



Child on Child Abuse Policy
September 2025

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Author/Reviewer:	Tara Cook, HoHR

Introduction

We recognise that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. This includes verbal as well as physical abuse. Child-on-child abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as ‘banter’ or “growing up”.

We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse within our school and beyond.

In cases where child-on-child abuse is identified, we will follow our child protection procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children who have been affected by the situation.

We recognise that child-on-child abuse can manifest itself in many ways, such as:

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- The sharing of nude or semi-nude images (sometimes known as ‘sexting’ or youth-produced and AI-produced digital imagery)
- Up-skirting
- Bullying
- Radicalisation
- Abuse in intimate relationships
- Children who display sexually harmful behaviour
- Gang association and serious violence (County Lines)
- Technology can be used for bullying and other abusive behaviour

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school, such as the behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, child protection policy and online safety policy.

This policy concentrates on child-on-child abuse in the context of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and should be read in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

Aims

The policy will:

- Set out our strategies for preventing, identifying and managing child-on-child abuse
- Take a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved. Acknowledging that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable and may have been abused themselves.

Understanding child-on-child abuse

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex, or a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

The impact of this behaviour on children can be very distressing and have an impact on academic achievement and emotional health, and wellbeing.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence may also occur online and offline.

The Context

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

In this policy, we recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour (Harmful Sexual Behaviour- HSB).

We adopt the NSPCC definition of HSB as: -

"Sexual behaviours expressed by children...that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child...or adult."

Vulnerable groups

We recognise that all children can be at risk; however, we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable. This can include those: with experience of abuse within their family; living with domestic violence; young people in care; children who go missing; children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities); children who identify as or are perceived as LGBT and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

Research tells us that girls are more frequently abused by their peers, and girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools.

Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviours such as antisocial behaviour. Boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs. We recognise that both boys and girls experience child-on-child abuse, but they can do so in gendered ways.

All staff should be aware of indicators which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff working with children must maintain an attitude of **'it could happen here,'** and this is especially important when considering child-on-child abuse.

The Headteacher and DSL have overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation, and to liaise with the Governing Body, parents/carers, Local Authority, and outside agencies.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all; however, all staff, parents/carers and pupils need to be aware of who to report to and how to report any safeguarding concerns. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and their Deputy in our school are James Evelyn (DSL) and Jemma Wallace (Deputy DSL).

The nominated Governor with responsibility for child-on-child abuse is Penny Richardson.

Definitions

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudiced-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes, and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or engage in sexual activity with a third party
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth-produced sexual imagery)
- Up-skirting (which is a criminal offence), which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or to cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse, or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element). This may also be an indicator of wider exploitation such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and/or Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and/or County Lines.

Recognising Behaviours

We recognise that behaviours associated with child-on-child abuse take place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on this spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

We recognise that all children grow and develop at their own pace. We will use our professional judgement and knowledge of child development when responding to child-on-child abuse.

Reporting and our response to alleged incidents, and responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment

All reports of child-on-child abuse will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis with the DSL or their deputy taking a leading role using their professional judgement and supported by other agencies such as social care or the police as required. We want children, parents/carers, staff, and visitors to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be taken seriously. We recognise that our school's initial response to a report of child-on-child abuse is incredibly

important - how we respond to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims to report or come forward.

We will respond to reports of alleged child-on-child abuse that have occurred online or outside of school. These reports will be treated seriously and we remain committed to supporting and safeguarding all parties, including the victim, alleged perpetrator and any other child(ren) who may be affected.

We will make decisions on a case-by-case basis, with the DSL (or a deputy) taking the leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as the Local Authority, Children's Social Care, and the Police as appropriate. We will ensure that we reference and follow other school policies and procedures as appropriate.

We have clear reporting systems for each group of our school community: the effectiveness of these reporting systems is reviewed throughout the academic year and may be amended to meet the needs of all members of our community.

