Sidcot

Live Adventurously

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1 It is essential that all our staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours and that children can and do abuse each other. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it. (Keeping Children Safe in Education – current edition). Staff who work with children are advised to maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here’ where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff should always act in the best interests of the child.

1.2 All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers and staff should be aware of safeguarding issues from child-on-child abuse including:

- bullying (including cyber, prejudice based or 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
- 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, online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- Harmful sexual behaviour, including behaviour that may be inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent in nature.
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to 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)
- Upskirting 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 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.

1.3 This abuse can:

- Be motivated by perceived differences e.g. on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other differences
- Result in significant, long lasting and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to the victim.

1.4 Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs eg:

- Significant disruption in their own lives
- Exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering abuse
- Educational underachievement
- Involvement in crime

Children who display harmful behaviour may themselves have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma or other adverse experiences and should be supported alongside any safeguarding response.

1.5 Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the first priority of any education setting, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical. School staff, alongside their Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy, have to make their own judgements about each specific case and should use this policy guidance to help.

2. Responsibility

2.1 Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), states *that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse and sets out how allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with'.*

2.2 It also emphasises that the voice of the child must be heard.
'Governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, all system and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.'

2.3 Child-on-child abuse is referenced in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2.1. The sensitive nature and specific issues involved with child-on-child abuse necessitate separate policy guidance. Our School ensures that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to the impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

2.4 Online filtering and monitoring responsibility
The governing body are responsible for ensuring that appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place.
The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), supported by IT leadership, has operational responsibility for:
- overseeing the effectiveness of filtering and monitoring systems
- ensuring systems are regularly reviewed and updated
- responding to safeguarding concerns identified through monitoring
- ensuring staff understand their role in reporting online safety concerns

All staff are responsible for reporting any concerns identified through online activity in line with safeguarding procedures.

3. Purpose of the Policy

3.1 The purpose of this policy is to explore some forms of child-on-child abuse. The policy also includes a planned and supportive response to the issues. In our school we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Anti-Bullying including Cyber Bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff to Student Code of Conduct
- Low level concerns policy
- Managing Allegations / Whistleblowing Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Attendance policy

4. Framework and Legislation

4.1 This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document is Working Together, 2024, highlighting that every assessment of a child, *'must be informed by the views of the child'*. (Working Together, 2024) This is echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2025 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

5. Abuse and harmful behaviour

5.1 It is necessary to consider:

- what abuse is and what it looks like
- how it can be managed
- what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual
- what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

5.2 Abuse should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. It Is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

- Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.
- Children can abuse other children. This can include (but is not limited to): abuse within intimate partner relationships; bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; Sharing nudes and semi nudes and initiation/hazing type violence and

rituals.

- Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action.
- Staff should be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people, which can include Sharing nudes and semi nudes, online grooming and coercion between peers.
- Staff should be aware of the added vulnerability of children and young people who have been the victims of violent crime.

5.3 The child causing harm is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. Evidence suggests that such children may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, may have witnessed or been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, may have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and be in need of protection. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the child causing harm must also address their needs.

6. Types of Abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

When assessing concerns, the School will consider contextual safeguarding factors, including peer groups, online activity, the wider community and other environmental influences:

6.1 Physical abuse

This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidently before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

6.2 Sexual violence and sexual harassment

Concerns around sexual violence and sexual harassment must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will follow the latest KCSIE guidance.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. The School recognises that sexual violence, sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour may occur both online and offline. Any child may be a victim and any child may display harmful behaviour, regardless of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability or

background.

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may include

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- Recognising that sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexist comments, sexualised language, misogynistic behaviour, unwanted sexual conduct and gender-based harassment will not be tolerated and will not be tolerated or dismissed as banter or part of growing up, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”.
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them
- Up-skirting: where someone takes a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm is a criminal offence.
- Anyone of any sex, can be a victim. Additionally, it is important to remember that any child under the age of 13 cannot legally consent to any form of sexual activity, and this will always trigger a referral to Children’s Services for child protection.

