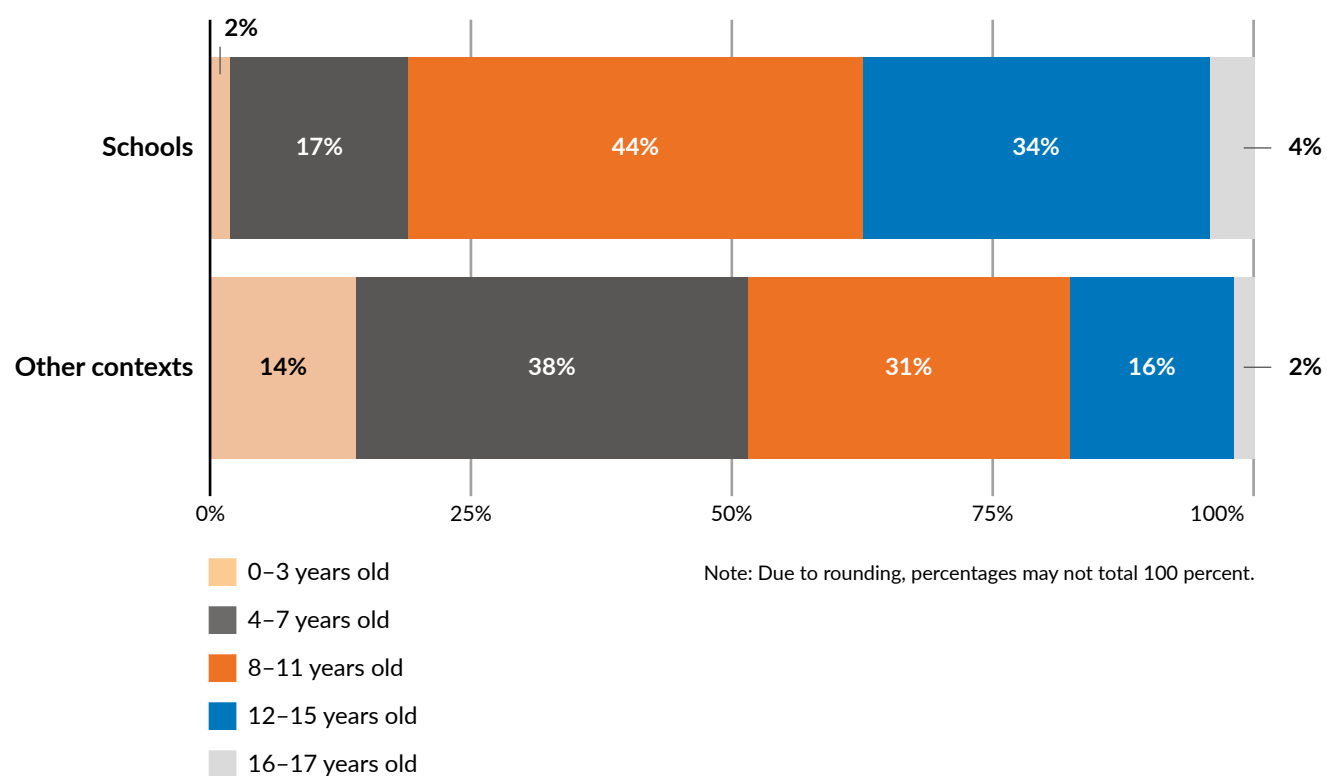


Table 4.1 Demographic information about participants at time of participating in the Truth Project

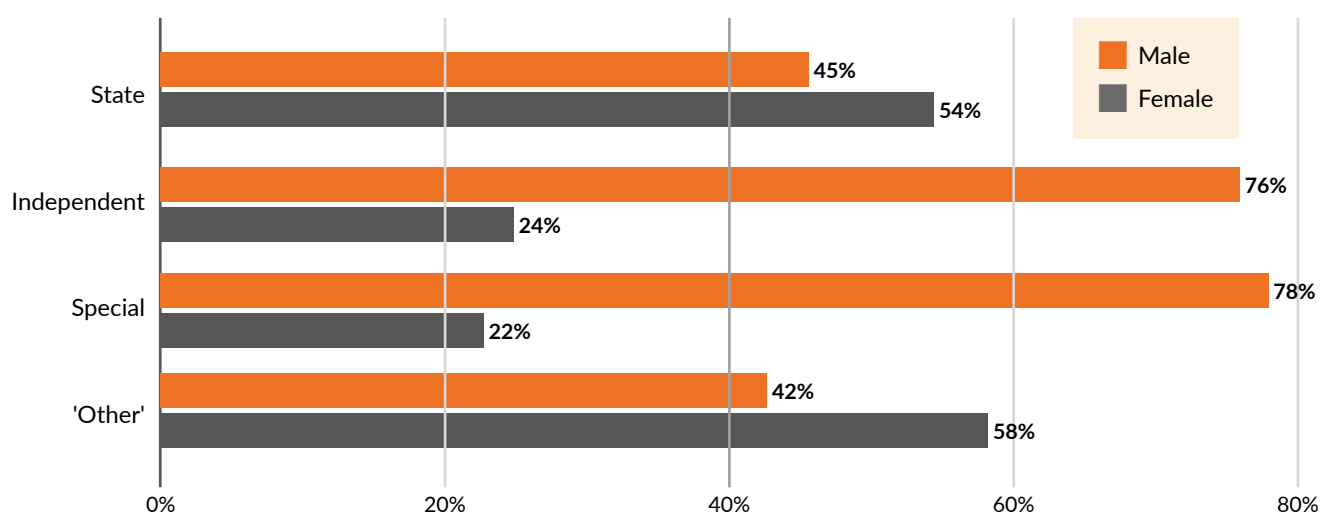
Characteristic (at time of attending Truth Project)		Schools context		Other contexts	
		number	percent	number	percent
Gender	Male	374	55	909	26
	Female	301	44	2,560	74
	Other	4	1	8	0
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority	33	5	253	7
	White	478	69	2,348	66
	Unknown	180	26	977	27
Reported illness or condition	Yes	321	46	1,654	46
	No	370	54	1,924	54

The proportion of participants sexually abused in the context of schools who reported a disability, illness or condition that affected their lives was 46 percent, which was the same proportion of participants sexually abused in other contexts. Of these participants, 31 percent reported that they were affected by the disability, illness or condition at the time of the sexual abuse, compared to 21 percent in other contexts. A range of different disabilities, illnesses and conditions were reported by participants who were sexually abused in the context of schools and they included those that affected mobility, mental health and learning.

#### State, independent, special and 'other' schools

State schools and the 'other' category of schools had a much more even split of male and female participants (see Figure 4.2), with 54 percent female participants in state schools, and 58 percent female participants in 'other' schools, than was seen for independent schools and special schools, where 24 and 22 percent, respectively, of participants were female.

Figure 4.2 Sex of victims and survivors across school categories



#### Residential and non-residential schools

There were large differences between residential and non-residential schools in the proportion of male and female participants in the quantitative sample. Twenty-one percent of participants who reported sexual abuse in residential schools were female, and 78 percent were male, compared to a 50 percent female 49 percent male split in those participants who reported sexual abuse in non-residential schools.

## 4.2 Participants' backgrounds, families and childhoods

### Qualitative information

Twelve participants in the qualitative sample lived at home with their families during their childhoods, one of whom was sent to a residential school in early adolescence after contact with the police for a misdemeanour. Five participants attended and boarded at residential secondary schools from the ages of 10 and 13 years old, and one of these had also boarded at a residential preparatory school from a young age. Across all school types participants described coming from a range of family and social backgrounds. Some had stable and supportive families; some described their family as 'vulnerable' (due to issues around parental mental health problems, or substance misuse for example); and some talked about coming from low income backgrounds, describing their families as 'poor' or 'underprivileged'.

The majority of participants in the qualitative sample described a lack of close relationships to one or both parents, as well as disrupted families due to their parents' experiences of bereavement, abandonment, physical and mental illness or work pressures. Many participants talked about absent fathers. In other cases, when fathers were present, participants described psychological distance due to the lack of a close relationship. In some families, both parents were 'absent.'



*... we were maintained, but there was no feeling of love and involvement.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Two participants talked about experiencing physical or emotional abuse from family members prior to being sexually abused at school. One participant described her childhood as:



*One of utter neglect and emotional abuse interspersed with sexual abuse, either from our father or in my case our maternal grandfather and his paedophile friends, and from the men our mother pimped us to.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Three-quarters of the participants in the qualitative sample described their own individual characteristics or experiences that were exploited and manipulated by perpetrators. These included characteristics such as being bullied at school, academic, fascinated by science, keen to learn, and having sporting ambitions. A couple of participants talked about craving attention due to the lack of love and attention they received at home, while some participants highlighted their lack of emotional or physical development as children.



*... [I was] kind of intellectually very well developed and emotionally kind of less than zero I think. You know and I having, you know, looked at myself over the years I have a decent IQ but my EQ<sup>23</sup> was non-existent.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

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<sup>23</sup> Emotional quotient or emotional intelligence, relating to a person's abilities in perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotion.

## 4.3 Schooling and education

### Quantitative information

The majority of participants sexually abused in the context of schools reported that the sexual abuse was perpetrated at school: 624 participants, or 90 percent. Some of these 624 participants were sexually abused on more than one occasion across different school types.<sup>24</sup>

There are more independent and special schools in the quantitative sample than would be expected given the proportion of these schools currently and in previous decades. Just under one-half of all of one-third of cases were within independent schools, yet only 6 to 8 percent of pupils attended independent schools from the 1950s onwards (Bolton, 2012). Special schools currently make up 4 percent of all schools and accounted for 5 percent of schools in the mid 1970s; in our sample, 6 percent of sexual abuse that could be categorised was perpetrated in special schools.

The representation of residential schools and the sexual abuse reported within these schools in the quantitative sample is also markedly higher than current and past proportions of these schools in England and Wales. Where schools could be categorised as residential or non-residential schools in our sample, over two-fifths of sexual abuse was perpetrated in a residential school, however only approximately 2 percent of schools in England and Wales are residential and 1 percent of children board at these schools (see Table 4.2). Independent and special schools, which account for the bulk of residential schools, accounted for just under 8 percent of all schools in the mid 1970s (Bolton, 2012).

Table 4.2 Experiences of sexual abuse across school type

School	Number	As a percentage of all school accounts
State	309	45
Independent	200	29
Special	41	6
Other	97	14
Residential	217	42
Non-residential	302	58

<sup>24</sup> There are instances, for example, where someone may have been sexually abused in a state school and an independent school, therefore the total number in Table 4.2 is higher than the 624 participants who experienced sexual abuse in a school location.

## Qualitative information

Participants in the qualitative sample described attending a variety of different schools, as shown in Table 3.1. These included state schools, independent schools, residential schools, special schools, a music school and a sports college. Five participants attended a residential school as a boarder, one of these schools was for students with dyslexia, and one was described as a school 'for troubled children', which catered for students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD). All other participants in the qualitative sample attended school on a day basis, although three attended residential schools as day students.

Participants reported mixed experiences regarding their schooling and education. Some participants reported that prior to being sexually abused, they had good school experiences and were doing well academically.

“ I would like to think that I had an okay school experience. Year 7 and Year 8 was really good. And then came Year 9. And I met my science teacher [perpetrator].

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### *The role and extent of school in participants' lives as children*

Schooling is an important feature in most children's lives. Some of the participants in the qualitative sample discussed features of the school as well as or in addition to their own or families' views and ambitions that meant that school had additional significance. Several participants were involved in extra-curricular lessons, activities and trips such as sports clubs or music lessons that were arranged within the schools. One participant described how hard his parents worked to send him to a private school so he could benefit from the education and opportunities it might offer him. Another participant explained that his mother sent him to an all-male school to ensure he had positive male influences in his life. For some participants, the school was meant to offer extra support in relation to additional learning as well as emotional, social and behavioural needs; for other participants, school was important because of their particular ambitions or interests.

“ I was, you know, science was my thing and I was absolutely fascinated, and I got sort of, you know, teacher's pet is how it seemed and you know it seemed good and it was attention.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Residential schools had a more extended role in the participants' lives, primarily because these schools were also where they lived. Some participants who attended residential schools highlighted the all-encompassing nature of boarding school life. They described how their school life was very often merged with their social and private lives because activities such as sleeping, eating and leisure time all occurred within the school grounds, and often with members of school staff. One participant described her school as providing an escape from the abuse she suffered at home:

“ It enabled me to escape my totally dysfunctional home and the sexual and emotional abuse and neglect.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In summary, the information shared by Truth Project participants revealed that overall there was a higher proportion of participants who experienced sexual abuse in the context of schools who were male, compared to those sexually abused in other contexts. This was the case for special and residential schools; however, female participants accounted for half of the participants sexually abused in state schools and almost three-fifths of the participants sexually abused in 'other' types of school. This finding is consistent with the results of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia (2017), where the majority of victims and survivors who provided accounts of sexual abuse in the context of schools were male.

The age at which the sexual abuse began differed between participants; however, compared to sexual abuse in other contexts, sexual abuse in the context of schools began when children were older. This older age range was seen particularly in independent, special and residential schools. Participants described a range of family and individual characteristics. These characteristics included absent parents, poor attention span, lack of emotional intelligence, seeking attention and also aspects such as academic interests and sporting ambitions. Participants' experiences of school also varied. Some enjoyed school and were doing well academically until the sexual abuse began.

## *Chapter 5*

# Participant experiences of child sexual abuse in the context of schools

This chapter details the context and nature of the sexual abuse experienced by participants in the context of schools. Information is provided about the location, timing and nature of the sexual abuse as well as details of who the perpetrators were and their roles in or links to schools. Other types of (non-sexual) abuse that participants experienced in the context of schools are also reported. It addresses the research sub-question:

- What do people share about the nature of the child sexual abuse they experienced in the context of schools?

## 5.1 Perpetrators

### Quantitative information

#### *Perpetrators: schools and non-schools contexts*

Seventy-one percent of participants sexually abused in the context of schools reported that they were sexually abused by teachers or educational staff, with the second most frequently reported perpetrator being a peer or older child, at 15 percent. Some 7 percent of participants described sexual abuse in the context of schools that was perpetrated by clergy or church related staff, and 5 percent talked about perpetrators who were ancillary staff, such as cleaners, caretakers and cooks.

The majority of participants sexually abused in the context of schools reported being sexually abused by male perpetrators (95 percent), with 7 percent reporting female perpetrators.<sup>25</sup> This was similar to participants in other contexts, of whom 92 percent described male perpetrators and 7 percent reported female perpetrators.

#### *Perpetrators: state, independent, special and 'other' schools*

There were some differences in the perpetrators described across the four school types. State schools had a lower proportion of sexual abuse perpetrated by older children or peers at 14 percent, compared to 19 percent in independent, 22 percent in special and 19 percent in 'other' schools (Figure 5.1). This could reflect the fact that the majority of independent and special schools in the quantitative sample are residential.

#### *Perpetrators: residential and non-residential schools*

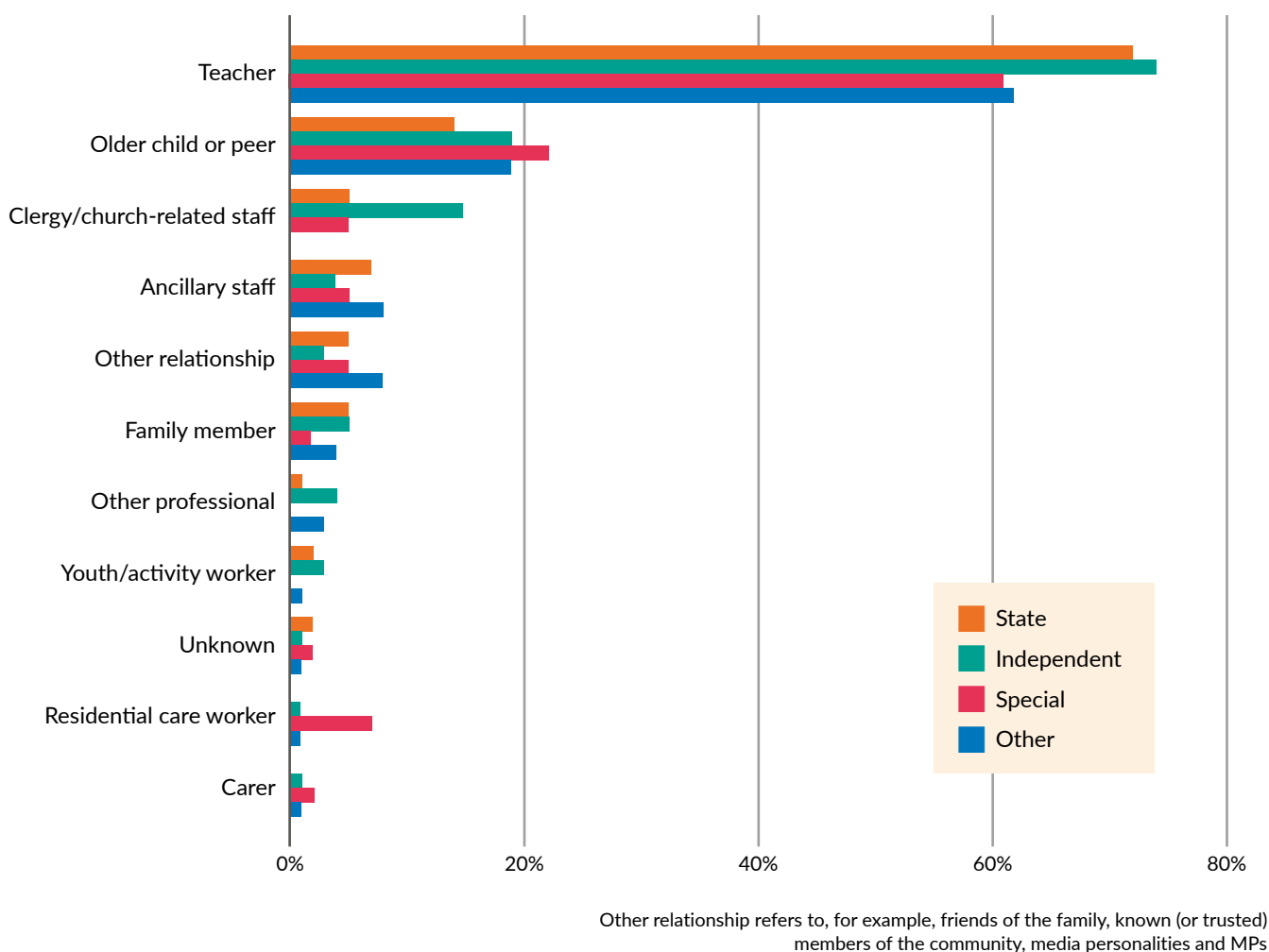
Similar proportions of perpetrators in residential and non-residential schools were teachers, at 71 percent and 75 percent respectively. There was a difference between the proportion of sexual abuse perpetrated by older children or peers, where 21 percent of perpetrators in residential schools reported were peers, compared to 10 percent in non-residential schools.

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<sup>25</sup> These figures may include episodes that could have been outside a school context. Some participants report more than one perpetrator across episodes of sexual abuse, so percentage totals do not sum to 100%.



Figure 5.1 Perpetrators within a school context across school type



## Qualitative information

Reflecting the quantitative data, in the majority of the cases selected for qualitative analysis the participants were sexually abused by teachers, two of whom were also Catholic priests. One participant reported being sexually abused by a female teacher, while all the other teacher perpetrators were described as male teachers.

In most of these cases, participants reported that the teachers had acted alone. However, one participant described how he was sexually and physically abused in a residential school by four teachers acting together to ‘punish’ him and facilitate the sexual abuse.