Children (including bystanders):

It is important to understand that a victim may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report. We recognise that in some instances, another child may report on another child's behalf. We will teach children so that they will know how to report concerns or incidents of child-on-child abuse.

We ask that all children report any concerning behaviour to a member of school staff – this can be any member of teaching or non-teaching staff, including a class teacher, a TA, the Head Teacher, a lunchtime supervisor, or a member of the office team. We talk about trusted adults regularly in class and in assemblies to remind our children of whom they can report concerns to.

The member of staff will listen to the child and make an initial note of their concerns. they will then discuss next steps with them and reassure them that they will be supported. We will never promise a child that we will not tell anyone about a report of any form of abuse. The member of staff will make a formal record of the concern/report on CPOMS, and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The member of staff will directly alert the school's DSL.

We understand that some children may find it difficult to tell a member of staff about their concerns verbally; we therefore have additional reporting mechanisms in place. Our school has a worry box in the hall where children can put their name/a brief note about their concerns/draw a picture of their concern – this worry box is introduced to the children at the start of the year, and children are reminded of it regularly. The Worry Box is monitored by a specified staff member who follows up with the child and supports.

Parents/Carers

We understand that parents and carers may well struggle to cope with making or receiving a report that their child has been the victim of or is an alleged perpetrator of child-on-child abuse.

In line with the statutory guidance, we will seek advice and support from other services as appropriate on a case-by-case basis. All decisions and actions taken by the school will consider the needs of the individual children involved and the wider school community.

We ask that if parents/carers have concerns about their child experiencing or allegedly perpetrating child-on-child abuse, they contact the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy (in person/via telephone call/via email) to explain their concerns. The

DSL/Deputy will take an initial note of the concerns but may ask to schedule a meeting to allow for more time to discuss the concerns in detail. Following the report and/or the meeting, the DSL will make a formal record of the report on CPOMS, and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The DSL will seek advice from statutory services if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk, or if this is otherwise appropriate.

We ask that parents/carers come directly to the school with their concerns rather than discussing them with other members of the school community in person or online.

Our school remains committed to supporting pupils and their families in all instances of child-on-child abuse. We will endeavour to ensure that all parties are kept informed of progress and any developments, but we will also need to show due regard to GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and ongoing investigations by statutory services. This may mean, at times, that we are not able to provide or share information or updates.

If a parent/carer is not satisfied with our school's actions, they can use the complaint policy and procedures. This is available on our school website and on request from the school office.

Staff

Our staff work closely with our children and therefore may notice a change in a child's behaviour or attitude that might indicate that something is wrong before receiving a report from a child or a member of the school community. When staff have any concerns about a child's welfare or are concerned that a child is displaying behaviours that may show they have been the victim of or that they are perpetrating child-on-child abuse, they must act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.

Staff must report their concerns to the DSL/directly to the Headteacher. The member of staff receiving the report will take an initial note of the concerns and will then make a formal record of the report on CPOMS, and other relevant staff members will be alerted. The DSL will seek advice from statutory services if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

Visitors

We ensure that all visitors to our school are aware of our Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures and which staff member they should report any concerns to (the member of staff may differ depending on the purpose of the visit, e.g., supply teacher, governor, external agency, etc.).

We ask that if a visitor to our school has any concerns about a child or about child-on-child abuse that they have witnessed, or have been told about, they report their concerns at the earliest opportunity in person to the school's DSL/the Headteacher/a member of the Senior Leadership Team. We ask that visitors report their concerns in person as soon as possible, but at least by the end of the school day. It is not appropriate to wait until the following day or leave a written note with concerns. The member of staff receiving the report will take an initial note of the concerns and will then make a formal record of the concerns on CPOMS, and other relevant staff members will be alerted. The DSL will seek advice from statutory services if the report is deemed urgent or if a child is considered at risk.

Recording and Evaluating

We will ensure a written report is made as soon after the disclosure as possible, recording the facts as presented by the reporter. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated. We will ensure the DSL (or deputy) is informed as soon as possible, if they were not involved in the initial report. All records and actions, safety plans and risk assessments etc will be recorded on CPOMS. We will ensure that details of decisions made and reasons for decisions are recorded as well as any outcomes.