6.3 Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity— to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, race or disability and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

6.4 Online Bullying

Online Bullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, e-mail, chat rooms etc.) to harass, threaten, or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. Online bullying can take many forms:

- Abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites
- Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- Stealing someone's online identity
- Spreading rumours online
- Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms or games
- Developing hate sites about another person
- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Encouraging a young person to self-harm
- Pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

6.5 Sharing nudes and semi nudes / sharing nude or indecent imagery

The term 'Sharing nudes and semi nudes' relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content; these are created and sent electronically. They are often 'shared' via social networking sites and instant messaging services.

Up-skirting is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim. This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will follow current UKCIS guidance on Sharing Nude and Semi-Nude Images and Videos together with KCSIE and local safeguarding procedures.

Staff are reminded that it is important that they should not under any circumstances view any material of this description and should confiscate the device and pass on to the Police.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people

6.6 Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers

into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies. The ceremony welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

6.7 Prejudiced Behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – for example disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity.

6.8 Teenage Relationship Abuse

Teenage relationship abuse is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical, sexual abuse and financial or controlling behaviour. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner. This abuse may be child sexual exploitation.

7. Expected Staff Action

Staff will respond positively and with sensitivity when they become aware of any form of 'child-on-child' abuse. Staff will always ensure that the Designated Safeguarding Lead is immediately made aware to ensure that necessary actions take place and record on CPOMS the specific incident and actions taken.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and the reasons for decisions will be recorded in accordance with the School's safeguarding procedures.

8. Recognising child-on-child abuse

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:

- Chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved
- Difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender,

physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability
- All alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident
- Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
- What was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery?
- The effect on the victim
- Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret
- The child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred
- Whether this was a one-off incident, or longer in duration

It is important to deal with a situation of child-on-child abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts. It is equally important to think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled. Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

8.1 Taking Action

- Always take complaints seriously
- Gain a statement of facts from the pupil(s)
- Assess the needs of victim and alleged perpetrator.
- Cases involving sexual violence, exploitation, coercion or significant harm will always be referred to external agencies (Children's Social Care and/or Police) in line with statutory guidance
- Contribute to multi-agency assessments
- Convene a risk management meeting
- Record all incidents and all action taken and if no action taken record why

8.2 Recording sexualised behaviour

- Be clear, explicit and non-avoidant, and avoid vague statements or euphemisms
- Record as soon as possible, so as not to forget or confuse detail
- If appropriate use the body map on CPOMS to indicate where touch took place
- Use proper names for body parts but record exactly any language or vocabulary used by the child. Use the child's exact words in quotation marks. Always check with the child their understanding of the word used to ensure we have understood the child's meaning correctly.
- Note where and when the incident happened and whether anyone else was around.

8.3 Gather the Facts

Speak to all the young people involved separately, gain a statement of facts

from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account.

Ask the young people to tell you what happened. Use open questions, (T.E.D) Tell me, Explain to me, Describe to me or 'where, when, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?). It is very important to not interrogate or ask leading questions.

8.4 Next course of action

Report the incident to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately; they will follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. If other professionals need to be involved, they may ask to interview the young people in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take. On all occasions record as soon as possible on CPOMS: the incident, any questions you asked with responses and what actions you took.

8.5 Informing parents/carers

The best way to inform parents/carers is face to face. Although this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents/carers whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.
If the pupil is 13+ and does not want to share with parents, we should use the 'Gillick' test and the 'Fraser' guidelines.

https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/gillick-competence- fraser-guidelines

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then the school should encourage the young person to share the information with their parent/carer (they may be scared to tell parents/carers that they are being harmed in any way).

9. Points to consider

9.1 What is the age of the children involved?

How old are the young people involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however, should not be overlooked.

9.2 Where did the incident or incidents take place?

Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so, was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?

9.3 What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?

Can each of the young people give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one young person different from another and why?