In three of the cases in the qualitative sample, participants described sexual abuse perpetrated by other students. In one of these cases, a female participant experienced sexual abuse at secondary school by three girls who were in the year above her. In another case, a seven-year-old boy sexually abused a female participant when she was aged four. In the third of these cases, the participant experienced extreme and prolonged sexual and physical abuse by two older boys.

## 5.2 Location and timing of sexual abuse

### Quantitative information

In 90 percent of cases where participants were sexually abused in the context of schools, participants reported that the abuse had taken place within school premises/grounds. Some participants described how they were sexually abused in other locations. For example, 4 percent of the participants sexually abused by teachers and school staff reported that this abuse took place on the premises of a religious organisation.

The 1970s was the decade in which the sexual abuse began for the highest proportion of participants sexually abused in the context of schools at 35 percent, which was a similar proportion to the 32 percent of participants sexually abused in other contexts (see Table 5.1). A lower proportion of participants sexually abused in the context of schools were abused from the 1990s onwards: 14 percent compared to 20 percent of those sexually abused in other contexts.

Table 5.1 Decade sexual abuse began

Decade sexual abuse began	Number	As a percentage of all school accounts*
1940s	9	1
1950s	44	7
1960s	134	21
1970s	222	35
1980s	133	21
1990s	57	9
2000s	29	5
2010s	1	0

\* Where this information is known.

### Qualitative information

In all cases in the qualitative sample, participants reported that they were sexually abused multiple times by the same perpetrator(s). As was shown in the quantitative data, most participants reported that sexual abuse started on school premises and in some instances then moved to other locations. In some cases, perpetrators used small, lockable or isolated rooms, sometimes with no windows, to which the perpetrators had restricted the access. Such locations included the perpetrators' office, storerooms and other lockable rooms. Some locations where sexual abuse began were more accessible to other staff/students but were 'private' spaces, where there was limited general access and visibility. These included, for example, school toilets, children's bedrooms and dormitories in residential schools, and a science laboratory during break and lunchtimes. In one case, the sexual abuse took place in school premises in 'plain sight', when the perpetrator sexually abused the victim at the front of the class, where the participant reported that *"...he used to put his hand up my shorts"* [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools].

In residential schools, particularly where staff were resident, sexual abuse was also perpetrated in locations that were in school grounds, but away from classrooms. Participants reported sexual abuse taking place in perpetrators' living areas within these schools, such as homes in the grounds and 'live-in' rooms in school buildings, unused buildings in the school grounds and on the playing fields. Participants who boarded at residential schools spoke about how there were few places for them to either escape to, or hide in. As a result, spaces such as dormitories or bathrooms, which should have been private and safe, became sites of sexual abuse for some participants.

Participants described how sexual abuse that was perpetrated away from school premises and grounds often took place in perpetrators' homes. Participants talked about how some perpetrators created environments in their homes that were attractive to children. One participant, who was the only one in the qualitative sample who did not report sexual abuse taking place on school premises, explained how the perpetrator had a youth club environment in his house.

“ ... he had a jukebox and a massive telly – then, for a massive telly. And it was all set up like a, sort of, youth club. ... it was a good laugh. You know, you went to his house and you could stay up late and doss about.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In a few cases, participants were sexually abused in a range of locations in addition to the perpetrators' homes. These included perpetrators' cars, a sailing boat, and a bus that a perpetrator used to take children on trips.

“ ... he had adapted this bus – I mean – so that some of the seats were – you know, where there would have been a table, it had been taken out and just mattresses put down.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

A couple of participants talked about perpetrators taking groups of children away on trips, where the sexual abuse had been perpetrated in youth hostels both in the UK and overseas. **“So, it was kind of like anything went on these trips. It was mostly girls”** [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools].

The timing of sexual abuse was linked to the locations in which the abuse was perpetrated. Most sexual abuse that took place in schools occurred during the school day including in class, during break periods and lunchtimes. This seemed to happen especially at the start of the sexual abuse. Sexual abuse by teachers often took place in class time or perpetrators used class time to create opportunities for the sexual abuse, for example by telling participants that they needed additional tutoring or support. This support or tutoring then took place in breaks/lunchtime, or in one case as 'extra-curricular' activities after school. In residential schools sexual abuse frequently took place overnight. In one case, at night-time two other students would take the participant from his dormitory to other areas of the school that were unused at this time to sexually abuse him.

## 5.3 Nature of the sexual abuse

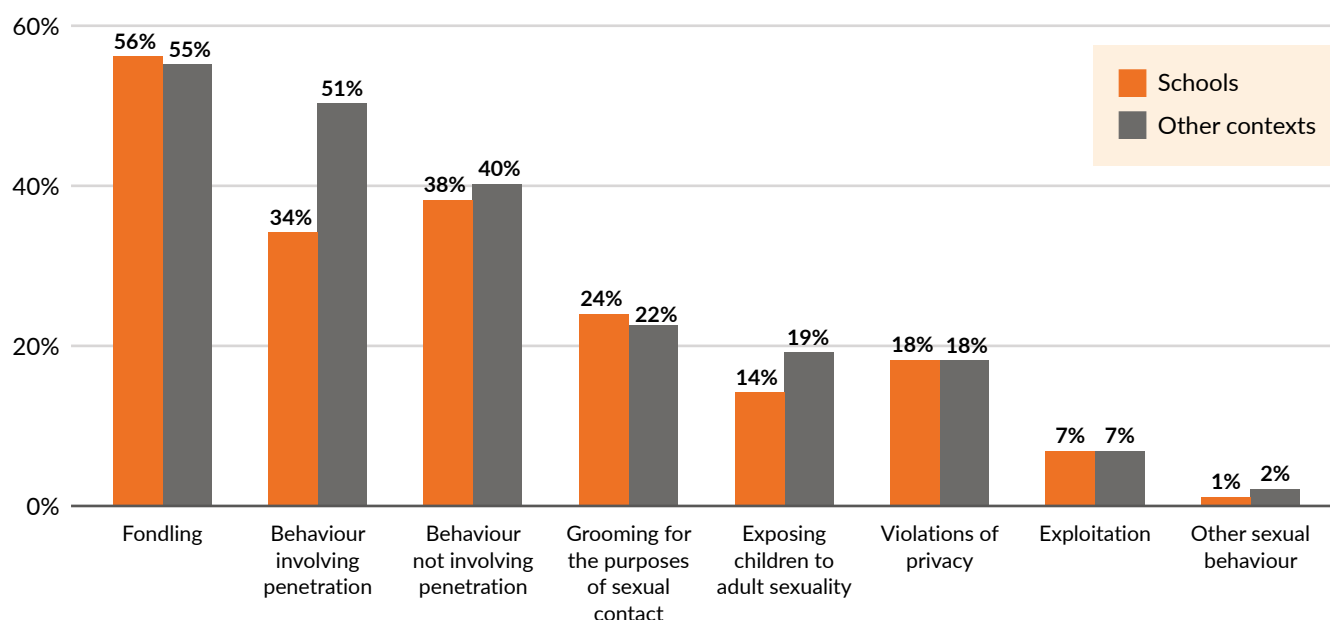
### Quantitative information

#### *Schools and non-schools contexts*

Over half of participants sexually abused in the context of schools spoke about fondling, at 56 percent, followed by 38 percent who spoke about other forms of sexual abuse not involving penetration (see Figure 5.2). The proportion of participants sexually abused in other contexts who reported fondling was similar (55 percent) as was sexual abuse not involving penetration (40 percent). There was a lower proportion of those reporting behaviour involving penetration in a school context, when compared to other contexts, at 34 percent and 51 percent, respectively.

Reflecting the fact that the majority of the accounts from participants sexually abused in the contexts of schools predate the 2000s, only a small number of participants reported types of sexual abuse that occurred online. So 1 percent of participants reported being exposed to adult sexuality online, and 1 percent reported experiencing online grooming.

Figure 5.2 Nature of sexual abuse, schools compared to other contexts<sup>26</sup>



#### *State, independent, special and 'other' schools*

Across the four different school categories, those attending special schools reported the highest levels of behaviour involving penetration: 41 percent compared to 34 percent in state schools, 35 percent in independent schools and 35 percent in 'other' schools. A slightly higher proportion of participants attending state schools reported grooming: 29 percent compared to 25 percent in independent schools, 20 percent in special schools and 14 percent in 'other' schools.

<sup>26</sup> Full definitions of the nature of sexual abuse can be found in Appendix A: Glossary.

### Residential and non-residential schools

Sixty percent of participants in non-residential schools reported fondling and 28 percent reported grooming, similar levels compared to residential schools where 56 percent reported fondling and 24 percent reported grooming. Thirty-eight percent of those participants that attended residential schools reported behaviours involving penetration, a higher level compared to 32 percent of those that attended non-residential schools.

## Qualitative information

### Onset and grooming

For a small number of participants, the onset of the sexual abuse was an immediate commencement of contact sexual abuse. In the majority of cases however, participants talked about how perpetrators would set up opportunities to sexually abuse them over a period of time, which gave the perpetrators time to groom the participants. Many participants explained how perpetrators befriended and created relationships with them prior to the sexual abuse.

“ I felt like I was speaking to my friend, not my teacher, and an adult friend. And he made me feel very intelligent.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

“ ... it was a gradual grooming, and it was fulfilling my need to be needed.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

A couple of participants noted that the perpetrators selected children who were likely to respond given their vulnerabilities (discussed in the previous chapter). In one case, the participant described how the perpetrator exploited his vulnerability by providing him with a 'safe space' away from the other students who were bullying him:

“ I also began to visit [perpetrator] at other times to avoid the bullying and because I didn't belong to any of the other groups.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Once perpetrators had created opportunities to be with children, participants described how they then escalated sexualised behaviours over time.

“ It started with sort of looking and touching, and then went onto full sexual acts. But I didn't know what he was doing to me.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In some cases, participants explained how they believed that they were in romantic relationships with the perpetrators, whom they loved and protected (see Middleton, 2017; Dutton and Painter, 1993; Ferenczi, 1949, for an explanation of why a victim and survivor may become attached to and protective of a perpetrator). One participant described how the perpetrator talked about being her 'boyfriend' and how the perpetrator made her feel responsible for him and his happiness. These types of interactions tended to be experienced by participants who were teenagers when the sexual abuse began.

“ I became very protective of him, because [perpetrator] said, “You must ...” or, “If you love me – I love you ...” He always said, “I’m risking my life. I’m risking my job”.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

“ I survived by kidding myself that he ‘loved me’ really.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Some participants talked about how perpetrators made them feel that they were responsible for the sexual abuse, such as by encouraging them to ‘choose’ to have sex with them. Four participants (who between them, were sexually abused in the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s) noted that perpetrators talked about them being 16, referencing the age of consent in the UK, and how sex with a person aged 16 and above was legal. However the perpetrators were overlooking their roles in positions of trust (direct reference to abuse of position of trust was introduced in the Sexual Offences Act 2003). These accounts demonstrate another form of manipulation of the participants by the perpetrators where they sought to legitimise the sexual abuse by reference to the legal age of consent, making participants feel special and as though the ‘relationship’ was consensual. This led to participants feeling responsible and guilty.

“ I remember her [perpetrator] saying, “Well, at least you’re legal now,” you know because I’d just tripped 16 by a matter of a couple of weeks. So technically yes, I was and there wasn’t a law about position of authority. And for many many years I’ve thought, “Well yes, well I was legal so that’s kind of my fault and that’s my responsibility”.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In some cases, perpetrators made threats or engaged in coercive and controlling behaviours in order to maintain the sexual abuse, with some perpetrators emotionally blackmailing participants to maintain the ‘relationship’.

“ He blackmailed me telling me that he would refuse to teach me both piano and music if I didn’t allow him to continue with “our affair” as he referred to it.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### *Nature of sexual abuse*

The majority of sexual abuse reported in the qualitative sample was contact sexual abuse, with most participants reporting multiple and frequent incidents by a single perpetrator. Fondling was most frequently reported, as was also shown in the quantitative data.

“ ... his hands went down my shorts and he started touching me. And again, it was during the sit-ups, his hands went down my shorts, he was fondling my genitals.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

The sexual abuse included a range of sexual acts including digital penetration, forced oral sex, forced masturbation of the perpetrator, masturbation of the victim and survivor and sexual intercourse. Most experienced more than one type of contact sexual abuse. In some cases, non-contact sexual abuse took place prior to or along with contact sexual abuse.

“ I feel, I do now believe that I was his slave. I feel like I became a slave to him for sex. I was his sex slave. And that’s the only way that I can put it.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

One participant explained how the incidents of sexual abuse could often last two to three hours at a time, and how perpetrators became more violent and “*sadistic*” over time. One participant explained how the perpetrator tried to make him perform sexual acts on another child, but the participant refused.

“ At one time he suggested that I might perform a sex act with another one of his victims in his bedroom.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

One participant described how the perpetrator got her (and a friend) to “*crawl around ... topless as, like, a game*”, while he (and his wife) watched [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools]. A few participants remembered having photographs taken of them as part of the sexual abuse.

## 5.4 Duration of sexual abuse and when the sexual abuse ended

### Quantitative information

Some participants who shared their experience through the Truth Project talked about multiple, distinct episodes of sexual abuse. In our analysis we define an ‘episode’ as one or more instances of sexual abuse involving a particular perpetrator(s) or institution(s). It may involve a single instance of sexual abuse or relate to more than one instance which takes place over a period of time. It may also involve a single perpetrator, or multiple perpetrators who have colluded together. This means that experiences involving child sexual abuse or exploitation perpetrated by a group would be classified as one episode of sexual abuse. Where a participant reports multiple episodes of sexual abuse, this means they have distinct experiences of sexual abuse, involving different, unconnected perpetrators and institutions. For example, an individual may have been sexually abused by a family member in a domestic setting, and then experienced sexual abuse perpetrated by a teacher in a school; this would be classified as two episodes of sexual abuse.

Of the participants who were sexually abused in the context of schools, 39 percent<sup>27</sup> reported experiencing multiple episodes of sexual abuse, a higher proportion compared to those sexually abused in other contexts, where 31 percent reported multiple episodes. Further information on this can be found in section 8.2.

The sexual abuse that participants experienced varied in terms of duration, with some reporting a single instance of sexual abuse and others reporting abuse that lasted for more than 10 years. Participants sexually abused in the context of schools reported an average duration of 2.2 years of sexual abuse, with participants sexually abused in other contexts reporting an average of 4.4 years in total.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> This includes participants who experienced multiple episodes of sexual abuse across different institutional contexts, ie not all episodes may have been in the context of schools.

<sup>28</sup> The average duration of sexual abuse is an average of the total duration of sexual abuse across all experiences in an episode reported by participants.

## Qualitative information

The duration of sexual abuse in the qualitative cases reflects the quantitative data. In most of the cases in the qualitative sample, participants experienced sexual abuse over many months, and in some cases, the sexual abuse took place over many years. The sexual abuse of one participant lasted for two years and he quantified exactly what this meant:

“ You know, in a two-year period which in school term times, school – it was around about 70 weeks, I think ... Give or take a week. In that period of time, I was raped around about 300 times.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In the qualitative cases, participants described how the sexual abuse ended in a number of different ways. In a few cases, the participants' parents had intervened. In other cases, participants described how they themselves tried to end the sexual abuse several times, but the perpetrators manipulated them either through emotional blackmail or threats and the sexual abuse continued.

“ He [perpetrator] would consistently contact me. He would turn up at my mum and dad's house. .... But he's so – he would not leave me alone. He continuously hounded me. He would emotionally blackmail me.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In two cases, participants described how wanting to protect younger family members from similar sexual abuse was a factor in enabling them to end the sexual abuse.

“ ... And I remember thinking, “I want to protect my sister”. So, I wrote him a letter and said, “If you ever lay a finger on my sister, I'm going to the police. That's it”. So, he never did.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

For some participants, the sexual abuse ended by them leaving the school. Two participants ran away from school to try to end the sexual abuse. For another couple of participants, the sexual abuse ended when participants moved to different educational establishments. One participant reported that the 'relationship' (as he described it) with a female teacher “*fizzled out*” when he went to university. The other reported that the sexual abuse by a male teacher ended when she left her school to study for A-levels at another school.

## 5.5 Experiences of other forms of abuse

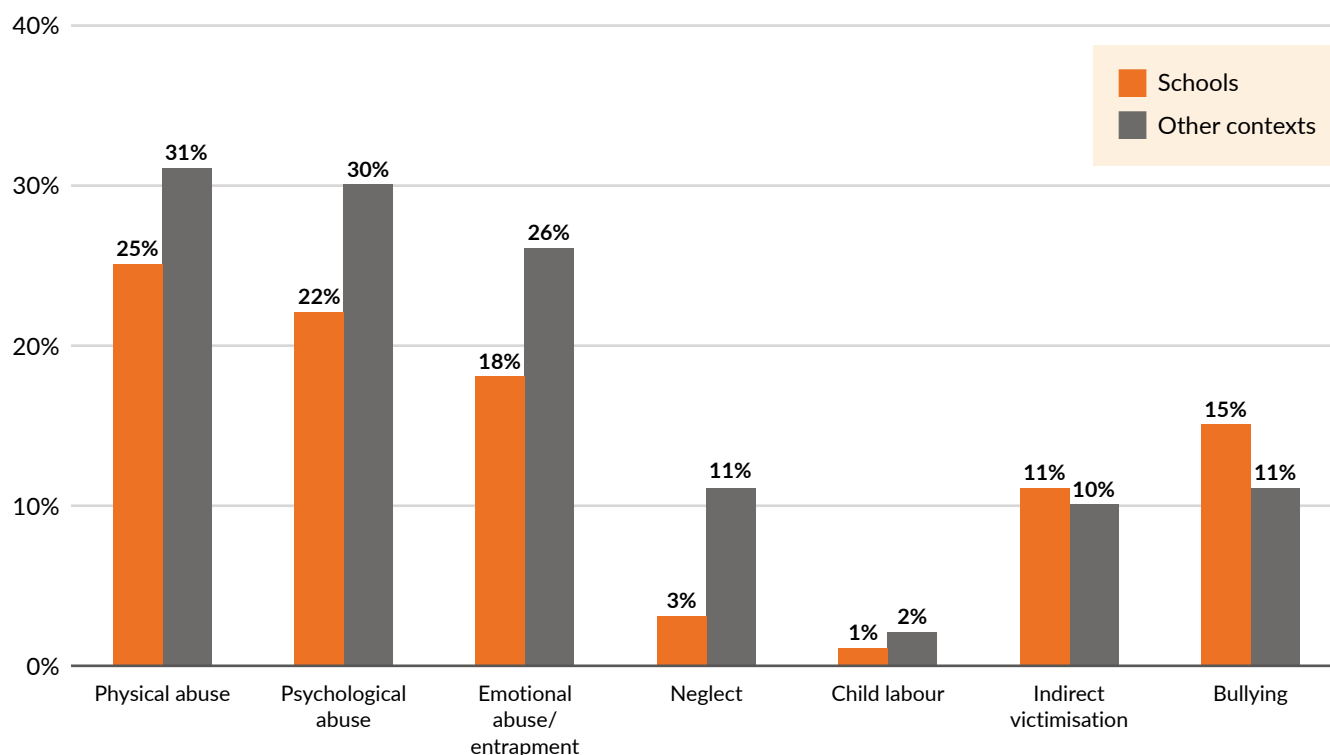
### Quantitative information

#### *Schools and non-schools contexts*

In some cases, participants reported experiencing child sexual abuse alongside other forms of abuse by the same perpetrator, such as physical and emotional abuse, and neglect. Of those abused in the context of schools, 48 percent talked about other forms of abuse they experienced alongside the sexual abuse, a similar proportion to the 52 percent of those abused in other contexts. However, a higher proportion of those abused in the context of schools experienced bullying and indirect victimisation, where they may have been a witness to abuse (Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3 Other forms of abuse, schools compared to other contexts



#### State, independent, special and other schools

Across the four different school types, a lower proportion of participants who attended state schools reported physical abuse: 22 percent in state schools, compared to 30 percent in independent schools and 32 percent in special schools. Similarly, a lower proportion reported psychological abuse: 20 percent in state schools, compared to 26 percent in independent schools and 27 percent in special schools. Those who attended ‘other’ schools reported very similar levels of physical and psychological abuse to state schools at 23 percent and 22 percent respectively.

