

Child on Child Abuse Policy 2023/24

Rationale

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two young people of any age and gender. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their education attainment as well as their emotional well-being. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support.

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are extremely complex to manage. It is essential that victims are protected, offered appropriate support and every effort is made to ensure their education is not disrupted. It is also important that other children, adult students and school and school staff are supported and protected as appropriate.

Research has shown that teenagers do not understand what constitutes abusive behaviours and controlling behaviours which could escalate to physical abuse, e.g. checking someone's phone, telling them what to wear, who they can/can't see or speak to; or that this abuse is prevalent within teenage relationships. Further research shows that teenagers are likely not to understand what consent means within their relationships. They often hold the common misconception that rape could only be committed by a stranger down a dark alley and do not understand or recognise that it could happen within their own relationships.

This can lead to these abusive behaviours feeling 'normal' and therefore left unchallenged as they are not recognised as being abusive.

In response to these research findings the School will provide education to help prevent teenagers from becoming victims and perpetrators of abusive relationships, by encouraging them to rethink their views of violence, abuse and controlling behaviours, and understand what consent means within their relationships.

Policy

We believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the school and other children.

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers and this will be dealt with under our child protection policy and in line with KCSIE (2023).

We are clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.

We will minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse by:

Prevention:

- Taking a whole school approach to safeguarding & child protections
- Providing training to staff
- Providing a clear set of values and standards, underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, and by a planned programme of evidence based content delivered through the curriculum
- Engaging with specialist support and interventions.

Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment:

- Children making a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment will be taken seriously, kept safe and be well supported
- If the report includes an online element staff will be mindful of the Searching Screening and Confiscation: advice for schools (DfE 2019) guidance
- Staff taking the report will inform the DSL or one their Deputies straight away.
- Staff taking a report will never promise confidentiality
- Parents or carers will normally be informed (unless this would put the child at greater risk)
- If a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral will be made to FPOC 0345 6789021
- All incidents will be reported via the child concern form and handed in person to one of the safeguarding team

Risk Assessment:

Following a report, the DSL will make an immediate risk and needs assessment on a case-by-case basis.

The Risk assessment will consider;

- The victim, especially their protection and support
- The alleged perpetrator, their needs and any discipline action
- All other children at the school
- The victim and the alleged perpetrator sharing classes and space at school

The risk assessment will be recorded and kept under review.

Where there has been other professional intervention and/or other specialist risk assessments, these professional assessments will be used to inform the school's approach to supporting and protecting pupils.

Action: The DSL will consider:

- The wishes of the victim
- The nature of the incident including whether a crime has been committed and the harm caused
- Ages of the children involved
- Developmental stages of the children
- Any power imbalance between the children
- Any previous incidents
- Ongoing risks
- Other related issues or wider context

Options: The DSL will manage the report with the following options:

- Manage internally
- Early Help
- Refer to Children's Services
- Report to the police (generally in parallel with a referral to Children's Services)

Ongoing Response:

- The DSL will manage each report on a case by case basis and will keep the risk assessment under review
- Where there is a criminal investigation into a rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, the alleged perpetrator should be removed from any classes they share with the alleged victim.
- The DSL will consider how best to keep the parties a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport where appropriate.
- Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, the school will take suitable action. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other pupils or students)
- Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, the school or school will, if it has not already, consider any suitable sanctions in the light of their behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion. Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school or school, the principle would be to continue keeping the victim and perpetrator in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school and school premises and transport. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases
- The victim, alleged perpetrator and other witnesses (children & adults) will receive appropriate support and safeguards on a case-by-case basis
- The school will take any disciplinary action against the alleged perpetrator in line with behaviour and discipline in schools
- The school recognises that taking disciplinary action and providing appropriate support are not mutually exclusive actions and will occur at the same time if necessary.

Physical Abuse

While a clear focus of peer on peer abuse is around sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be abusive.

These are equally not tolerated and if it is believed that a crime has been committed, will be reported to the police.

The principles from the anti-bullying policy will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any police investigation will need to take priority.

Reference:

KCSiE (DfE 2023)

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Schools (DfE 2018)

This policy is referenced in our Safeguarding Policy:

Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment

Where there are concerns of child-on-child sexual violence or sexual harassment, the school will follow the below pieces of Government Guidance as set out in:

- Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people)
- [Searching, screening and confiscation at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/searching-screening-and-confiscation-at-school)

In summary the process and procedures for managing a sexual violence or sexual harassment incident are:

The school monitors where there are any patterns of child-on-child abuse by recording on CPOMS and will determine necessary support and intervention.

It is vital that staff understand that the child who is perpetrating the abuse may also be at risk of harm. Staff should make every effort to ensure that the child who is perpetrating the abuse is also treated as a potential victim and undertake assessments to conclude this. Sensitive work must be undertaken with the child who is perpetrating, by helping them to understand the nature of their behaviour and the effect it has on others may prevent abuse.

Staff must be able to use their professional judgement in identifying when what may be perceived as “normal developmental childhood behaviour” becomes abusive, dangerous and harmful to others. Designated leads may need to consult with the SSCP Threshold document to help with their decision making.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead has attended Brook Traffic Light Training, Summer 2022, which will support in identifying developmentally typical behaviours or those that may be referred to as problematic or harmful.

Children do not always feel able to speak out about their experience of child-on-child sexual abuse. They may be afraid of:

- being considered a ‘snitch’
- getting in trouble themselves
- how they will be perceived by others □ teachers or adults not being discrete □ their parents being informed.

A helpline was launched by the NSPCC on 1st April 2021 to support potential victims of sexual harassment and abuse. Run by the NSPCC it aims to provide advice and support to both children and adults who are victims of abuse in school. It will also include how to contact the police to report crimes. The advice line is also available to support professionals and parents. **NSPCC helpline number is 0800 136 663.**

This dedicated helpline will offer support to:

- all children and young people making current and non-recent disclosures of abuse
- any children or young people who want to talk about being involved or witnessing any incidents
- any adults who have experienced non-recent abuse
- parents and carers who have any concerns about their own or other children
- parents and carers who have any concerns about their own or other children
- professionals who work in schools and need support on this or related issues.

This school promotes the use of this helpline by;

- Posters around the school

- Promoted in school assemblies and staff meetings
- Newsletters to parents
- On the school's website

Any harmful sexual behaviour or other form of harassment can be reported to any member of staff. If students do not want to approach a member of staff directly, they can use the Confidential Reporting System and receive an appointment with a team member to discuss their issues. This system can be accessed by using the attached QR codes.

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