9.4 What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?

Do the young people know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the young person's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the young person have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

9.5 Repetition

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted towards an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

10. Next Steps

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

10.1 For the young person who has been harmed

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends; in which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people, or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on online bullying, relationship abuse etc.

10.2 For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

The School will balance the welfare needs of all children involved, including the child harmed and the child who may have caused harm.

Understand behaviour:

- Explore reasons behind the young person's actions.

- Consider whether they are experiencing difficulties or have been harmed themselves.

Provide support:
- Offer one-to-one mentoring or counselling if needed.
- Refer to appropriate services (Family Wellbeing, Youth Inclusion Support, Harmful Sexual Behaviour specialists).
- Involve family members for additional support.

Consequences for behaviour:
- Apply restorative justice (e.g., making amends in bullying cases).
- For sexually harmful behaviour, require work with specialist services or agencies.
- If a crime is committed, involve police/youth offending services.
- If under investigation, provide alternative education/support off-site.

Risk management:
- Complete an individual risk assessment with a multi-agency team, parents, and the young person.
- Implement additional supervision or protective strategies to reduce further risk.

School responses:
- Consider disciplinary actions (exclusion, internal exclusion, seclusion).
- Remain mindful of ongoing Police/Children's Services investigations.

10.3 After care

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). For this reason, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

11. Preventative Strategies

Child-on-child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most robust policies and support processes. It is important to develop appropriate strategies to proactively prevent child-on-child abuse. Our school has an open environment where children and young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. There is a strong and positive PSHE/RSHE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. The school makes sure that 'support and report' signposting is available to young people. Staff will not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. Staff will consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. Young people are part of changing their circumstances and we encourage young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour'. We involve pupils in the positive ethos in school; one where all young

people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

The RSE (Relationships & Sex Education) curriculum now plays a formal role in **preventative safeguarding education**. Schools are expected to foster a whole-school culture that rejects sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and sexual harassment—integrated into ethos, policies, pastoral care, and curriculum

The School seeks to foster a culture of respect, equality and inclusion in which inappropriate behaviour is identified early, challenged consistently and addressed effectively.

12. References and Further Information

This policy should be read alongside the following legislation, statutory guidance and supporting resources:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (current edition)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (current edition)
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying
- Teaching Online Safety in Schools
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools
- Sharing Nude and Semi-Nude Images and/or Videos: Advice for Education Settings Working with Children and Young People (UKCIS)
- Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers
- What to Do if You are Worried a Child is Being Abused: Advice for Practitioners
- Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales
- Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures

Note: References in this section apply to the current published versions of these documents, as amended from time to time.

13. Relevant Policies

2.1 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
2.2 Staff to student Code of Conduct
2.3 Child on child abuse policy
2.11 Equal Opportunities
3.1 Admissions Policy
4.2 Supporting students with medical conditions, disabilities
5.1, 5.1a and 5.1b Behaviour and Discipline Policies
5.10 Search and confiscation policy
5.11 Exclusions
6.4 Special educational needs and disability in practice (SEND)
7.1 PHSE Policy

7.3 Relationships and Sex Education Policy
12.1 Digital safety
12.4 Acceptable use policy students

14. Review Cycle

This policy is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and will be reviewed annually at the Governing Body's Annual Safeguarding Review. Should amendments to the policy be required at an earlier date in the light of changes to legislation, guidance, practice or a relevant incident, these will be adopted by the Governor with responsibility for safeguarding and the Chair of Governors.

15. Document Change History

Date of change	Detail significant changes and any new legislation / guidance taken into account
October 2022	New policy taken to Board for approval October 2022 Adopted by Board
September 2023	Reviewed, no significant changes
10.10.2023	Reviewed and adopted by Board as part of the Annual Safeguarding Review
1 September 2024	Updated changes for KCSIE 24
1 September 2025	Updated policy. Minor changes only including removing the word perpetrator to 'Child causing harm'
1 September 2026	Policy reviewed. Minor changes made