#### Residential and non-residential schools

A higher proportion of participants who attended residential schools reported physical abuse in addition to the sexual abuse: 30 percent, compared to 21 percent in non-residential schools. A higher proportion also reported psychological abuse: 29 percent, compared to 18 percent in non-residential schools, and bullying: 19 percent, compared to 11 percent in non-residential schools.

#### Qualitative information

Reflecting the quantitative data, only two participants reported experiencing physical abuse that was linked to the sexual abuse. Both of these participants attended residential schools and gave many accounts of physical assaults.

“... he [Perpetrator] was shouting, “I will kill you; I will kill you, boy”; he was just a torrent of swearing and – he just went manic. And I was screaming and screaming and screaming, and the cane was smashed on the whole of my body, from the soft part of your legs, where it really hurt, to the neck.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

The other participant described how the physical abuse became more “*tortuous*” before and after the sexual abuse.

“ And they’d throw darts – use me as a dart board ... – and throw cricket balls at me.. ... And had, later, as time progressed, brought in other things like – boiling water, poured on my buttocks and my backside.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Many accounts in the qualitative sample, as discussed previously, revealed psychological abuse and manipulation from perpetrators. Three of the participants recalled experiencing bullying related to the sexual abuse in the context of schools. In addition, other incidents of abuse unrelated to the sexual abuse in the context of schools was also identified by participants. As noted in chapter 4, a couple of participants described additional forms of abuse from family members. A couple of participants talked about how some members of school staff were physically abusive to pupils.

“ He was the most terrifying person you could imagine. He was a horrible man. I remember one occasion when – in sports, there was a locker room downstairs ... He came and he had everybody line up and searched for a suitable plimsoll for which to beat every boy that was there.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Another participant described racism in the school she attended.

“ And also there was a lot of racism at that school. And the racism, I say from the teachers ... because they were just unprofessional and the way they would speak to us, the way they would look at us, inappropriate comments they would make to the students, because, as I said, we were all Asian and all the teachers were white.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

The research findings discussed in this chapter show that the majority of perpetrators for the quantitative and qualitative samples of participants were male teachers or other educational staff. Many participants experienced harmful sexual behaviour and sexual abuse from their peers or older children, with more participants who attended residential schools reporting sexual abuse perpetrated by other children. Most participants reported contact sexual abuse, with fondling being more prevalent than penetrative sexual behaviours. The majority of participants were sexually abused frequently by perpetrators, typically for many months or years. Participants sexually abused in residential schools reported additional physical abuse, and the all-encompassing nature of residential schools facilitated greater access to participants and opportunities for abuse.

The findings around victims and survivors’ perceptions of being in a ‘relationship’ with perpetrators are consistent with the findings described by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia (2017). Many forms of manipulative and grooming behaviours were recalled by the participants in the present study, types of behaviour also reported to the Royal Commission.

## *Chapter 6*

# Institutional context and knowledge of the sexual abuse

This chapter describes the characteristics and features of schools and how these facilitated the perpetration of child sexual abuse. It considers what knowledge school staff and others had about sexual abuse that was occurring at the time. Using primarily qualitative data, this chapter explores the research sub-questions:

- How much did institutions know about what was happening?
- What have victims and survivors said about whether anything could have been done by the institutions at the time to prevent the sexual abuse?

## 6.1 Characteristics of schools

### Qualitative information

The participants in the qualitative sample attended a range of schools, as shown in Table 3.1, chapter 3, of this report. These included state and independent schools, as well as residential and non-residential schools, some of which had both day and boarding pupils. The schools attended ranged in size, with some being small state schools or privately run primary schools, while others were large secondary schools. Some schools had extensive buildings and/or grounds.

Fewer than half of the participants in the qualitative sample gave clear indications of their views of the schools in which they were sexually abused. Four reported positive views, stating the schools were good, well established, or beautiful, with many facilities. They were perceived as being able to offer good learning support and opportunities, in some cases particularly in respect of sport or music.

Four participants had more negative views of the schools they attended.

“ ... it wasn't like the most disciplined school. ... my school was – wasn't the best school.  
Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Participants in the qualitative sample also talked about specific features of the schools that made sexual abuse more likely to occur.

### Type of school and physical features

The type and physical features of the school were features in many of the cases that were spoken about. Participants who attended residential schools talked about the constant access to children which they felt gave perpetrators (both staff and peers) a great deal of power and control. In addition, these schools and those premises in which staff and their families resided had large grounds and buildings with many rooms, some of which were less frequently accessed or hidden, or were controlled by perpetrators. For example, one participant explained that his school building had many rooms that were not accessible to students in normal circumstances. In other schools, perpetrators had access to offices, labs, gyms, or store rooms that they controlled and which they used to sexually abuse pupils.

### *Lack of supervision, monitoring and safeguarding*

Lack of supervision, monitoring and safeguarding by teachers and other staff was a feature of many schools talked about. This feature was exacerbated in some schools by the cultures created by the staff, such as poor discipline, use and normalisation of aggression, violence and sexual misconduct that facilitated physical and sexual abuse.

“ I have often asked myself, “Where were the teachers?”, how could pupils be in music rooms every break experimenting sexually without anyone knowing. We were just juniors.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Two participants described their residential schools as ‘progressive’. One of these participants described a culture in her residential school of sexual misconduct that ranged from inappropriate non-contact sexualised behaviour to sexual abuse, which was underpinned by an acceptance and normalisation of ‘relationships’ between staff and students.

“ It was a ‘progressive’ school and provided a great deal of freedom to the pupils to smoke, swear, skip lessons, etc.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

“ A ‘progressive’ boarding school is the ideal location for a child abuser to thrive.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Another participant, who was sexually and physically abused at his residential school by two older students, discussed the school’s reliance on older children to ‘police’ and discipline younger children.

“ ... the boarding school is quite unique in a lot of ways. It’s set up to be self-policed by – by, you know, a peer system of, you know, senior boys, more senior boys, which is centuries old.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Many participants described behaviours that supported sexual abuse, or abuse taking place in plain sight, with staff and students knowing about these behaviours even if they did not know about the sexual abuse, or perpetrators’ motives. For example, the school trips and youth clubs organised by one teacher on his own that gave him access to children were known about, as were extra-curricular one-to-one sessions.

“ Everyone knew what was going on in terms of having these sessions, because I wanted to be part of the football team, and there were three or four other students at the same time, who were having these private sessions, which I wasn’t aware of at the time.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### Reputation and status of teachers

Some participants indicated that the teachers/perpetrators had power over pupils, and in some cases staff, who were then paying deference to them, by the nature of their roles. Perpetrators had good reputations with other staff, helped them restore discipline in their classes, or were loved by pupils who considered them to be good teachers or 'cool'.



*And everybody loved him. He was such a cool teacher. He was known – everybody loved him.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools



*Even my mates now, when I'm at home, they say, "Oh, do you remember [Perpetrator]? He was such a legend..."*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In some instances, these feelings of respect towards staff extended to parents.



*... my parents went on and on to me as a child about how amazing this teacher was and how brilliant he was. And my dad really respected him. My mum thought he was great because he was nurturing and he was recognising my academic ability and whatever.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

One participant noted that the perpetrator's status as a supply teacher enabled sexual abuse as: *"... he was never around anywhere long enough for them to really catch on"* [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools].

### Few protective features

Very few protective features of the schools were described by participants. In some cases participants talked about other students trying to prevent the sexual abuse. For example one participant described how another student warned them to stay away from the perpetrator.



*She told me to stay away from him. And I – I thought she didn't want me to be with him because she was jealous. I genuinely thought she was jealous, and I was only [age] at the time and I thought she was my competition. I really did. I was so stupid ... I didn't listen to her.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

A small number of participants explained that there was a teacher at the school who they felt able to report the sexual abuse to, as discussed in more detail in chapter 7. In one case, the participant's behaviour at school changed as a result of the sexual abuse and this was identified by the participant's headteacher who spoke to her about it.

## 6.2 Institutional and wider knowledge at the time of the sexual abuse

### Quantitative information

#### *Schools and non-schools contexts*

Of the participants sexually abused in the context of schools, 32 percent reported that someone else in the institution knew about the sexual abuse, a higher proportion than in other contexts (26 percent). Over two-fifths or 42 percent of those who were sexually abused in the context of schools reported that they knew of someone else in the institution also being sexually abused. Again, this was higher than in other contexts where 23 percent of participants reported that they knew of other victims.

#### *State, independent, special and other schools*

Thirty-nine percent of participants who were sexually abused while they attended independent schools reported that someone else in the institution knew about the sexual abuse. This is a higher proportion compared to the 31 percent of participants who were sexually abused in state, 29 percent in special and 29 percent in 'other' schools who reported this. Fifty-five percent of those who were sexually abused in independent schools reported that they knew of someone else in the institution also being sexually abused, which is higher than those who were sexually abused in special at 46 percent, state at 37 percent, and 'other' schools at 36 percent.

#### *Residential and non-residential schools*

Thirty-eight percent of participants sexually abused while they were attending residential schools reported that someone else in the institution knew about the abuse, compared to 32 percent of participants who were sexually abused in non-residential schools. Fifty-five percent of those who were sexually abused in residential schools reported that they knew of someone else in the institution also being sexually abused, which is higher than those who were sexually abused in non-residential schools at 39 percent.

### Qualitative information

#### *Rumours and knowledge among other children*

As seen in the quantitative data, many victims and survivors reported knowledge of other victims. In almost all of the qualitative sample cases, the participants were aware that they were not the only victims. In some cases they were sexually abused at the same time as one or more of their peers, such as in 'youth clubs' and during school trips where more than one child was sexually abused by the same perpetrator. Participants also spoke about being aware of the potential for others to be sexually abused even if they did not observe the sexual abuse directly.

In many instances the different victims were not aware of other victims at the time. For example, one participant recalled that as an adult he disclosed the sexual abuse to his closest childhood friend.

“ He [friend] was silent throughout the whole thing, and you know his face was just like stony. ... And that went on for about 15 minutes and at the end of it he just looked at me and he said, “Oh I thought it was just me”.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In some cases participants described how they became aware of other victims of the same perpetrator around the time of the sexual abuse, as the other victims disclosed to parents as well as or in addition to the police, or teachers were alerted. A few participants reported conflicted feelings about finding out that there had been other victims, including anger at not being the only victim of the perpetrator.

“ [I was] Angry really. It was strange. I thought, “I went through all of that, and he was doing it to other people”. I was nothing special.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In other cases, participants talked about how the perpetrators' behaviour was an 'open secret', or how aggression and sexual abuse in the school was normalised. Some participants talked about rumours at their schools among the students. For example that the perpetrator had a reputation for being “*friendly with the girls*” [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools]. One participant saw a picture on social media of the perpetrator with some children many years after the sexual abuse ended, with comments that indicated that others knew about the sexual abuse:

“ And underneath the caption somebody had put, “Is that [perpetrator]”? And another person, another guy had put underneath, “Yes it is. I wonder where his hands are”?

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### *Missed opportunities to safeguard children*

Participants talked about many missed opportunities to intervene and safeguard children in the institutions at the time of the sexual abuse. Many participants described how they believed the staff at their schools must have known about the sexual abuse.

“ ... even those who didn't participate, they stood back and did nothing.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Two participants attended residential schools where physical and sexual abuse was a regular occurrence. One participant believed that staff at the school were aware of the physical violence at least and no noticeable action was taken to intervene.

The other participant discussed how staff at his residential school consistently ignored possible signs of sexual abuse.

“ I was constantly visually visible ... So, people are seeing the aftermath of sort of physical beatings and torture and bruising and holes and burns and goodness knows what. All the time, because there was – some of those things take a long time to get better.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools



Other participants also talked about how signs of sexual abuse, such as changes in participants' behaviour or truanting from school were not followed up by staff. A few participants believed that some staff at their schools must have noticed perpetrators' behaviour:

“ *Somebody must have noticed, or at least had some idea that there was stuff going on here that wasn't right. ... just needed one person who had the moral courage just to ...*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

A couple of participants wondered why staff at their schools did not notice sexual behaviour (and sometimes sexual abuse) taking place between children. One spoke of how her previous headteacher said that he:

“ *... knew of older pupils having sex regularly, and reportedly said “but what could I do about it?”.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

One participant explained how school staff were aware that she was being sexually abused by a teacher, but that this sexual abuse was perceived as a 'relationship':

“ *Several of the staff at boarding school knew about this 'relationship' and would joke about it asking me, laughing, “Where is your new boyfriend now?” I only learned this year that he had told them that I wanted this relationship and that I had initiated it. I guess they believed him. Nobody ever asked me if this was true.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Some participants talked about how perpetrators who were teachers were able to move to other educational establishments after the sexual abuse they had perpetrated was uncovered. Participants were understandably angry that perpetrators had been allowed to move even after sexual abuse was identified in the original institution.

“ *And then this teacher was removed from the school and went on secondment, but he bloody well turned up at the college that I was studying at. ... which really upset me.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In summary, the findings in this chapter revealed that participants reported few protective factors present at the time of the sexual abuse in the schools. Participants described physical features of the schools and grounds, and cultures that normalised aggression as well as or in addition to activities that facilitated sexual abuse. They described how the perpetrators often had positive reputations among school staff and pupils. In some cases, it seemed that knowledge of the sexual abuse was widespread among pupils, or there were rumours about the perpetrators and victims and survivors. Participants described how many staff ignored or did not act on signs of sexual abuse, abdicating their responsibility to protect the children in their care. These findings are similar to the findings reported by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia (2017). For example, the Royal Commission reported that they identified 'clusters' of sexual abuse, where one or more perpetrators were able to sexually abuse many children.

## *Chapter 7*

# Experiences of disclosure and responses by institutions

The first part of this chapter presents information about participants' experiences of disclosing the sexual abuse, both as children and as adults. It details how the disclosures were responded to by institutions and describes the impact of those responses on the participants. The drivers and barriers to disclosure shared by participants are also reported. The second part of the chapter describes participants' experiences of the police and criminal justice system.

The research sub-questions addressed in this chapter are:

- What were victims and survivors' experiences of disclosing child sexual abuse (as a child/adult) that occurred in a schools context and what has helped or hindered disclosure?
- How were disclosures or allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of schools responded to by those within and outside institutions?

## 7.1 Experiences of disclosure at the time of the sexual abuse

### Quantitative information

#### *Schools and non-schools contexts*

Thirty-two percent of participants sexually abused in the context of schools told someone about the sexual abuse at the time it was happening, a very similar proportion to the 31 percent of those sexually abused in other contexts. In just over half of the accounts where the sexual abuse in the context of schools was reported at the time (55 percent), participants disclosed to a person in authority inside the institution, such as the headteacher or another member of staff. This is more than twice the proportion of participants sexually abused in other contexts, which was 23 percent. Twenty-one percent of participants reported disclosing to the police at the time of the sexual abuse, though they did this less frequently than participants sexually abused in other contexts where 37 percent disclosed to the police (see Figure 7.1). A slightly smaller proportion of those sexually abused in the context of schools reported the sexual abuse to a parent compared to those sexually abused in other contexts.

Figure 7.1 Disclosure at the time of the sexual abuse, schools compared to other contexts

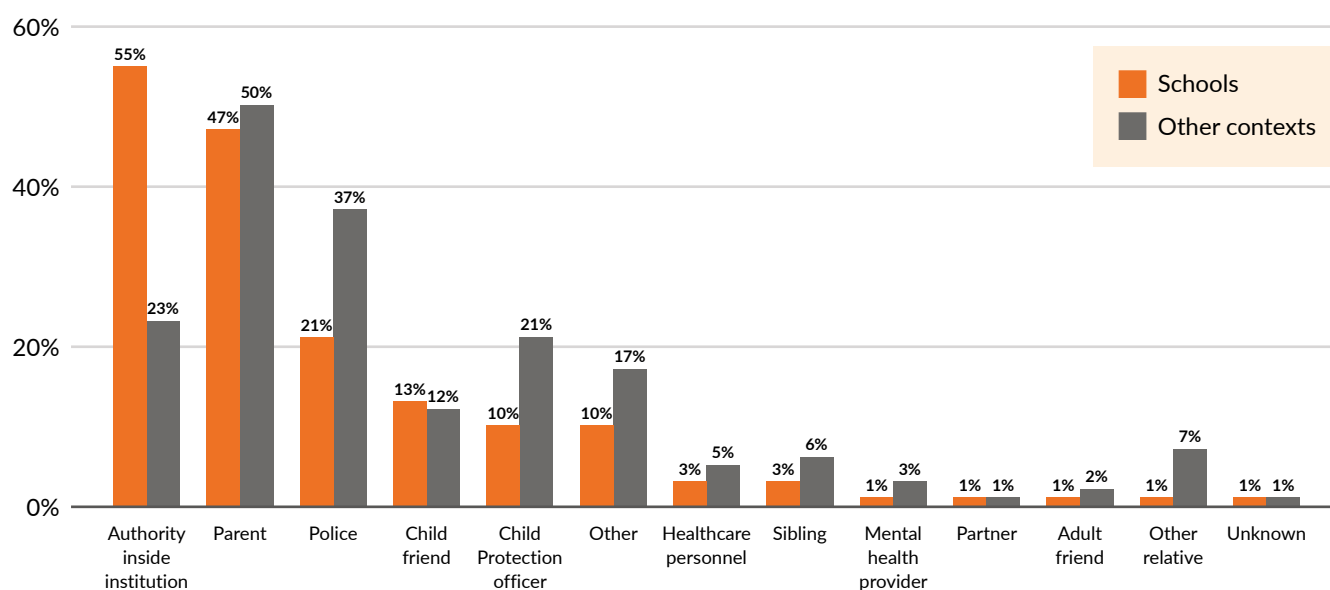
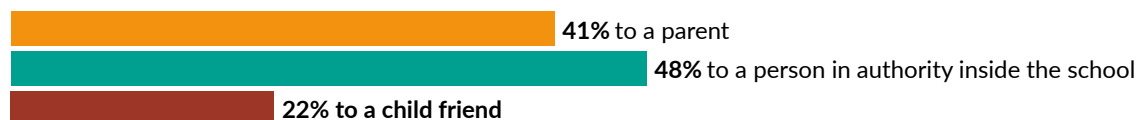


Figure 7.2 Rates of disclosure during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and who participants most frequently disclosed to

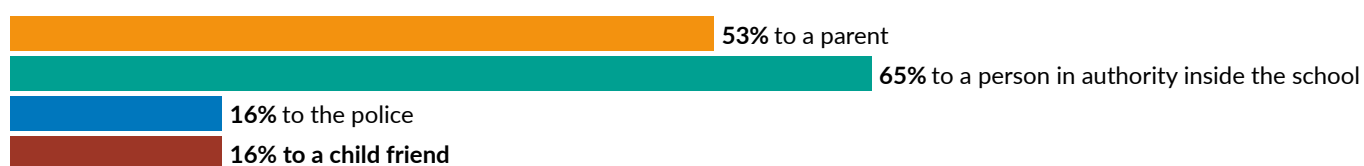
**1960s** 26% disclosed at the time of the sexual abuse



**1970s** 29% disclosed at the time of the sexual abuse



**1980s** 38% disclosed at the time of the sexual abuse



Where the sexual abuse took place within the context of schools, a quarter of participants shared that they did not disclose at the time due to feelings of shame and embarrassment, a slightly higher proportion than the 21 percent of those sexually abused in other contexts. Six percent of participants within a school context reported that they did not disclose at the time as they believed that the perpetrator loved them, something that was not reported in the quantitative data for other contexts.

