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Girls should learn how to cope with school banter 'because it prepares them for male-dominated workplaces'

- Headmistress Lucy Elphinstone said girls need to learn how to be less sensitive
- She pointed out many boys make fun of each other as a mark of 'endearment'
- Francis Holland School head also said girls need to learn how to 'blag' a bit more

By [ELEANOR HARDING FOR THE DAILY MAIL](#)

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Girls should learn how to cope with teasing and 'banter' at school because it prepares them for male-dominated workplaces, according to a leading head teacher.

Lucy Elphinstone, headmistress of Francis Holland School, Sloane Square, said girls need to learn how to be less sensitive so that they can deal with the rough-and-tumble of adult life.

She pointed out that many boys make fun of each other often as a mark of 'endearment' – and that girls may find they have to be a part of this when they enter the world of work.

She also said girls need to learn how to 'blag' a bit more about their skills, if they are to compete with some of their more 'egotistical' male peers.



Lucy Elphinstone, headmistress of Francis Holland School, Sloane Square, said girls need to learn how to be less sensitive so that they can deal with the rough-and-tumble of adult life. Pictured: A stock image of workplace banter

These skills will help them excel in male-dominated fields such as law, politics, banking and finance, she added.

Mrs Elphinstone, whose school is top-performing and charges fees of £20,000 a year, said such behaviour is often counter-intuitive for many girls who 'want to please' and feel they have to be 'good'.

But she said: 'Girls are perhaps by nature sensitive and easily hurt. Very often when we hear something that is just gentle teasing, we tend to call it bullying, while boys would never call [it] that.

'They are used to calling each other nicknames, pushing each other around a bit, making fun of each other, but often it's a sign of endearment.

'Girls need to learn to not take themselves quite so seriously, to learn to laugh at themselves a little bit more and to understand that teasing isn't necessarily something that is cruel or unkind.

'It prepares them for a world where they will get far worse than teasing and it toughens them up a little bit.

'I think it's great if they learn how to banter a little bit, like boys do.'

She said all-girls schools can be a great place to develop these skills, and Francis Holland also tries to encourage girls to 'take risks' and 'encounter failure'.

And she said that while sometimes boys needed to be a bit 'less egotistical' and 'more honest about their own skills', girls often have the opposite problem.

She said while many girls will only apply for a job if they are convinced they are more than qualified for it, male counterparts will not necessarily let such things get in their way.

'I certainly teach my girls that well known trait, and that is how to blag it,' she said.

'Girls need to know just as much as any boy that sometimes you have to wing it and sometimes you have to go for that job or that position when you are not sure whether you have all the experience or qualifications necessary but you are brave enough to have a go and believe in yourself.

'We as women tend to be much more authentic and truthful than men are, sometimes to our own detriment.'

She added that the so-called 'glass ceiling' which prevents women progressing in the world of work may be partly down to psychology.

She blamed it partly on 'this fear of getting things wrong, the curse of the good girl, fear of not being liked and not pleasing people.'

It comes amid a growing row over the gender gap in pay, with the BBC left embarrassed earlier this year when it emerged the Today Programme's Sarah Montague was being paid a fraction of the salary of her co-presenter, John Humphrys.

The Fawcett Society has said that as of yesterday – November 10 – women are on average working for free for the rest of the year in comparison with their male counterparts because of the gap in pay.