Strategies for Prevention

Our school actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

Staff training – including for supply staff, governors, volunteers. This will include:

- Contextual safeguarding
- Identification and classification of specific behaviours
- Making it clear that there is a **zero-tolerance approach** to child-on-child abuse, that it is **never** acceptable and will not be tolerated. Ensuring it is **never** passed off as “banter,” “just having a laugh,” “a part of growing up”, or “boys being boys.”
- Recognising, acknowledging, and understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and that even if there are no reports, it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported
- Challenging physical behaviours (potentially criminal) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts, and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting skirts
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside of the classroom)
- Ensuring that the Governing Body/Trust are aware of their statutory safeguarding responsibilities.
- Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the safeguarding lead/team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify those children who may need additional support

Information for pupils. This includes:

- Creating an ethos and culture in which all children feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to
- All children are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience any form of child-on-child abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it
- They are regularly informed about the school’s approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse, including the school’s zero-tolerance approach towards all forms of child-on-child abuse, the process for reporting their concerns of child-on-child abuse and where to go for further help, support, and advice
- Educating all children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via a well-embedded RSHE curriculum, PSHE curriculum or wider curriculum
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside of the classroom)

Information for parents/carers. This includes:

- Talking to parents, both in groups and one-to-one
- Providing opportunities for parents to be involved in the review of school policies and lesson plans; and

- Encouraging parents to hold the school to account on this issue
- Asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the school address those risks
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie child-on-child abuse – in school and/or the wider community
- Ensuring parents /carers are aware of the ethos and culture of the school or college

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Curriculum

- The school has a clear set of values and standards, upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life, which is supported by a planned programme of evidence-based RSHE curriculum
- Our RSHE/PSHE programme is fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and/or other vulnerabilities such as gender questioning children)
- We will, through our RSHE/PSHE programme promote:
 - Healthy and respectful relationships
 - Boundaries and consent
 - Equality and raising awareness of stereotyping and prejudice
 - Body confidence and self-esteem
 - How to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour
 - The concepts of, and laws relating to – sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, teenage relationship abuse (intimate personal relationships between children), and how to access support, and
 - What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence, and why these are always unacceptable

Further information and support can be found through the following links:

[Part 5: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025](#)

[Sexual development and behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)

[NSPCC Learning Understanding sexualised behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)

Useful Publications and Websites

Government Publications

Keeping Children safe in Education - www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education

Preventing youth violence and gang involvement
www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-schools-and-colleges-on-gangs-and-youth-violence

Preventing and tackling bullying in schools

www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying

Other useful documents

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes (sometimes known as sexting)

- Sharing nudes and semi-nudes in schools and colleges-Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/609874/6_2939_SP_NCA_Sexting_In_Schools_FINAL_Update_Jan17.pdf

Anti-bullying Alliance

There are some useful links on the section on sexual bullying:

- Sexual bullying: developing effective anti-bullying practice- A guide for school staff and other professionals
<https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/sexual-and-sexist-bullying>
- Preventing abuse among children and young people-guidance from Stop it Now
<https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/>
- What is Age appropriate?
<http://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/what-is-age-appropriate>
- NSPCC-Harmful sexual behaviour
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour/>
- NCB Harmful sexual behaviour
<https://www.ncb.org.uk/>
- NSPCC –Is this sexual abuse?
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/nspcc-helplines-report-peer-sexual-abuse.pdf>

Online sexual harassment

- Project deSHAME- Digital Exploitation and Sexual Harassment Amongst Minors in Europe Understanding, Preventing, Responding
<https://www.childnet.com/our-projects/project-deshame>

Sexism

- It's Just Everywhere- a study on sexism in schools –and how we tackle it
<https://ukfeminista.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Report-Its-just-everywhere.pdf>