The majority of participants in the quantitative sample experienced child sexual abuse in the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s. Figure 7.2 shows the percentages of participants who told someone about the sexual abuse at the time and who they most frequently disclosed to (only the top three results are listed). For all three of these decades, a person in authority inside the school or a parent were the most frequently mentioned recipients of disclosures of child sexual abuse.

#### *State, independent, special and 'other' schools*

Figure 7.3 shows the percentages of participants who told someone about the sexual abuse at the time for the different school types, and the three recipients they most frequently disclosed to. For all school types, a person in authority inside the school or a parent were the most frequently mentioned recipients of disclosures of child sexual abuse. A child friend was the third most frequently disclosed to recipient by participants who attended state schools, unlike the three other school types.

#### *Residential and non-residential schools*

The level of disclosure of sexual abuse was similar between participants across residential and non-residential schools. Of those who reported the sexual abuse at the time it was happening, 59 percent of participants who attended residential schools reported disclosing to a person in authority inside the institution, a higher proportion compared to non-residential schools at 48 percent.

Figure 7.3 Who participants most frequently disclosed to across state, independent, special and 'other' schools at the time of the sexual abuse

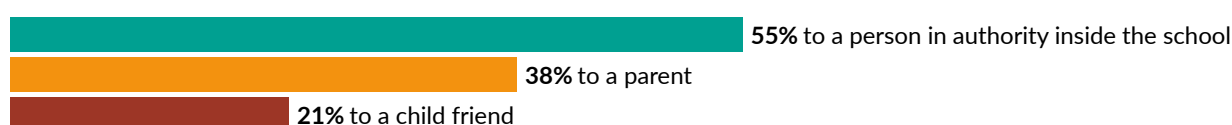
**Independent schools** 30% disclosed at the time of the sexual abuse



**Special schools** 59% disclosed at the time of the sexual abuse



**State schools** 31% disclosed at the time of the sexual abuse



**'Other' schools** 34% disclosed at the time of the sexual abuse



## Qualitative information

Reflecting the quantitative data, in most cases in the qualitative sample, participants did not disclose the sexual abuse during their childhood. Five participants reported that they disclosed the sexual abuse when it was happening. In four of these cases these disclosures ended the sexual abuse. In the fifth case, the participant disclosed to his mother *“in a veiled way, that a teacher was taking an unhealthy interest”* in him [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools]. His mother complained to the school but the participant reported that nothing happened as a result. The participant also disclosed to his peers who did not believe him. The participant described that he found out that the teacher was ‘invited to resign’ from the school, as rumours about the teacher were circulating, but the timing of this is not clear.

One participant reported the sexual abuse to her parents and another participant disclosed to her mother after her mother noticed a change in her behaviour. In the other two cases, participants reported the sexual abuse to other members of staff at their schools. One participant told her younger sister, which she later regretted.

**“** ... the only thing I very much regret at the time is that I ... used to tell her a lot of this and burdened her with an awful lot far too young, that she shouldn't have heard about.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Two participants revealed the sexual abuse without intending to and later denied it was happening when questioned in order to protect the perpetrators.

“ And I just got petrified. I got scared. Everything was going through my brain ... A lot was going on. I was still in this relationship with [perpetrator], and I just panicked. And I was like, “No, I wasn’t in a relationship with [perpetrator]” ... I denied it, because I got scared. I got scared.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### Facilitating disclosure

A few things that assisted disclosure at the time of the sexual abuse were noted by participants in the qualitative sample. A few participants talked about the approachability of staff and the alertness of some staff to changes in the behaviour of pupils as a positive factor. In the cases where participants told their parents, the fact that victims’ families believed the participants was described as facilitating disclosure and ending the sexual abuse.

“ And even from a young age I was very aware that no matter what I said that, you know, whoever it was, my mum would believe me.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### Barriers to disclosure

Participants spoke about a number of reasons as to why they did not disclose the sexual abuse at the time it was happening. A number of participants talked about how they viewed the sexual abuse and how these views acted as a barrier to disclosure. They explained that they did not understand what the perpetrator was doing and that this was exacerbated by a lack of information about sexual abuse.

“ There was no conversation about, “Oh if a man touches you here or touches you there”. None of that.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Other participants reported that, at the time of the sexual abuse, people did not understand sexual abuse and that the societal view then was that sexual abuse was perpetrated by strangers. This made it difficult to identify what was happening to them as abuse.

“ I mean, people didn’t understand. They couldn’t – in those days, they had no comprehension.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

As discussed in the grooming section, three participants were told that sexual behaviour with 16-year-olds was legal. As a result, these victims did not disclose the sexual abuse, as they did not then recognise it as such.

For some participants, it was the fear of getting into trouble or getting their family members into trouble that prevented them from reporting the sexual abuse.

“ And then I was worried about my family. I was worried that I would get in trouble. I genuinely thought that I would get in trouble. My family would judge me.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

As was seen in the quantitative data, many participants in the qualitative sample reported that they did not want their friends and family to know about the sexual abuse for reasons relating to embarrassment or fear (of the perpetrator and of people's reactions). Some participants talked about being worried about what people would think.



*... you know, everyone would think we were dirty and – or I was dirty, and things like that.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Many participants described barriers relating to not having people or environments in which they felt able to disclose the sexual abuse. One participant highlighted that at the time the sexual abuse was happening, children were not encouraged to talk to adults and adults did not ask questions that might have uncovered the sexual abuse, that: *“Children were seen and not heard, remember?”* [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools]. Another participant talked about a *“code of silence”* [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools] and not questioning injuries or suspicious behaviour in residential schools:



*Within that world [residential schools], it's impossible to say anything about anything? Because that's what you – you believe that ... You feel it, you believe it. ... Nobody wants to know – no, it's just not happening, basically. It's not going on.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Some participants noted that they had no one to whom they could disclose. One participant explained that she could not disclose to members of her family as they had sexually abused her or encouraged others to do so. Other participants reported that appropriate people were 'absent'.



*My mum and dad should have spotted it, you know, were busy doing other things and dad wasn't well enough.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Participants living in residential schools reported that there were no members of staff that they felt able to disclose to. Two participants described how the 'relationships' with their teachers were common knowledge among school staff, with suggestions from the staff that the participants had initiated or were consenting to the 'relationships'. This meant that the participants did not have anyone at their school that they could seek help from to end the sexual abuse.



*I'd overheard my house mothers say .... “no good would ever come of [friend] or me, we were simply too pretty for our own good”. ... How could I turn to house parents for help when they thought this?*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Some reported that the perpetrators' reputations prevented them from disclosing the sexual abuse.



*But they [parents] kept on going about what an amazing teacher he was and I felt so powerless to kind of correct them.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

A few participants explained that they did not disclose the sexual abuse because they blamed themselves.

“ Maybe I'd brought it on myself. I asked for it. So many things. I just blamed myself continuously. Not once did I ever think that he would be to blame. I always thought that, and I still do.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In the quantitative data, some participants reported that they did not disclose as they believed that the perpetrator loved them. Similarly, in the qualitative sample, some participants had a deep commitment to perpetrators, which was exacerbated by the perpetrator's manipulation of them as discussed in chapter 5.

“ As far as I was concerned, in my eyes he was almost like God. ... not only did I fancy him in my brain, not only did I love him, I felt like, you know, I worshipped him. Like he comes before my mum, he comes before my dad – he comes before my brothers, he comes before my sisters, he comes before myself; I will die for this man.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

## 7.2 Experiences of disclosure after the sexual abuse ended

### Quantitative information

#### *Schools and non-schools contexts*

Although rates of reporting sexual abuse at the time it was happening were relatively low at 32 percent, a high percentage of participants sexually abused in the context of schools and in other contexts told someone about the sexual abuse after it ended,<sup>29</sup> at 79 percent and 80 percent respectively.

Half of the participants in the quantitative schools sample reported the sexual abuse to the police compared to just under half (46 percent) of participants sexually abused in other contexts. A smaller proportion of participants sexually abused in the context of schools spoke about disclosing to family members, such as parents, siblings and other relatives, after the sexual abuse had ended compared to those sexually abused in other contexts. They more frequently disclosed the sexual abuse to mental health professionals, or a person in authority within the institution, than those sexually abused in other contexts. This is shown in Figure 7.4.

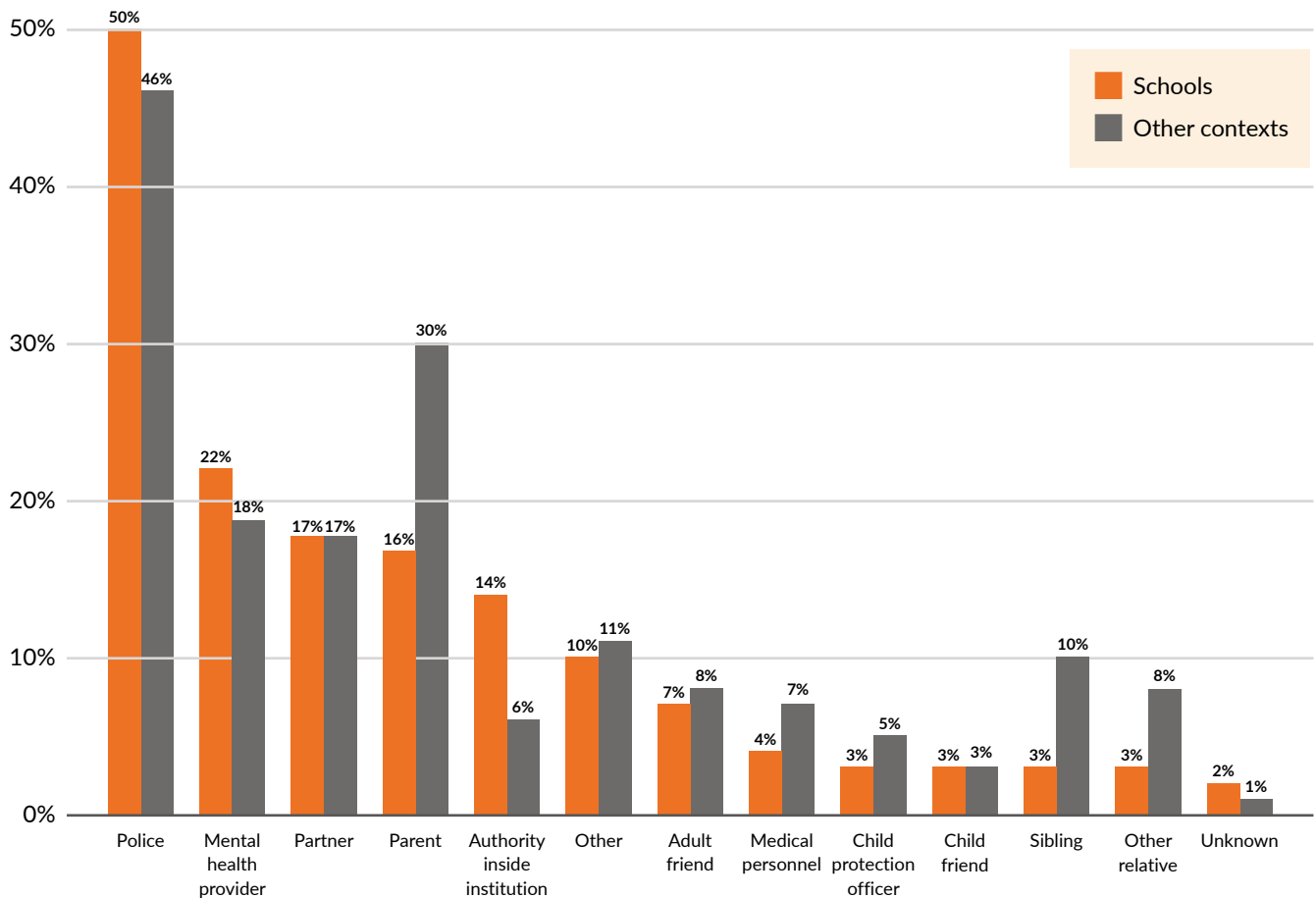
In contrast with those who disclosed the sexual abuse at the time it was happening, only 14 percent of participants sexually abused in the context of schools who disclosed the sexual abuse after it ended said they reported the sexual abuse to someone inside the institution. However, this was still a larger proportion compared to 6 percent of participants sexually abused in other contexts who disclosed the sexual abuse to someone inside the institution after it had ended.

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<sup>29</sup> Note that 'after the sexual abuse had ended' could refer to disclosures made when the victim and survivor was still under the age of 18 or when they were an adult over the age of 18.



Figure 7.4 Disclosure after sexual abuse ended, schools compared to other contexts



#### State, independent, special and 'other' schools

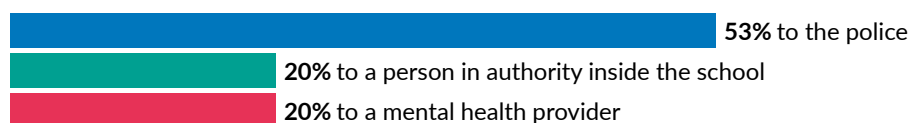
Figure 7.5 shows the percentages of participants who told someone about the sexual abuse after it had ended across the four school types, and who they most frequently disclosed to. For all four school types, the police were the most frequently disclosed to after the sexual abuse had ended. In contrast with those who disclosed the sexual abuse at the time it was happening, disclosures to mental health providers were more frequently mentioned after the sexual abuse had ended.

#### Residential and non-residential schools

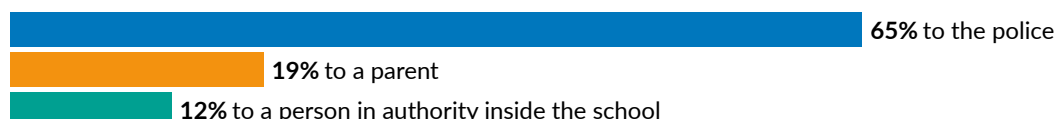
Across residential and non-residential schools, levels of disclosures to different figures and institutions were broadly similar. However a lower proportion of participants who attended residential schools reported that they disclosed to their partner, which was 12 percent compared to 23 percent in non-residential schools.

Figure 7.5 Who participants most frequently disclosed to across state, independent, special and 'other' schools after the sexual abuse had ended

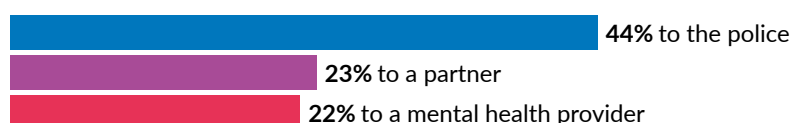
**Independent schools** 81% disclosed after the sexual abuse ended



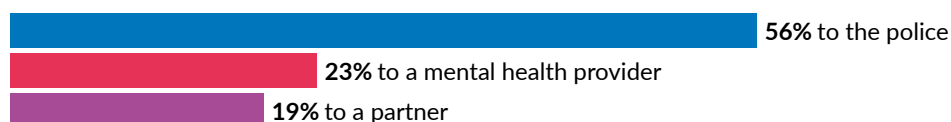
**Special schools** 78% disclosed after the sexual abuse ended



**State schools** 74% disclosed after the sexual abuse ended



**'Other' schools** 81% disclosed after the sexual abuse ended



## Qualitative information

In the qualitative sample, there were only two instances of participants reporting the sexual abuse to someone during childhood to seek emotional support. However, in adulthood most of the disclosures mentioned by participants related to seeking support from partners and friends, or professionals, such as counsellors.

In all the reported disclosures during adulthood the participants reported feeling believed, but in some instances participants reported that the sexual abuse was minimised or they were blamed for it. Three participants reported the sexual abuse to the police, which is discussed in section 7.3.2.

A small number participants explained that they did not disclose the sexual abuse for many years. Participants explained that they could not speak about the sexual abuse they had suffered, or tried not to think about it. One participant noted a tendency to not speak about the sexual abuse in order to:

“... automatically try and protect ... for the sake of the school, you go ... you try and protect the school and they try and protect everyone in it.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Another participant was reluctant to disclose what had happened to her due to victim-blaming based on gender-based stereotypes:

“ Sadly for us girls, there is always the additional question of “did we lead him on?”, which boys thankfully don’t have to contend with. It seems that apart from proving that it ‘happened’, we have to show we ‘hadn’t wanted it to happen!’.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Most participants reported that they disclosed the sexual abuse to their partners. Some participants reported that their partners were the only people to whom they had discussed the sexual abuse in detail.

“ I talk to my wife. My wife knows. She knew from the beginning.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Two participants reported that they disclosed the sexual abuse to one or more friends. Other participants described that, when they were adults, they disclosed the sexual abuse to one or both of their parents. Of those participants who disclosed to their parents as adults, a couple reported that their parents were supportive and felt guilty that they had not known at the time. In contrast, other participants reported that their parents minimised the sexual abuse.

“ So my mum knew about it and one of the most hurtful things is my mum’s reaction because she really minimised it. ... it was, 10 years ago or how long it was when I told my mum. And even she, she sort of said, “Oh well it’s not as if you know, it’s not as if he interfered with you like properly”.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Despite the fact that all participants in the qualitative sample had disclosed the sexual abuse to at least one person, their accounts also indicated that they kept the sexual abuse hidden from most people, telling only trusted partners, friends and family, or professionals as needed.

“ I told my husband about my past early on in our relationship but have never divulged this to anyone else.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Some participants reported that giving their accounts to the Truth Project was the most detailed disclosure that they had ever given to anyone.

“ I still couldn’t until this very day – this was the first time, this very day, I’ve actually said in the office with [Perpetrator]; I’ve always said to people, “I was abused”.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Another participant reported that making a disclosure to the Truth Project “has given me a little bit of closure” [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools].

## 7.3 Experiences of the criminal justice system

### 7.3.1 Experiences of the criminal justice system as a child

The sexual abuse reported by participants to the Truth Project in the qualitative and quantitative samples took place across a range of time periods, with the majority of cases occurring before the 1990s. Therefore participants' experiences of the police and the wider criminal justice system may often have occurred when attitudes towards, understanding of and statutory responses to child sexual abuse were different from what they are today.

#### Quantitative information

Only a small number of participants in the quantitative sample reported the sexual abuse to the police at the time it was happening: 40 out of 691 or 6 percent. These 40 participants represented 21 percent of the participants who disclosed the sexual abuse at the time it was happening (to anyone). This was a lower proportion than the 37 percent seen for those sexually abused in other contexts.

#### Qualitative information

Some participants and their families did not want to report the sexual abuse to the police or the criminal justice system. For example, one participant stated:

“ They didn't want to report it to the police because they thought given the reaction from the teachers, being so blasé about it, and then also the fact it was a small village, they didn't want me to be put through the process of having to tell the story again and again and it not being believed, and kind of getting – putting me through that. So they decided to kind of make sure that I was okay first.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

#### Experiences of the police

The participants in the qualitative sample reported only five instances when the police were made aware of the sexual abuse during the participants' childhoods. Only one of these participants gave a positive account of the police.

“ My father happened to have several friends who held senior ranks in the local police force and so this matter was taken to court.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

This was one of only two cases where the police were contacted initially about the sexual abuse experienced by the participants. In other cases, the participants did not initially contact the police and the perpetrators were reported to the police by other victims. One participant was frustrated that he contacted the police many times after receiving a letter from them, as part of their investigation, but they did not contact him back.

“ I think I tried once or twice the week I got the letter to call, and I spoke to people – the person, I don't know – wasn't available, someone would call me ... I think for the first week, I tried every day, and the second week, I decided that, “Well no-one's going to find out, I've tried to call the police, I've done my bit”, and that was it.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In the final case where the police were made aware of the sexual abuse during the participant's childhood, the participant had contact with the police when he absconded from the schools in which he was sexually and physically abused. He did not report to the police that he was being sexually abused, but did "make deals with them", so that they would not send him back to the school in which he was abused:

“ ... during that summer I absconded, got picked up by the police, and I'm terrified of ever going back there [school ] ... I'm telling them about it, that I'm frightened to go back to this school, and we done a deal. I admitted about ten different crimes, and they assured me that whatever happens that would delay my going back to [School].

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

This participant reported that he hated the police: *“I hated the police with a vengeance, because I blamed them and authority”* [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools].

#### Experiences in court

Only one perpetrator was tried at court when the participant was a child. The trial resulted in the conviction of the perpetrator.

“ The perpetrator was sent to prison. I don't know how long his sentence was but I know that he died in prison and I felt embarrassed about this as I would see his sister on occasions in our neighbourhood.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

The only other case that resulted in a trial included the details and testimonies of three other victims of the same perpetrator. The participant reported that the perpetrator pleaded guilty and received a prison sentence.

“ He pleaded guilty, and from what you read the Judge kind of praised him for that, because he didn't need to drag any of the students or people along to the courtroom to give their account of it, and claims he was confused with his sexuality and has never been in a relationship. ... I believe he got three years sentence, which I think he served about nine months of.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### 7.3.2 Experiences of the criminal justice system as an adult

#### Quantitative information

There were 218 out of 691 (32 percent) participants who disclosed the sexual abuse to the police after it had ended, a higher number than those who disclosed to the police at the time the sexual abuse was occurring. These 218 cases represented 50 percent of all participants sexually abused in the context of schools who disclosed about the sexual abuse after it had ended. This is a similar proportion compared to participants sexually abused in other contexts who disclosed after the sexual abuse had ended, where 46 percent of those who did so disclosed to the police.

## Qualitative information

### Experiences of the police

In the qualitative sample, some participants described a reluctance to report the sexual abuse to the police as adults. Only three of the participants reported the sexual abuse to the police as adults and only one of these cases proceeded to court.

One case was not taken further after the participant was interviewed by the police. The participant reported that she was believed by the police who went on to question the perpetrator. However, the police contacted her to say that the case was not being taken any further.

“ *From when I met her [police officer], she was lovely. Has she done her job properly? Do I believe she's done her job properly? No I don't. ... Do I believe this has been looked into properly? No I don't. I just think they think this little Asian girl has had this happen to her, they don't want the attention, they don't – they can't be bothered with it, and they've just pushed me aside and I am irrelevant and I'm not irrelevant.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In the second case that did not proceed to court, the participant explained how another victim of the perpetrator reported the sexual abuse to the police. Following this disclosure to the police, the other victim contacted the participant, who sought support and then also reported the sexual abuse to the police.

“ *... the police haven't been the best about it. ... They have been pretty poor I think in my opinion.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### Experiences in court

The participant whose case went to court when the participant was an adult described the trial as a traumatic experience:

“ *The trial was the worst day of my life, with his barrister questioning me about my views on homosexuality, and I couldn't stay in the courtroom as others gave evidence, as I was so disgusted at what I was hearing.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

All the participants in the qualitative sample who disclosed the sexual abuse to the police as adults felt there was a lack of justice.

“ *Do you know what? I want justice. ... I want justice. I want justice.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In summary, the information shared by participants showed that most did not disclose the sexual abuse at the time, nor during the rest of their childhood. Barriers to disclosure related to not understanding or being aware that they were being sexually abused, or not having the words to describe it, or someone to disclose to. Other participants reported being embarrassed or fearful and many blamed themselves for what had happened to them. Similar barriers to disclosure were reported to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia (2017) which also noted that children could be punished and physically abused in response to their making a disclosure.

In contrast to sexual abuse in other institutional contexts reported by Truth Project participants, some participants sexually abused in the context of schools reported that they did not disclose the sexual abuse because they thought the perpetrator loved them or they believed they were 'special' to the perpetrator and in a 'relationship' with them. This view is likely to be related to the deep commitments to perpetrators shown in some of the qualitative accounts, which resulted in some victims not recognising or denying the sexual abuse in order to protect the perpetrator (see Middleton, 2017; Dutton and Painter, 1993; Ferenczi, 1949). Compared to sexual abuse in other institutional contexts, higher numbers of participants sexually abused in the context of schools disclosed to staff in schools. Some participants did disclose to the police and the qualitative accounts revealed that most had negative views of their experiences of the police. Very few perpetrators faced court proceedings for their behaviour. While disclosure in childhood seemed to be related to ending sexual abuse, disclosure in adulthood seems to be more related to seeking support.

## *Chapter 8*

# Impacts of the child sexual abuse



This chapter sets out the range of impacts<sup>30</sup> that the experience of child sexual abuse has had on participants at different stages of their lives. This chapter addresses the research sub-question:

- What are the impacts of child sexual abuse in the context of schools reported by victims and survivors?

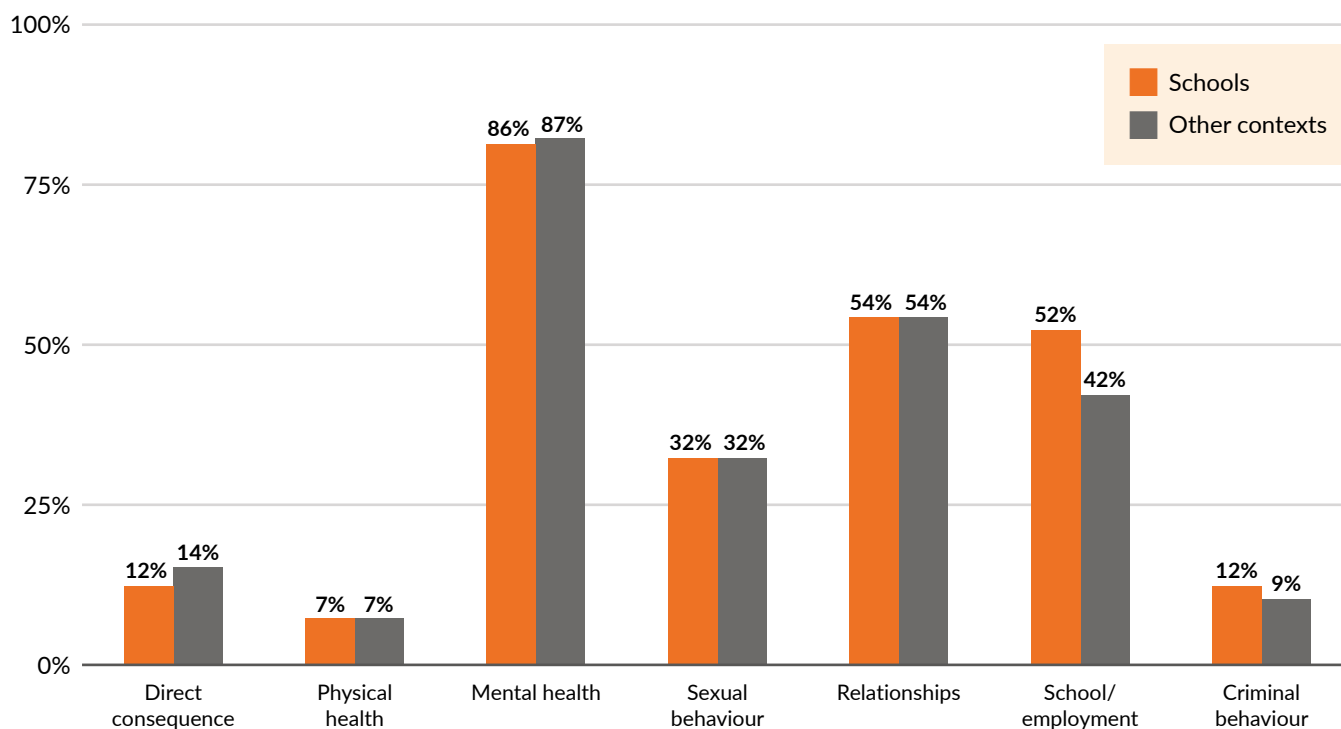
## 8.1 Impacts of child sexual abuse in the context of schools

### Quantitative information

#### *Schools and non-schools contexts*

Ninety-three percent of those sexually abused in the context of schools reported at least one negative impact, which is the same as those sexually abused in other contexts. Accounts highlighted the wide variety of impacts experienced by many victims and survivors sexually abused in the context of schools (Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Impacts of sexual abuse, schools compared to other contexts<sup>31</sup>



<sup>30</sup> Presentation of the impacts in this chapter follows the categories used in the data collection for Truth Project sessions. More information about the definitions of the impacts described is given in the glossary.

<sup>31</sup> Direct consequence means impacts that arose directly as a consequence of the child sexual abuse, such as physical injury or pregnancy.

## Qualitative information

Participants in the qualitative sample described extensive and diverse impacts of experiencing sexual abuse.

“ *So, I paid a terrible price, really, for the abuse I suffered, a terrible price. I didn't deserve it, my friends say I didn't deserve it, but it was a terrible price to pay. ...*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Some noted that it was difficult to say how the sexual abuse had affected them, but all described negative impacts. Some participants struggled to describe or understand how they felt at the time of the sexual abuse. Participants frequently expressed feelings of anger in their accounts, both towards the perpetrators and towards others, such as professionals, whom they felt had let them down.

“ *He's [perpetrator] such an evil, evil, evil man. He's evil, he did to me. So evil ... He knew what he was doing to me. ... I completely lost myself.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Many participants discussed a 'life that could have been'; a life that they felt they had lost, or that had been stolen, and reflected on the life that they could have had if they had not been sexually abused.

“ *... having reached the age I am, I'm thinking, well, could my life – I mean, I know it's abstract, but if it hadn't have happened, my life may have been different, you know? But we can never say that, can we?*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### 8.1.1 Direct impacts and consequences

Some participants talked about the immediate direct impacts of the sexual abuse, such as physical pain and discomfort. The two participants who were physically and sexually abused in residential schools recalled extensive physical pain and injuries.

“ *So, I'm standing there in absolute agony, but I didn't realise how badly I'd really been flogged ... I looked in the mirror, and to this day I could not believe the injuries: the whole of my back from the top was black and blue; you couldn't describe how black it was, and it dripped blood where the skin had been broken.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

“ *For that two-year period, there wasn't a time during that period that I wasn't bruised or cut or there was significant evidence on my body. ... I explained away so many things, you know, bruising, fingers, hands ...*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Others talked about psychological impacts immediately after the sexual abuse, resulting in them lacking confidence, becoming detached, withdrawn or introverted.

“ I didn’t trust anyone to tell. I learned from my lesson basically about being so open and speaking out about things, so I just became very withdrawn.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### 8.1.2 Education

Not surprisingly given the school context, the most frequent impacts spoken about by participants related to schooling and education.

#### Quantitative information

Over half (52 percent) of participants sexually abused in the context of schools reported an impact on their education or employment compared to 42 percent of participants sexually abused in other contexts. The most frequently referenced impacts on education, for both those sexually abused in the context of school and in other contexts, were being unhappy at school at 26 percent and 15 percent respectively, and academic difficulties at 20 percent and 16 percent respectively. Eleven percent of those sexually abused in the context of schools reported leaving school early, a similar proportion to the 9 percent of those sexually abused in other contexts who reported this.

#### Qualitative information

Some participants in the qualitative sample felt that the sexual abuse had not had an impact on their schooling. Some participants excelled academically and progressed to further and higher education despite the sexual abuse. However, and similarly to the quantitative findings, other participants described how they suffered disruption to their education as a result of the sexual abuse. One participant was sent home from school and did not attend for some time following disclosure of the sexual abuse. Another participant did not return to the school following her disclosure of sexual abuse and another reported that she was removed from the school by her family who then moved to another location. Two participants left school prior to reaching the age of 16.

Some participants reported that they were not happy at school, with one stating that leaving school was: “A joyous occasion” [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools].

“ I loathed school, I hated everything about it. I had to drag myself to school each day and drag myself out.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Many participants talked about truanting or avoiding school; one participant described that he faked illness to avoid college. A small number of participants reported that they ran away from their schools to get away from the sexual abuse.

“ I just ran away, wandered the streets of [Town]. I didn’t know what to do; I was just crying all the time, so I slept in a shed in the gardens, and the next day I thought, “Well, what am I going to do? I’ve got no money, I’m wandering round in the school uniform”, and I went and wandered back to the school.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

The sexual abuse and its impacts had a negative effect on some participants' educational performance and attainment. For example, one participant described how the perpetrator would test and punish him as part of the sexual abuse, which meant that he found it difficult to take tests/exams. Another participant discussed how the perpetrator wrote 'I love you' on her exam paper during an exam. Others recalled how they struggled to concentrate or lost interest in learning. These participants described how they did not sit the exams that they should have done, or did not do as well in them as they might have done had they not been sexually abused, which stopped them from reaching their full potential and had a lasting impact on their lives.

“ *My school work obviously, you know, studying was difficult for me and ... that cost me, you know, academic qualifications. Even though I managed to get a couple of O-levels. It cost me.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Another impact that some participants in the qualitative sample revealed was bullying at school. One participant recalled that other victims of the perpetrator who disclosed the sexual abuse were bullied by their peers. A participant who was sexually abused by another child explained that this led to her finding it difficult to form relationships with other children, which resulted in her being bullied.

“ *I feel like as result I got bullied as well, because I didn't know how to form attachments to people my own age.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### 8.1.3 Mental and physical health and wellbeing

#### Quantitative information

Many participants described the detrimental impact of the sexual abuse on their mental health<sup>32</sup> and wellbeing, with the proportion of participants reporting this being similar between school and other contexts at 86 percent and 87 percent respectively. Looking at more specific impacts, 25 percent of those sexually abused in a schools context reported a lack of trust in authority, a higher proportion compared to 19 percent of those sexually abused in other contexts.

#### Qualitative information

Like the quantitative findings, participants in the qualitative sample described a range of lifelong impacts on their mental health and wellbeing. Some occurred during the sexual abuse. For example, one participant reported self-harming<sup>33</sup> during the sexual abuse. Two other participants reported eating disorders.

“ *At my lowest weight I was probably six-and-a-half stone because I had to be very thin. He [perpetrator] didn't – he made it very clear that he liked me a certain weight and he liked my body a certain way. And as far as I was concerned I was going to cater to the weight he wanted me to be.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

<sup>32</sup> In this context 'mental health' refers broadly to any noted impact on mental wellbeing and functioning. Some terms relate to specific types of mental health disorder, but others are related to more general wellbeing difficulties.

<sup>33</sup> Self-harm is usually a reaction to a traumatic experience or set of experiences, with sexual abuse being the most common trigger (please see [verywellmind](#) for more information about the link between self-harm and child sexual abuse).

Participants also talked about experiencing stress and anxiety during and after the sexual abuse, including panic attacks.

“ *I had anxiety walking down the street. I couldn't, I couldn't open doors for people. Like, I couldn't really function.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

A couple of participants talked about feelings of dissociation either during the sexual abuse or, in one case, as a lifelong impact of the sexual abuse:

“ *Living “out of body” most of your life. It is only in the last two years that I have learned how to come back into my body where I can now feel my emotions.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Some participants talked about a feeling of helplessness:

“ *Because I think one of the things that frustrated me most as I've got older and understood things more is the kind of helplessness. ... You know that feeling that you can't, I mean exact revenge sounds really strong but you know you're just helpless, you know.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Other participants spoke of a range of impacts that affected them throughout their lives including low self-esteem, feeling worthless, lack of confidence and self-consciousness.

“ *I – you know, don't deserve things, low self-esteem, being hyper aware of my body as well ... As a result of everything that happened, I still struggle with anxiety and depression.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Many participants spoke of experiencing ongoing nightmares and depression.

“ *... but the nightmares and the memories were just – they were there, and the depression, really, has never gone away.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Three participants described post-traumatic stress symptoms, such as blackouts and flashbacks, or reported being diagnosed with complex post-traumatic stress disorder, including the two participants who were physically and sexually abused in residential schools. One of these participants recalled that during periods in his life he had a nervous breakdown every day.

“ *I suppose the repression of what had happened manifested a raging, angry, dysfunctional, post-traumatic syndrome-type person. I'm dysfunctional, I'm a wreck; I'm a psychological total nervous wreck.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

## 8.1.4 Relationships and sexual behaviour

### Quantitative information

Many participants spoke about how the sexual abuse they experienced had affected their relationships with others and their own sexual behaviour. Of the participants sexually abused in the context of schools, 54 percent reported an impact on their relationships, which is the same as those sexually abused in other contexts. Participants sexually abused in the context of schools and other contexts most frequently referenced difficulties with trust and intimacy when discussing impacts on their relationships, at 39 percent and 36 percent respectively.

Just under a third (32 percent) of participants sexually abused in the context of schools spoke about an impact on their sexual behaviour, which is the same as those sexually abused in other contexts. The most commonly cited impact on sexual behaviour was avoidance of or phobic reactions to sexual intimacy.

### Qualitative information

Participants in the qualitative sample also described how the sexual abuse they suffered had an impact on their relationships, sexual health and behaviour, starting in young adulthood and often having an impact throughout their adult lives. The link between the sexual abuse and its impact on sexual relationships was explained by one participant.

“ It really has messed up my relationship with sex and it’s messed up my idea of what affection – how affection should be shown and how ... it made me very manipulative myself and I think it taught me that it was okay to treat partners – and I have treated people shockingly badly.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Participants explained the impacts that the sexual abuse had on their intimate relationships, including these relationships ending prematurely, being unable to form stable intimate relationships for many years as an adult, as well as holding what they described as ‘unhealthy’ views on sex.

“ I got married ... But because I didn’t know how to form a normal sexual relationship, it just – the relationship just didn’t work. And we got divorced. ... it was much later in my life that I met people who allowed me to experience a fulfilling sexual relationship ... But I didn’t know how to form long-term. So, I could experience fulfilment within a sexual act.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Many of the participants in the qualitative sample described having problems with sex and intimacy. One explained that he did not like people touching him and still struggled to give family members a hug. Another participant explained how she was not able to cope with sexual feelings. Many talked about difficulties having sex, for example experiencing anxiety and panic attacks when trying to have sex.

“ I couldn’t be intimate without pain ... So for over a year-and-a-half, actually I couldn’t have sex with my husband.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Several participants stated that they had not had children, with one participant explaining:

“ *I could've been a grandfather today, I could've been a father, but that never happened; I just could not face ever bringing a child into this world – that was my attitude – because of what happened to me. So, I could never have a family.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

One participant continued to struggle with conflicting thoughts about whether the sexual abuse had an impact on his sexuality.

“ *... because this happened I can't help in my own mind at the back of my own mind wonder whether that had an impact. ... And the sort of rational side of me dismisses it and says, "Well that's ridiculous", because actually when like a lot of gay people, when I really look back I can see those signs ... So when I look back I think hmmm maybe the signs were there. ... Is being touched by a man at the age of eight or nine, is that going to have an effect on how you relate? Who knows. Like I said I don't personally think so but it is and that annoys me because again that feels like a little bit of power.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### 8.1.5 Employment and housing

#### Quantitative information

Eight percent of participants sexually abused in the context of schools talked about underemployment or difficulty in maintaining work and 6 percent said that they were unable to work. These were similar proportions to those sexually abused in other contexts at 7 and 4 percent respectively. Three percent of those sexually abused in the context of schools reported unemployment, which was the same as those sexually abused in other contexts.

#### Qualitative information

A small number of participants discussed impacts on employment and housing. One participant reported that she was prone to burn-out. Although another participant reported that getting a job many years after leaving school had eventually enabled her to end the sexual abuse, she explained that prior to this she was not able to work due to the sexual abuse and the perpetrator's demands, which meant that she became financially dependent on the perpetrator.

“ *I couldn't work. I couldn't even have a job because if I had a job, it meant I couldn't see him.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Two participants who were physically and sexually abused in residential schools reported lifelong impacts in terms of their employment and housing, which included periods of being unable to work.

“ *But the nightmares and the memories were never far away, and I would have to have a year, 18 months, 2 years off of work, had more counselling, a bit of medication, and wind myself down.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### 8.1.6 Criminal behaviour

#### Quantitative information

Of the participants sexually abused in the context of schools, 12 percent reported perpetrating some type of criminal behaviour as an impact of the sexual abuse. This was a similar proportion to the 9 percent of those abused in other contexts. Sixteen percent of those sexually abused in the context of schools reported aggression, which was again similar to the 13 percent of those sexually abused in other contexts who reported this.

#### Qualitative information

A small number of participants in the qualitative sample discussed how the frustration and anger they felt about the sexual abuse grew to the point that they were not able to control these feelings. A couple of participants described how this frustration led to them being aggressive and getting into fights as young adults.

“ I did things I regret. ... I felt like worthless. ... And so out of frustration I was just, I was just going out and just getting into fights just because I wanted to like sort of prove myself, so that's me again. I wouldn't – I was becoming quite a nasty, nasty person.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

One participant's anger led to behaviour that resulted in imprisonment. He continued to suffer the impacts of the sexual abuse in prison.

“ I end up in prison, and all the rage and the anger and the repression is still there; just because I'm in prison, having to adhere by these rules – but now it's a total nervous breakdown. It had come to an end; I just couldn't go on anymore; there was nothing to live for. The state I was in, I mean I just didn't care: my attitude was, “You can't do nothing – I've been hurt so much there's nothing you can do to me”.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### 8.1.7 Other impacts

Some participants described some additional impacts of the sexual abuse and its outcomes. One participant said that she had to work out what 'normal' was. She also described having few memories of her childhood due to the extensive sexual and other types of abuse she suffered and being conflicted about this:

“ You know that you don't know half of what happened to you as a child. You have many “shadow memories” ... Like having a partial view of something just to one side of your vision but mainly out of view. You live your life knowing you will never know/recall what happened to you because it was simply too traumatic.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools



One participant reported that the sexual abuse had made him vigilant and he frequently warned his children to try to protect them from sexual abuse.

“ I will say, “Look out,” and they, you know, they laugh at me and they say, “Oh, God, dad, not everyone’s a paedophile”. And I say, “You know, just, you know look out”.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

## 8.2 Experiences of multiple episodes of sexual abuse

### Quantitative information

Some participants experienced more than one episode of sexual abuse involving different, unconnected perpetrators. These other episodes of sexual abuse may have occurred prior to, concurrently with, or subsequent to, the sexual abuse in the context of schools. Over a third of participants (39 percent) sexually abused in the context of schools had experienced some additional form of sexual abuse. This is a higher proportion than for participants sexually abused in other contexts, of whom 31 percent experienced multiple episodes of sexual abuse.

Further analysis shows that of the 691 participants sexually abused in the context of schools, 14 percent had experienced more than one separate episode of sexual abuse with different perpetrators where both episodes were in the context of schools.

### Qualitative information

Three participants in the qualitative sample gave accounts of experiencing multiple episodes of sexual abuse. One participant reported that he was repeatedly sexually and physically abused in two different residential schools. Another participant reported that she was sexually abused by two other teachers in her residential school.

“ Two more ... kissing me and forcing me to kiss them. The other two members of staff stopped when I said no and there was no blackmail involved. They were significantly younger, so the disgust and trauma were less.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Another participant explained that the sexual abuse she suffered at school led to her having relationships with men that were abusive.

“ ... because of what had happened, the experiences of the child made what was – I allowed myself then to be what one may be called abused by other men in – it may have been fulfilling sexually but it certainly wasn’t fulfilling emotionally ... It’s almost as if I’ve never been able to form patterns of loving relationships with men.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

## *Chapter 9*

# Experiences of recovery and support

This chapter highlights the coping strategies participants adopted to manage their experiences of child sexual abuse and its impacts, and the factors that have helped or hindered their recovery. It also describes their experiences of informal and formal support. Using qualitative data only, this chapter addresses the research sub-question:

- What has helped or hindered victims and survivors' recovery from child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of schools?

## 9.1 Experiences of recovery

### 9.1.1 Coping strategies and aids to recovery

Participants' accounts highlighted a number of strategies which helped them to cope with the experience and impacts of child sexual abuse. These ranged from emotional avoidance (trying not to think about the sexual abuse or using alcohol to numb feelings), to talking about it and seeking support from others (discussed in section 9.2). Only one participant spoke of 'accepting' what had happened to them. Other participants' accounts reflected that they were still engaged in a lifelong struggle to cope with the sexual abuse.

At the time of the sexual abuse, participants described a range of coping mechanisms. Some described an urge to carry on as 'normal' and "*endure*" the abuse [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools]. One participant said: "*When I left the school, I took great pleasure in burning my school tie and uniform as a final incantation to the establishment that let me down so badly*" [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools].

Some participants explained that for many years they tried to cope with the sexual abuse by trying not to think about it, or by minimising it.

“ There was probably a good few years where I didn't think about it, and I'm aware now that I was, I was thinking about it subconsciously, but I would completely bin it, even to myself. I wouldn't think about it, it was gone.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Some participants talked about using coping mechanisms such as alcohol or gambling to numb the pain.

“ Throughout a lot of my life I used alcohol to obliterate the pain of what had happened.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Participants described how these strategies were not effective in dealing with the impact of the sexual abuse. Some participants reported that they were able to cope better when they sought professional help to address their feelings and the impact of the sexual abuse such as their addictions. One participant explained that she had made changes herself with the use of self-help guidance, which had enabled her to cope more effectively. Others reported that their resilience had aided their recovery.

“ But going through training and like seeing how my mentality – how much stronger I was to other people, kind of um – I’ve done some really good things. I’ve done some really hard things as well. ... Purely because of my mental strength. And it’s made me proud of the person I am.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### 9.1.2 Barriers to recovery

Participants reported numerous experiences that acted as a barrier to their recovery. Reflecting the fact that the majority of participants in the qualitative sample did not disclose the sexual abuse, or that the abuse was not otherwise detected in their childhood, their accounts do not include any reference to formal support received during childhood. In fact, many noted that they had no one who they could turn to for support. Even in cases where the sexual abuse was identified, in all but one case, no support was received.

“ I was also obviously very angry and hurt, and because upon moving we didn’t discuss it, my family tried to deal with things like bullying, and protected myself in terms of doing self-defence classes rather than talking about the emotions behind it.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Participants described the ongoing, lifelong impact of the sexual abuse, which was a hindrance to recovery.

“ I’m [in my 70s] and a week never goes by that I don’t think about it. I can see the man. I can see his shape; I can see his hands. I can see him as if it was yesterday. ...

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

As noted in the earlier chapters, many participants’ expressed feelings of self-blame and talked about this as a barrier to disclosing the sexual abuse. They also mentioned these feelings as a barrier to recovery.

“ I blamed myself – you can’t ask someone for help if you think you are to blame.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Participants described how certain events, actions or objects could cause them to re-experience the emotions, thoughts or physiological experiences of the sexual abuse, which impacted their recovery. Many triggers were related to specific details of the sexual abuse suffered. For example, one participant explained that being touched in certain ways or specific things being said would induce *“that sense of feeling gross and dirty...”* [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools]. One participant who was asked to help the perpetrator in the science lab, which involved breeding fruit flies, explained:

“ ... we’ve had this very hot summer last year. In our house it were plagued by fruit flies by the fruit that’s slightly going off, you get little fruit flies and it’s things like that that there are, you know, 40 years later are a trigger point still.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Other reminders were less specific to the details of the sexual abuse. Participants explained that more general discussions around child sexual abuse could cause them to remember an aspect of the abuse. Many participants described the impact of media coverage, particularly of sexual abuse that shared some similarity with the participant’s experiences. These included storylines in soap operas, documentaries and news coverage.

“ All I could think about all day and all night was about what had happened again, because it was on the television ... and I just started living every day, the memories; I couldn’t get the memories out of my mind.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Social media was also identified as acting as a trigger by some participants. One participant found a picture of the perpetrator with some children from his school on a social media site which *“chilled me to the bone again”* [Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools].

Reaching a certain age was described by participants as something that prompted them to revisit and reinterpret their experiences. It caused a heightened sense of the impact of sexual abuse and of vulnerability. For example, thoughts about the sexual abuse resurfaced or were more persistent when participants became the same age as the perpetrator was when he or she sexually abused the participant, or when young family members reached the age that the participant was when he or she was sexually abused.

“ ... for a lot of years, I’d thought, well, you know, I’d assimilated this experience and I was in control, but then you realise, when you are [the same age as perpetrator], that 15’s – they’re children. ... The, kind of – like I say, the, sort of, crashing realisation that ... no, it wasn’t a relationship; I was groomed as a child and groomed into thinking that it was fun and secretive and that it was completely okay.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

## 9.2 Experiences of support

### 9.2.1 Support from schools and wider professional networks

Participants reported a range of experiences of both formal<sup>34</sup> and informal support. The accounts in the qualitative sample included only one reference to any support received from a school (one participant received counselling in a school she went to after being sexually abused in a different school) and no reference to support from any professional networks during childhood. In fact some participants noted that the schools in which they had been sexually abused were more focused on protecting their reputation, with one noting that:



*... the school were about protecting themselves and not about protecting its children.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### 9.2.2 Informal support

Some participants described having good support from family and friends, following disclosure of child sexual abuse during adulthood, and the importance of finding such support. Partners were the most frequent source of informal support talked about. Many participants received support from partners, which they noted had helped them significantly.



*Kind of since talking to my wife about it, I think about it a lot, to be honest. I do think about it a lot. I don't exactly know how I feel about it a lot, really. Speaking to my wife certainly helped massively, anyway, because it's the first person I've ever told.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Other participants gained support from friends.



*They've [friends] been absolutely fantastic and they've been supportive. At the same time, there's only so much that friends can do, because friends have their own stuff going on and friends have problems and issues.*

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

### 9.2.3 Formal support

Participants described different experiences of receiving formal support and their views were mixed on the helpfulness of such support. Some reported that they did not want to seek formal support. In contrast, other participants talked about seeking support from a range of services, again with mixed results. One participant had tried to access various services (including a rape crisis service and her GP), but felt that no services had given her the support she needed, and that there were long waiting lists to access support. Other participants reported that they had received helpful support from counselling.

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<sup>34</sup> 'Formal support' here refers to services, organisations or interventions that provide support, advice or treatment to victims, survivors and their families to reduce the impact of having experienced child sexual abuse. These services encompass a range of different types, sectors and providers and can be statutory, voluntary or private. Services may also be specialist or generalist in relation to child sexual abuse. Services are provided across different sectors such as criminal justice interventions, health service treatments, specialist counselling, and mental health support.

“ ... during the next few months I had counselling for the abuse, the repression – I had got it in the open – and that slowly brought a massive change.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Participants in the qualitative sample talked about a range of diagnoses and therapy, including complex post-traumatic stress disorder<sup>35</sup> and bipolar disorder. Participants attended therapy with clinical psychologists and received a range of different therapies, including sex therapy and art therapy as well as counselling.

“ It took me many years of therapy to realise: one that I'd been sexually abused; two that it wasn't my fault. I wasn't to blame; three that he [perpetrator] didn't love me. All the expressions of affection had simply been part of the grooming plan to lure me to his end goal of using me for his sexual gratification ... . It blew me apart when I saw all his manipulations for what they were.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

Although most participants reported that professional support had been helpful to at least some extent, not all experiences of formal support described by participants were positive. A few participants were angry and upset by the responses of professionals.

“ I've actually had a counsellor turn around and say, you know, the same thing of, “Oh, well, just child's curiosity” type thing, and that set me off again and actually made me feel like I didn't deserve to get counselling and support.

Truth Project participant sexually abused in the context of schools

In summary, the information shared by participants showed that they used a range of strategies to help them to cope with their experiences of, and the impacts from, child sexual abuse. These strategies ranged from emotional avoidance, which tended to be an initial response and one that was felt by participants not to be effective in the long term, to talking about their experiences of sexual abuse and seeking support from partners and friends, as well or in addition to a range of professionals, which participants did feel was effective.

Most of the participants in the qualitative sample spoke about their continued engagement in a lifelong struggle to cope with the sexual abuse. During adulthood, partners were the most frequently cited source of support, who the participants described as being important to them and valued. Almost all participants did not receive formal support during childhood. However, as adults, participants talked about accessing a range of professional support services, such as counselling and different forms of therapy. These services were found to be helpful by many participants, but some participants did not find such services helpful and some were angry and hurt as a result of their negative interactions with some professionals.

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<sup>35</sup> Complex post-traumatic stress disorder is a condition where people experience some symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, along with some additional symptoms, such as: difficulty controlling emotions, constant feelings of emptiness or hopelessness, and avoiding friendships and relationships, or finding them very difficult (see [Mind](#) for more information).

## *Chapter 10*

# Summary of key findings from the research and victims and survivors' suggestions for change



**T**his concluding chapter provides a summary of the key research findings and themes identified in the report. It reports the potentially unique characteristics identified in child sexual abuse cases in the context of schools and suggests how these may differ from sexual abuse in other contexts and circumstances. The chapter concludes by detailing the changes participants think are necessary to prevent sexual abuse in the context of schools for children in the future and to improve responses to, and support for, victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. In doing so it addresses the research sub-question:

- What changes do victims and survivors suggest to improve child protection and prevent child sexual abuse in the future?

## 10.1 Summary of key findings from the research

This report has detailed Truth Project participants' experiences of child sexual abuse in the context of schools, the institutional failures in relation to this abuse and the impacts upon victims and survivors. Overall, the research findings from the 691 quantitative and 17 qualitative participants' accounts identified some characteristics and circumstances of sexual abuse in the context of schools that were different to sexual abuse in other institutional contexts. The analysis of Truth Project data is ongoing and the experiences of sexual abuse in the context of schools will be more fully compared to those of other institutional contexts as our research programme progresses.<sup>36</sup>

The key research findings concerning child sexual abuse in the context of schools described in this report are:

- The majority of perpetrators were male teachers or other educational staff. The qualitative sample accounts showed that perpetrators often manipulated and groomed children, staff and parents in order to facilitate sexual abuse, and often had good reputations with staff and parents, or were seen as 'cool' by pupils. Some participants believed that they were in 'relationships' with the perpetrators, some of which extended for years after the participants had left school. Six percent of participants reported that they did not disclose as they thought the perpetrator loved them.
- Fifteen percent of participants reported sexual abuse perpetrated by peers or older children, the second most frequently reported perpetrator type in the context of schools after teachers and educational staff.
- Sexual abuse perpetrated in residential schools is disproportionately higher in participants' accounts when compared to the proportion of these types of schools in England and Wales, and the percentage of children who attended them. A greater proportion of participants who attended residential schools reported sexual abuse by their peers, physical abuse, psychological abuse and bullying than participants who attended non-residential schools. The qualitative sample showed that perpetrators (staff and peers) in residential schools had constant access to children who boarded, both in and out of school time. Some participants reported that the only time they felt safe was when they were away from school.

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<sup>36</sup> Comparisons between experiences across different institution types and time periods will be made at a later point when we have the opportunity to carry out a fuller comparative analysis.

- Sexual abuse in independent and special schools was disproportionately higher in participants' accounts compared to state schools, and also showed higher levels of physical and psychological abuse. However, compared to sexual abuse in other institutional contexts, participants sexually abused in school contexts reported less penetrative sexual abuse, and less physical and psychological abuse, but more bullying.
- Fifty-four percent of the participants sexually abused in state schools were female, and female participants accounted for 58 percent of the participants sexually abused in 'other' school types. Over three-quarters of the participants sexually abused in independent and special schools were male.
- Many participants were aware of other victims (42 percent), which was higher than those sexually abused in other institutional contexts (23 percent). Almost a third of participants reported that other people were aware of the sexual abuse: 32 percent compared to 26 percent in other contexts. The qualitative findings showed that in some instances this awareness was because participants were part of a group of children whom the perpetrator sexually abused, or because disclosures revealed the sexual abuse. Participants talked about suspicion or rumours in schools surrounding the perpetrators, resulting in many missed opportunities for safeguarding.
- There were very few disclosures during childhood, which is similar to other institutional contexts. When children did disclose during childhood, it was more frequently to a person in authority compared to disclosures of sexual abuse in other institutional contexts. The qualitative sample revealed that when some participants were asked by parents or teachers whether they were being sexually abused, they denied the abuse, to protect perpetrators as well as or in addition to the environment the perpetrators created, which was exacerbated by the perpetrators' manipulation of them.
- Sexual abuse experienced in the context of schools had more impact on schooling and employment than sexual abuse in other contexts. More participants in this group talked about a lack of trust for those in authority compared to those sexually abused in other contexts.

## 10.2 Victims and survivors' suggestions for change

The majority of participants in both the quantitative and qualitative samples experienced sexual abuse in the context of schools prior to the 1990s, with the most recent case of sexual abuse occurring in this context almost a decade ago. There have been significant developments in addressing safeguarding issues in the context of schools since 2000 and some of the suggestions made by the participants and reported here may already have been implemented. However, we wish to present all suggestions made by these participants as they reflect the issues they felt to be of particular importance in protecting children from sexual abuse. Participants had experienced many difficulties throughout their lives since the time of the sexual abuse and made a number of explicit suggestions about what needs to change to improve child protection and prevent child sexual abuse in school contexts in future. They also shared their views on how victims and survivors of sexual abuse can be better supported.

### Quantitative information

The most common reason given for participating in the Truth Project was to prevent sexual abuse from happening to someone else, at 57 percent. A quarter (25 percent) of participants wanted to tell someone in authority about the sexual abuse. Another reason commonly given by participants sexually

abused in the context of schools was wanting some type of resolution to the sexual abuse they had experienced (20 percent).

Over one-third, or 35 percent, of participants sexually abused in the context of schools wanted to see an increase in knowledge about child sexual abuse and someone for children to report sexual abuse to. Many participants also wanted to see systems to identify children who are at risk or experiencing sexual abuse at an early stage (30 percent) and hoped that children who report sexual abuse will be believed (28 percent). A little over a quarter of participants, 26 percent, wanted child safety education programmes and 23 percent wanted greater supervision of children. Increased access to therapy and children receiving appropriate support in a timely fashion was also requested by 23 percent of participants.

## Qualitative information

Participants in the qualitative sample made specific suggestions, which have been categorised according to three of the four thematic areas outlined in the *Inquiry's Interim Report* (Jay et al., 2018c). These are: structural; cultural; and professional and political. No participants in this sample made specific suggestions for change with respect to the fourth thematic area: financial.

Table 10.1 represents summaries of the specific suggestions for change that relate to the context of schools made by participants in the qualitative sample.

**Table 10.1 Suggestions for change made by Truth Project participants sexually abused in the context of schools**

<b>Structural: The legislative, governance and organisational frameworks within and between institutions</b>
<p><b>Participants said:</b></p> <p><i>Schools should have a legal responsibility to respond to and investigate all allegations of abuse, and sexual abuse in schools should be investigated by a visibly independent body.</i></p> <p><i>School leaders should be accountable to external and independent bodies and visitors.</i></p> <p><i>Schools should not move or encourage the movement of potential perpetrators to other schools or institutions.</i></p> <p><i>The structure of residential schools needs to be changed to ensure that there are enough staff to monitor the pupils, and that trusted staff are present in the non-school times and spaces such as evenings.</i></p>
<b>Cultural: The attitudes, behaviours and values that prevent institutions from responding effectively to child sexual abuse</b>
<p><b>Participants said:</b></p> <p><i>It is important to get the right systems and cultures in place and improve child protection training.</i></p> <p><i>The culture in residential schools that relies on children to 'police' other children must change as this culture and system fails on all levels.</i></p> <p><i>Staff should understand what residential school is like for young children and how vulnerable they can be, particularly when they first attend.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers and school staff should have the moral courage to just do something to intervene and prevent abuse – they cannot abdicate their responsibility for safeguarding children in their care.</i></p> <p><i>Increase awareness of child sexual abuse in schools especially of peer abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, abuse by female perpetrators, abuse in Asian communities, and abuse perpetrated against boys and men.</i></p> <p><i>Educate and talk to children in schools about relationships, sex and abuse from a young age.</i></p>

**Participants said:**

*Better child protection training and improved awareness and vigilance of sexual abuse for all school staff and volunteers is needed.*

*Professionals need a better understanding of grooming and inappropriate 'relationships' in schools.*

*There needs to be training in place to support disclosure in schools in order that students might feel more confident about talking about their concerns and fears.*

*Pastoral support and interventions are needed in schools for suspected victims and survivors and for children who engage in harmful sexual behaviour.*

*There needs to be much more focus within schools on child sexual abuse and better communication with parents.*

*Teachers and school staff should be proactive to prevent sexual abuse and safeguard children, ie they should think about what is happening and confront suspicious behaviour.*

*There should be no one-to-one teaching, teaching in private spaces; and written approval should be given for extra-curricular activities.*

*There should be a named person and safe spaces in schools for children to talk about concerns/abuse.*

# *Appendices*

# Appendix A

## Glossary

<b>Abuse involving penetration</b>	This relates to vaginal, anal or digital penetration and oral sex.
<b>Abuse not involving penetration</b>	This relates to prolonged kissing, cuddling, French kissing and excessive touching.
<b>Child sexual abuse</b>	Sexual abuse of children involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact and non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet. Child sexual abuse includes child sexual exploitation.
<b>Child sexual exploitation</b>	Sexual exploitation of children is a form of child sexual abuse. It involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where a child receives something, as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain.
<b>Complex post-traumatic stress disorder</b>	A condition where individuals experience some symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), along with additional symptoms.
<b>Context of schools</b>	This relates to schools and colleges, state and independent, residential and non-residential for children aged 5 to 18, and to all staff who work in these schools/colleges, or who provide activities commissioned/organised by schools.
<b>Criminal justice system</b>	The system that investigates, prosecutes, sentences and monitors individuals who are suspected or convicted of committing a criminal offence. This also encompasses institutions responsible for imprisonment, probation and sentences served in the community.
<b>Designated safeguarding lead</b>	This is the person who is appointed in schools to have lead responsibility for their school's safeguarding and child protection issues.

Episodes of child sexual abuse/exploitation	<p>An 'episode' relates to sexual abuse involving a particular perpetrator(s) or institution(s). It may involve a single instance of sexual abuse or relate to more than one instance that takes place over a period of time. We have defined an 'episode' of abuse as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● an instance or multiple instances of sexual abuse committed by a single perpetrator;</li> <li>● a single instance of sexual abuse committed by multiple perpetrators;</li> <li>● multiple instances of sexual abuse committed by multiple perpetrators, but only where there is collusion between the perpetrators.</li> </ul> <p>An episode involving multiple perpetrators could include cases where there is collusion between perpetrators, such as gang rape, child sexual exploitation or abuse by networks organised for the purposes of child sexual abuse. An episode could also involve more than one institution, such as abuse perpetrated by one person but in several contexts.</p>
Fondling	This relates to touching, masturbating or kissing a child's genitals and/or making a child fondle an adult's genitals.
Grooming for child sexual abuse	Building a relationship with a child in order to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation.
Harmful sexual behaviour	Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people and which may be harmful or abusive.
Impact	<p>A marked effect or influence on someone or something.</p> <p>Information on impacts presented in this report align with categorisations used in the Truth Project.</p> <p>The term impact is used in this report to describe what victims and survivors themselves reported about the effects of the abuse they experienced.</p>
Independent schools	Schools run by charitable organisations, companies or individuals that charge fees for the education they provide.
Independent Schools Council (ISC)	A non-profit organisation that represents over 1,300 schools in the UK's independent education sector.
Local authority	An administrative body in local government that is responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area.
Multiple victimisation	Becoming a victim of violence, crime and abuse, having already been victimised.
Other contexts	This is used throughout the report to refer to sexual abuse perpetrated across other institutional context such as <u>religious institutions, children's homes and residential care, custodial institutions, sports, and healthcare.</u>
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	A type of anxiety disorder that individuals may develop after being involved in, or witnessing, traumatic events.

<b>Qualitative research</b>	Qualitative research uses words and themes, rather than numbers, to answer research questions. Qualitative social research seeks to observe and understand social situations without measuring them using numbers, for example, through interviews with people involved.
<b>Rapid evidence assessment (REA)</b>	A research methodology used in the identification, quality assessment and synthesis of existing literature on a particular topic. More structured and rigorous than a standard literature review, it is not as exhaustive as a systematic review.
<b>Recovery</b>	The act or process of returning to a positive, former or improved level of functioning following a traumatic experience that caused a decline in levels of functioning and wellbeing.
<b>Residential care</b>	This relates to institutions such as orphanages, children's homes/residential care, secure children's homes, specialised residential care units.
<b>Residential school</b>	A state or independent school providing care, education and boarding accommodation for some or all of its students.
<b>Residential special schools</b>	Funded by charities, not-for-profit organisations or private organisations that charge fees. The majority of such places are paid for by the local authority due to children's SEND/ALN. Often, children attend these settings because of the extent and complexity of their needs.
<b>Safeguarding</b>	Protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's health or development; ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking actions to enable all children to have the best life chances.
<b>SEND</b>	Special educational needs and disabilities.
<b>Sex therapy</b>	Sex therapy is a specialised type of therapy that addresses concerns about sexual function, sexual feelings and intimacy, either for individuals or couples.
<b>State schools</b>	A school funded by the government or local authority.
<b>Statutory agencies</b>	Institutions set up by law to carry out public activities.
<b>Trigger(s)</b>	Something that prompts a reliving of elements of the trauma itself. These responses make it more difficult to live more fully in the present.
<b>Victims and survivors</b>	Defined in this report as individuals who have been sexually abused as children.

Sources: Department for Education (2014); Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (n.d.); Mind (n.d); Ofsted (2017); Ofsted (2018); Roberts et al. (2020); Soares et al. (2019).



# *Appendix B*

## **Schools in England and Wales**

Schools have a long history in England and Wales, being established initially to teach priests and to provide some moral and religious education to the general public. As trade and developments in areas such as law and medicine were outside the remit of religious organisations, 'free grammar schools' and schools outside of the church developed. The industrial revolution and growing British Empire led to pressure for curricula and schools to expand to meet societal needs. This led to a growth of fee-charging grammar schools and the development of boarding schools. The structures of schools have changed greatly over the years but this mix of state and privately funded, and religious and 'free' non-religious, schools remains.

The Education Act 1944 (The Butler Act) established what is recognisable as the school system we have today. It divided statutory education into primary, secondary and further education stages and required that there were sufficient state primary and secondary schools available, for free, for all children of relevant ages. It also required independent schools to register with the Registrar of Independent schools. The compulsory school age for continuing to attend school was raised to 15 years and increased to age 16 in 1973.

The Act created provision for children with disabilities to receive 'special educational treatment' in special schools. A wide range of children have some form of disability or special educational needs, which has included those with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Some children were not required to attend school as they were deemed 'ineducable' (The Open University, 2020). The 'ineducable' category was removed by the Education (Handicapped Children) Act 1970, which allowed all children with SEND to receive an education; however, practice centred on children being educated in special schools. As these developments show, the range of disabilities and special educational needs of children attending special schools changed considerably over the period from the 1940s onwards. Society's understanding of a range of conditions, for example, autism, has also developed considerably, resulting in a shift away from educating children in residential special schools where possible. In 1978 Baroness Mary Warnock advocated for greater inclusion of pupils with SEND in mainstream schools (Warnock, 1978), which led to the Education Act 1981 and the requirement that children should be educated in mainstream schools wherever possible. Guidelines to identify and address the educational needs of pupils with SEND were set out in the Education Act 1993. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 made it unlawful for schools to discriminate against disabled pupils.

The Education Reform Act 1988 (The Baker Act) gave schools more control over their own budgets. Schools could choose to be independent of local authorities and have full control over their finances. Schools generally followed the same structure in England and Wales and were subject to the same regulations until the devolution of responsibility for schools in Wales (and other Government responsibilities) to the Welsh Government in 1997, with a gradual divergence in the systems since then.

The Education Act 2002 included new measures to deal with failing schools. School standards in relation to independent schools in England are now made in regulations under the Education and Skills Act 2008 – the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which came into effect in 2015.

The Children and Families Act 2014 set out the current legal framework for SEND in England, with statutory guidance provided by the Department for Education (2015). The level and type of support provided to children is dependent on each individual child's needs. There is an obligation to educate children in mainstream schools where possible and such schools must have a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) to oversee education for children with SEND. However, some children's needs require attendance at schools specifically for children with SEND, or home-based or other non-school based education. Education, health and care plans (EHCP) are developed for children and young people (between the ages of 0 and 25) who are considered to have complex needs (Department for Education, 2015).

All children and young people (age 0 to 25) in Wales with additional learning needs (ALN) will have an individual development plan (IDP)<sup>37</sup> that is developed in line with each individual child's needs. The Act requires that learners' views should always be considered as part of the planning process, along with those of their parents/carers. A code of practice (Welsh Government, 2018a) will support the Act.<sup>38</sup> Every school and college must have an ALN coordinator (Welsh Government, 2018b).

Section 19 (1) of the Education Act 1996 requires local authorities in England and Wales to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at schools or otherwise (referred to as Educated Other Than At School; EOTAS) for children of compulsory school age who for reasons such as illness or exclusion from school may not receive suitable education unless suitable arrangements are made for them. Section 19 (2) states that any school established to provide education for such children and which is not a county [community] or special school, is known as a 'pupil referral unit' (PRU). While many children who meet these conditions attend PRUs, local authorities fund a wide range of provision depending on the circumstances and needs of the child, such as home schooling and/or online education (Statistics for Wales, 2019).

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<sup>37</sup> There is a period of transition and training with the new system expecting to be live from September 2020. The implementation period will last three years until summer 2023, during which time all existing plans will be converted to individual development plans (IDPs).

<sup>38</sup> At the time of writing there is a draft code which will be replaced in line with the Welsh Government's transition plan for implementation of the Act.

# Appendix C

## Quantitative data tables

Please note that due to the nature of Truth Project data collection, we do not always have information for every individual. This is reflected in the quantitative data tables, which may not always be fully populated. For some tables, percentages may not exactly sum to 100 percent due to rounding. For some tables, numbers do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

### Chapter 4 Information about participants sexually abused as children in the context of schools

Sex of victim and survivor	School contexts		Other contexts	
Male	374	55%	909	26%
Female	301	44%	2560	74%
Other	4	1%	8	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>679</b>		<b>3477</b>	
Unknown	12		101	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

Sex of victim and survivor	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
Male	136	45%	152	76%	32	78%	39	42%
Female	164	54%	47	24%	9	22%	53	58%
Other	3	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>		<b>199</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>92</b>	
Unknown	6		1		0		5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>		<b>200</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>97</b>	

Sex of victim and survivor	Residential school		Non-residential school	
Male	168	78%	145	49%
Female	46	21%	148	50%
Other	1	0%	3	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>		<b>296</b>	
Unknown	2		6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>		<b>302</b>	

Disability or long-term illness/condition* of victim and survivor	School contexts		Other contexts	
Yes	321	46%	1654	46%
No	370	54%	1924	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	
Unknown	0		0	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

\* Note that this is at the time of the session and is defined as a condition that limits a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

Was the victim/survivor affected by the conditions at the time that they first experienced the sexual abuse?*	School contexts		Other contexts	
Yes	64	31%	248	21%
No	145	69%	926	79%
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>		<b>1174</b>	
Unknown	112		480	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>321</b>		<b>1654</b>	

\* This table is a breakdown of those that answered 'yes' to whether they had a disability or long-term illness/condition.

Age sexual abuse began	School contexts		Other contexts	
0–3 years old	12	2%	461	14%
4–7 years old	108	17%	1268	38%
8–11 years old	284	44%	1049	31%
12–15 years old	217	34%	537	16%
16–17 years old	23	4%	53	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>644</b>		<b>3368</b>	
Unknown	47		210	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

Age sexual abuse began	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
0–3 years old	3	1%	1	1%	0	0%	4	5%
4–7 years old	56	19%	19	10%	5	14%	24	27%
8–11 years old	130	44%	103	54%	18	49%	25	28%
12–15 years old	98	33%	62	32%	14	38%	28	32%
16–17 years old	6	2%	6	3%	0	0%	7	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>293</b>		<b>191</b>		<b>37</b>		<b>88</b>	
Unknown	16		9		4		9	
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>		<b>200</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>97</b>	

Age sexual abuse began	Residential school		Non-residential school	
0–3 years old	1	0%	2	1%
4–7 years old	22	11%	56	20%
8–11 years old	105	51%	127	45%
12–15 years old	71	34%	92	33%
16–17 years old	8	4%	5	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>		<b>282</b>	
Unknown	10		20	
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>		<b>302</b>	

Ethnicity of victim and survivor	School contexts		Other contexts	
Asian/Asian British	10	2%	65	2%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	7	1%	64	2%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	14	3%	99	4%
Other ethnic group	2	0%	25	1%
White	478	94%	2348	90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b>		<b>2601</b>	
Unknown	180		977	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

Sexual orientation of victim and survivor	School contexts		Other contexts	
Heterosexual/straight	371	84%	2130	87%
Gay man	24	5%	67	3%
Gay woman/lesbian	18	4%	99	4%
Bisexual	22	5%	115	5%
Other	5	1%	29	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>		<b>2440</b>	
Unknown	251		1138	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

Victim and survivor's reason for attending	School contexts		Other contexts	
Wanted change to prevent abuse happening to someone else	397	57%	2017	56%
Wanted to tell someone in authority	173	25%	798	22%
Wanted some resolution	138	20%	597	17%
No reason given/unknown	132	19%	763	21%
Wanted to be believed	108	16%	577	16%
Reason other	74	11%	330	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691*</b>		<b>3578</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

School category*	Residential		Non-residential		Unknown	
State	23	10%	247	82%	39	33%
Independent	152	67%	36	12%	12	10%
Special	28	12%	7	2%	6	5%
Other	25	11%	10	3%	62	52%
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>		<b>300</b>		<b>119</b>	

\* Cases can potentially have multiple school categories listed, therefore when cross-referencing against residential status totals may not match against residential/non-residential numbers seen elsewhere.

## Chapter 5 Participant experiences of child sexual abuse in the context of schools

Decade sexual abuse began	School contexts		Other contexts	
1930s (or earlier)	0	0%	2	0%
1940s	9	1%	35	1%
1950s	44	7%	247	8%
1960s	134	21%	609	19%
1970s	222	35%	1000	32%
1980s	133	21%	649	21%
1990s	57	9%	401	13%
2000s	29	5%	190	6%
2010s	1	0%	19	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>629</b>		<b>3152</b>	
Unknown	62		426	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

Relationship of perpetrator to victim/survivor (grouped)	School contexts		Other contexts	
Teaching or educational staff	491	71%	49	1%
Older child or peer	105	15%	481	13%
Clergy or church related staff	48	7%	206	6%
Ancillary staff	37	5%	24	1%
Relationship other	30	4%	930	26%
Family member	28	4%	1916	54%
Other professional	14	2%	183	5%
Youth/activity/sports worker	13	2%	95	3%
Unknown	9	1%	240	7%
Residential care worker	7	1%	128	4%
Carer (foster, pre-school, after school)	4	1%	115	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691*</b>		<b>3578</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Relationship of perpetrator to victim/survivor (grouped)	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
Teaching or educational staff	221	72%	148	74%	25	61%	60	62%
Older child or peer	42	14%	38	19%	9	22%	18	19%
Ancillary staff	23	7%	7	4%	2	5%	8	8%
Clergy or church related staff	16	5%	30	15%	2	5%	0	0%
Family member	15	5%	9	5%	1	2%	4	4%
Relationship other	16	5%	5	3%	2	5%	8	8%
Youth/activity/sports worker	6	2%	5	3%	0	0%	1	1%
Unknown	6	2%	1	1%	1	2%	1	1%
Other professional	4	1%	7	4%	0	0%	3	3%
Carer (foster, pre-school, after school)	1	0%	1	1%	1	2%	1	1%
Residential care worker	1	0%	2	1%	3	7%	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>309*</b>		<b>200</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>97</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.



Relationship of perpetrator to victim/survivor (grouped)	Residential school		Non-residential school	
Teaching or educational staff	155	71%	225	75%
Older child or peer	46	21%	29	10%
Clergy or church related staff	19	9%	22	7%
Ancillary staff	12	6%	20	7%
Other professional	8	4%	5	2%
Family member	7	3%	15	5%
Relationship other	7	3%	13	4%
Residential care worker	5	2%	1	0%
Youth/activity/sports worker	4	2%	5	2%
Carer (foster, pre-school, after school)	2	1%	1	0%
Unknown	1	0%	5	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>217*</b>		<b>302</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Sex of perpetrator	School contexts		Other contexts	
Male	656	95%	3287	92%
Female	46	7%	267	7%
Other	2	0%	6	0%
Unknown	19	3%	173	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691*</b>		<b>3578</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Type of sexual abuse (grouped)	School contexts		Other contexts	
Fondling	389	56%	1981	55%
Behaviour not involving penetration	263	38%	1437	40%
Behaviour involving penetration	237	34%	1820	51%
Grooming for the purposes of sexual contact	164	24%	793	22%
Violations of privacy	122	18%	640	18%
Exposing children to adult sexuality	98	14%	695	19%
Exploitation	45	7%	246	7%
Other sexual behaviour	9	1%	59	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691*</b>		<b>3578</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Type of sexual abuse (grouped)	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
Fondling	183	59%	125	63%	17	41%	44	45%
Behaviour not involving penetration	121	39%	89	45%	12	29%	35	36%
Behaviour involving penetration	105	34%	70	35%	17	41%	34	35%
Grooming for the purposes of sexual contact	89	29%	49	25%	8	20%	14	14%
Violations of privacy	60	19%	40	20%	5	12%	16	16%
Exposing children to adult sexuality	43	14%	35	18%	10	24%	12	12%
Exploitation	20	6%	16	8%	4	10%	5	5%
Other sexual behaviour	2	1%	4	2%	1	2%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>309*</b>		<b>200</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>97</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Type of sexual abuse (grouped)	Residential school		Non-residential school	
Fondling	121	56%	182	60%
Behaviour not involving penetration	87	40%	115	38%
Behaviour involving penetration	82	38%	97	32%
Grooming for the purposes of sexual contact	52	24%	84	28%
Exposing children to adult sexuality	41	19%	36	12%
Violations of privacy	40	18%	55	18%
Exploitation	18	8%	15	5%
Other sexual behaviour	3	1%	4	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>217*</b>		<b>302</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Episodes of sexual abuse	School contexts		Other contexts	
One episode reported	425	62%	2486	69%
Two episodes reported	131	19%	567	16%
Three episodes reported	135	20%	525	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

Other forms of abuse	School contexts		Other contexts	
Mentioned any other form of abuse	330	48%	1866	52%
<b>Particular types of abuse</b>				
Physical abuse	175	25%	1107	31%
Psychological abuse	155	22%	1089	30%
Emotional abuse/entrapment	124	18%	928	26%
Neglect	19	3%	401	11%
Bullying	102	15%	394	11%
Witnessing the abuse of others/indirect victimisation	76	11%	357	10%
Child labour	6	1%	58	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691*</b>		<b>3578</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Other forms of abuse	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
Mentioned any form of abuse	148	48%	104	52%	20	49%	42	43%
Particular types of abuse								
Physical abuse	67	22%	60	30%	13	32%	22	23%
Psychological abuse	61	20%	52	26%	11	27%	21	22%
Emotional abuse/entrapment	58	19%	39	20%	2	5%	15	15%
Neglect	6	2%	5	3%	3	7%	1	1%
Child labour	1	0%	1	1%	1	2%	1	1%
Witnessing the abuse of others/indirect victimisation	34	11%	21	11%	3	7%	12	12%
Bullying	45	15%	32	16%	7	17%	18	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>309*</b>		<b>200</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>97</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Other forms of abuse	Residential school		Non-residential school	
Mentioned any form of abuse	112	52%	143	47%
Particular types of abuse				
Physical abuse	66	30%	64	21%
Psychological abuse	62	29%	55	18%
Emotional abuse/entrapment	38	18%	52	17%
Neglect	6	3%	7	2%
Child labour	2	1%	0	0%
Witnessing the abuse of others/indirect victimisation	26	12%	33	11%
Bullying	41	19%	34	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>217*</b>		<b>302</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

## Chapter 6 Institutional context and knowledge of the sexual abuse

Victim knew of someone else being sexually abused	School contexts		Other contexts	
Yes	291	42%	815	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

Someone else knew what was happening	School contexts		Other contexts	
Yes	223	32%	934	26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

Victim knew of someone else being sexually abused	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
Yes	113	37%	109	55%	19	46%	35	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>		<b>200</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>97</b>	

Someone else knew what was happening	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
Yes	97	31%	77	39%	12	29%	28	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>		<b>200</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>97</b>	

Victim knew of someone else being sexually abused	Residential school		Non-residential school	
Yes	119	55%	118	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>		<b>302</b>	

Someone else knew what was happening	Residential school		Non-residential school	
Yes	82	38%	97	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>		<b>302</b>	

## Chapter 7 Experiences of disclosure and responses by institutions

Did the victim and survivor tell anyone about the sexual abuse at the time it was happening?	School contexts		Other contexts	
Yes – all experiences of sexual abuse were reported	182	32%	931	31%
No – all experiences of sexual abuse went unreported	378	67%	1903	63%
Some episodes reported, some were not	5	1%	192	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>565</b>		<b>3026</b>	
Unknown	126		552	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

Did the victim and survivor tell anyone about the sexual abuse at the time it was happening?	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
Yes – all experiences of sexual abuse were reported	79	31%	53	30%	20	59%	24	34%
No – all experiences of sexual abuse went unreported	177	68%	122	69%	14	41%	46	65%
Some episodes reported, some were not	3	1%	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>		<b>176</b>		<b>34</b>		<b>71</b>	
Unknown	50		24		7		26	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>309</b>		<b>200</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>97</b>	

Did the victim and survivor tell anyone about the sexual abuse at the time it was happening?	Residential school		Non-residential school	
Yes – all experiences of abuse were reported	58	31%	79	31%
No – all experiences of abuse went unreported	128	68%	170	68%
Some episodes reported, some were not	3	2%	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>189</b>		<b>251</b>	
Unknown	28		51	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>217</b>		<b>302</b>	

Who sexual abuse was reported to at the time (of those who reported it)	School contexts		Other contexts	
Person in authority inside institution	103	55%	255	23%
Parent	87	47%	567	50%
Police	40	21%	418	37%
Child friend	25	13%	136	12%
Told other	19	10%	194	17%
Welfare/child protection officer	18	10%	235	21%
Healthcare personnel	6	3%	53	5%
Sibling	6	3%	66	6%
Person providing mental health service	2	1%	29	3%
Unknown	2	1%	14	1%
Partner	1	1%	8	1%
Adult friend	1	1%	21	2%
Other relative	1	1%	84	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>187*</b>		<b>1123</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Who sexual abuse was reported to at the time (of those who reported it)	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
Person in authority inside institution	45	55%	27	50%	13	65%	12	48%
Parent	31	38%	27	50%	11	55%	19	76%
Child friend	17	21%	5	9%	0	0%	4	16%
Police	16	20%	10	19%	6	30%	5	20%
Told other	8	10%	6	11%	1	5%	1	4%
Welfare/child protection officer	6	7%	3	6%	4	20%	4	16%
Unknown	2	2%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Medical personnel (eg doctor, nurse)	1	1%	2	4%	1	5%	1	4%
Person providing mental health service (eg counsellor, psychologist)	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%
Partner (incl. boyfriend/girlfriend)	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Adult friend	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Sibling	1	1%	1	2%	2	10%	1	4%
Other relative	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>82*</b>		<b>54</b>		<b>20</b>		<b>25</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.



Who sexual abuse was reported to at the time (of those who reported it)	Residential school		Non-residential school	
Person in authority inside institution	36	59%	39	48%
Parent	29	48%	34	42%
Police	14	23%	17	21%
Welfare/child protection officer	7	11%	6	7%
Told other	7	11%	9	11%
Child friend	5	8%	14	17%
Medical personnel (eg doctor, nurse)	2	3%	2	2%
Sibling	1	2%	1	1%
Person providing mental health service (incl. counsellor, psychologist)	0	0%	1	1%
Partner (incl. boyfriend/girlfriend)	0	0%	1	1%
Adult friend	0	0%	0	0%
Other relative	0	0%	0	0%
Unknown	0	0%	2	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61*</b>		<b>81</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Why sexual abuse was not reported at the time	School contexts		Other contexts	
Unknown	105	27%	500	24%
Shame, embarrassment	97	25%	430	21%
Fear of not being believed	76	20%	365	17%
Not reported for other reason	75	20%	404	19%
Didn't know the behaviour was not ok	67	17%	453	22%
Fear of retribution by perpetrator	62	16%	421	20%
Felt guilty	54	14%	236	11%
Didn't want to hurt their family	51	13%	336	16%
Believed they were special (eg given special privileges)	45	12%	135	6%
Didn't have the language to explain what was happening	44	11%	342	16%
Did not want anyone else to know	36	9%	183	9%
Thought they would get in trouble	33	9%	213	10%

Why sexual abuse was not reported at the time	School contexts		Other contexts	
Fear of retribution by institution	27	7%	51	2%
Believed the perpetrator loved him/her	24	6%	0	0%
Just wanted to forget	20	5%	86	4%
Perpetrator threatened victim/family/ other significant people	12	3%	174	8%
Regarded as private	11	3%	48	2%
Fear of retribution against the perpetrator	11	3%	50	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>383*</b>		<b>2095</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Did the victim/survivor tell anyone/report the sexual abuse after it ended?	School contexts		Other contexts	
Yes	428	79%	2438	80%
No	108	20%	506	17%
Some episodes reported, some not	9	2%	121	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>545</b>		<b>3065</b>	
Unknown	146		513	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>691</b>		<b>3578</b>	

Did the victim/survivor tell anyone/report the abuse after it ended?	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
Yes	182	74%	138	81%	25	78%	56	81%
No	59	24%	27	16%	6	19%	12	17%
Some episodes reported, some not	4	2%	5	3%	1	3%	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>245</b>		<b>170</b>		<b>32</b>		<b>69</b>	
Unknown	64		30		9		28	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>309</b>		<b>200</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>97</b>	

Did the victim/survivor tell anyone/report the abuse after it ended?	Residential school		Non-residential school	
Yes	146	80%	186	76%
No	30	16%	57	23%
Some episodes reported, some not	6	3%	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>		<b>245</b>	
Unknown	35		57	
<b>Total (including unknown)</b>	<b>217</b>		<b>302</b>	

Who sexual abuse was reported to after it ended	School contexts		Other contexts	
Police	218	50%	1184	46%
Person providing mental health service (incl. counsellor, psychologist)	95	22%	457	18%
Partner (incl. boyfriend/girlfriend)	75	17%	440	17%
Parent	69	16%	755	30%
Person in authority inside institution	63	14%	146	6%
Told other later	44	10%	269	11%
Adult friend	30	7%	195	8%
Medical personnel (eg doctor, nurse)	19	4%	187	7%
Sibling	15	3%	261	10%
Other relative	13	3%	202	8%
Welfare/child protection officer	12	3%	120	5%
Child friend	12	3%	68	3%
Unknown	8	2%	24	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>437*</b>		<b>2559</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Who sexual abuse was reported to after it ended	State school		Independent school		Special school		Other school type	
Police	82	44%	76	53%	17	65%	32	56%
Partner (incl. boyfriend/girlfriend)	42	23%	16	11%	2	8%	11	19%
Person providing mental health service (eg counsellor, psychologist)	40	22%	29	20%	1	4%	13	23%
Parent	34	18%	19	13%	5	19%	7	12%
Person in authority inside institution	27	15%	28	20%	3	12%	3	5%
Told other later	18	10%	14	10%	1	4%	5	9%
Adult friend	16	9%	9	6%	0	0%	6	11%
Sibling	9	5%	4	3%	0	0%	0	0%
Medical personnel (eg doctor, nurse)	7	4%	6	4%	1	4%	4	7%
Child friend	8	4%	2	1%	0	0%	1	2%
Welfare/child protection officer	4	2%	4	3%	1	4%	3	5%
Other relative	3	2%	5	3%	1	4%	5	9%
Unknown	1	1%	4	3%	0	0%	2	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>186*</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>26</b>		<b>57</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Who sexual abuse was reported to after it ended	Residential school		Non-residential school	
Police	81	53%	92	49%
Person providing mental health service (incl. counsellor, psychologist)	28	18%	38	20%
Person in authority inside institution	26	17%	29	15%
Parent	19	13%	31	16%
Partner (incl. boyfriend/girlfriend)	18	12%	43	23%
Told other later	15	10%	14	7%
Medical personnel (eg doctor, nurse)	7	5%	6	3%
Adult friend	7	5%	16	9%
Other relative	7	5%	3	2%
Welfare/child protection officer	5	3%	6	3%
Sibling	4	3%	8	4%
Unknown	4	3%	2	1%
Child friend	2	1%	7	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>152*</b>		<b>188</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Decade sexual abuse began, and if reported	Reported		Not reported		Some episodes reported, while others not		Total	Unknown	Total (including unknown)
1930s (or earlier)	0		0		0		0	0	0
1940s	3	43%	4	57%	0	0%	7	2	9
1950s	16	40%	24	60%	0	0%	40	4	44
1960s	31	26%	84	72%	2	2%	117	17	134
1970s	52	29%	125	70%	2	1%	179	43	222
1980s	42	38%	67	61%	1	1%	110	23	133
1990s	19	41%	27	59%	0	0%	46	11	57
2000s	8	30%	19	70%	0	0%	27	2	29
2010s	0		0		0		0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>		<b>350</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>526</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>629</b>
Unknown	11		28		0		39	23	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>		<b>378</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>565</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>691</b>

Who sexual abuse was reported to	1960s		1970s		1980s	
Parent	18	55%	22	41%	23	53%
Person in authority inside institution	16	48%	26	48%	28	65%
Police	8	24%	8	15%	7	16%
Told other	5	15%	5	9%	2	5%
Sibling	2	6%	1	2%	1	2%
Welfare/child protection officer	1	3%	5	9%	4	9%
Medical personnel (eg doctor, nurse)	1	3%	0	0%	2	5%
Person providing mental health service (incl. counsellor, psychologist)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Partner (incl. boyfriend/girlfriend)	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Adult friend	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Child friend	0	0%	12	22%	7	16%
Other relative	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Unknown	0	0%	2	4%	0	0%
<b>Total*</b>	<b>33</b>		<b>54</b>		<b>43</b>	

\* These totals relate to those that reported sexual abuse for every episode, or for some episodes within a decade, as seen in the table directly above.

## Chapter 8 Impacts of the child sexual abuse

Impacts (grouped)	School contexts		Other contexts	
Mental health	591	86%	3110	87%
Relationships	371	54%	1950	54%
School/employment	362	52%	1507	42%
Sexual behaviour	224	32%	1153	32%
Direct consequence	84	12%	499	14%
Criminal behaviour	83	12%	315	9%
Physical health	48	7%	247	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691*</b>		<b>3578</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

Detailed impacts	School contexts		Other contexts	
Difficulties with trust and intimacy	270	39%	1305	36%
Depression	250	36%	1342	38%
Anxiety	232	34%	1200	34%
Thoughts of suicide	189	27%	947	26%
Feeling of guilt	180	26%	903	25%
Unhappy at school	179	26%	524	15%
Low selfesteem	177	26%	955	27%
Lack of trust in authority	173	25%	669	19%
Attempted suicide	144	21%	686	19%
Alcohol abuse	137	20%	599	17%
Academic difficulties	137	20%	567	16%
Post-traumatic stress disorder	136	20%	663	19%
Other behavioural and mental health functioning	132	19%	682	19%
Nightmares	131	19%	815	23%
Self-harm	130	19%	678	19%
Aggression	111	16%	477	13%
Marital problems	109	16%	529	15%
Avoidance of or phobic reactions to sexual intimacy	100	14%	500	14%
Illicit drug use	90	13%	427	12%
Eating and sleeping difficulties	87	13%	525	15%
Other impact on relationship	76	11%	408	11%
Left school early	74	11%	321	9%
Panic attacks	69	10%	436	12%
Other school/employment	69	10%	251	7%
Running away	66	10%	367	10%
Feeling helpless	63	9%	363	10%
Confusion about sexual identity	58	8%	166	5%
Discomfort/lack of confidence with parenting	56	8%	382	11%
Truancy	56	8%	331	9%
Self-hatred	55	8%	250	7%

Detailed impacts	School contexts		Other contexts	
Physical injury	54	8%	315	9%
Multiple partners	54	8%	354	10%
Underemployment/difficulty in maintaining work	54	8%	240	7%
Unknown impact	51	7%	249	7%
Minor offences	49	7%	195	5%
Other physical health	41	6%	223	6%
Sexually risky behaviour/unprotected sex	39	6%	222	6%
Other impact on sexual behaviour	39	6%	162	5%
Unable to work	39	6%	148	4%
Difficulty in arousal	34	5%	114	3%
Phobias	31	4%	126	4%
Loss of religious faith	28	4%	84	2%
Violent offences	22	3%	70	2%
Unemployment	21	3%	107	3%
Other financial difficulties	21	3%	80	2%
Pregnancy	20	3%	157	4%
Other involvement in crime as an offender	19	3%	70	2%
Other direct consequence	17	2%	52	1%
Overuse of prescription medication	14	2%	56	2%
Exchanging sex for money	12	2%	83	2%
Sexual offences	12	2%	23	1%
Hypertension	8	1%	28	1%
Gambling	6	1%	17	0%
Sexually transmitted disease	4	1%	53	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691*</b>		<b>3578</b>	

\* Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.



## Chapter 10 Summary of key findings from the research and victims and survivors' suggestions for change

Suggestions for change	School contexts		Other contexts	
Someone to report the sexual abuse to	244	35%	1215	34%
Increase knowledge/awareness about child sexual abuse/exploitation	243	35%	1461	41%
Systems to identify children who are at risk/ experiencing sexual abuse at an early stage	204	30%	1188	33%
Other* changes	201	29%	908	25%
Believing children who report	195	28%	1113	31%
Child safety education programmes	182	26%	1046	29%
Increased supervision of children	160	23%	563	16%
Increased access to therapy/appropriate support in a timely fashion	157	23%	930	26%
Unknown	90	13%	526	15%
Alternative approaches to court processes	54	8%	312	9%
Changes to the rules of evidence	34	5%	173	5%
No time limit on bringing legal proceedings	24	3%	87	2%
Sentencing reform	22	3%	138	4%
Person not sure	10	1%	34	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>691**</b>		<b>3578</b>	

\* This refers to the range of other changes victims and survivors suggested that are not included in the specific categories below.

\*\*Numbers in this table do not sum to the totals as participants could report on more than one variable.

# Appendix D

## Ethics

All social research conducted or commissioned by the Inquiry is subject to approval from the Inquiry's Research Ethics Committee. It ensures that all Inquiry research complies with the Inquiry's Research Code of Ethics.<sup>39</sup> The Committee is formed of external academics and experts in addition to relevant internal staff, including a member of the Inquiry's Victims and Survivors Consultative Panel and a member of the Inquiry's Support and Safeguarding Team.

The Truth Project deals with highly sensitive and personal material and the Inquiry's Research Ethics Committee ensures that any Truth Project data used for the purposes of research adhere to strict ethical standards. The Inquiry's Research Ethics Committee has approved the use of Truth Project data for research purposes and it is subject to ongoing ethical scrutiny.

All Inquiry staff working with victims and survivors in the Truth Project are provided with training by the Research Team before commencing in the role. This training covers the important ethical considerations relevant to conducting Truth Project private sessions, including the importance of informed consent.

Participants receive information about taking part in the Truth Project prior to their participation. This is in the form of a booklet, details of which are available on the Truth Project [website](#). The booklet contains a 'consent for research' statement, which informs participants that their information may be used to conduct research throughout the life of the Inquiry, unless they would prefer their information not to be used in this way. The consent statement was piloted and subjected to cognitive testing<sup>40</sup> to ensure that all participants were able to make an informed decision. For participants who were unable to read, for example, consent was sought verbally.

At the start of a private session, all participants are reminded how their information may be used for research by the assistant facilitator, who reads out a number of statements that include how the Inquiry manages their data. Participants can choose to opt out of research at this point. They also receive information that they can change their mind and withdraw consent both during or after their session has taken place or they have submitted their written experience. Participants can ask to have their information removed from the analysis and reports up until the point that reports are finalised for publication. The supporting material provided to Truth Project participants also includes information about who they can contact if they decide that they do not want their information to be used in research.

In the event that a participant shares an experience with the Truth Project on more than one occasion, they hear the statements about how the Inquiry manages their data on each occasion. Further information about how Truth Project data is collected, managed and used in our research can be found in [Truth Project Research: Methods](#).

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<sup>39</sup> [www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/1382/view/iicsa-ethical-approval-guidance.pdf](http://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/1382/view/iicsa-ethical-approval-guidance.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Cognitive testing is a process which tests comprehension regarding consent materials and the way in which individuals use this information to make decisions regarding participation (Willis, 2006).

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