Child on Child Abuse Policy

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Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022), states that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of Child on Child abuse'. All systems and processes outlined within this policy, operate with the best interests of the child at their heart. The voice of the child will be heard and their 'wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide.'

Child on Child abuse is referenced in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The sensitive nature and specific issues involved with Child on Child necessitate separate policy guidance.

Responsibility

At Marsh Lane Primary School we are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of Child on Child abuse. We ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the children involved, with full consideration to impact on their emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

All staff should know and understand:

• children are capable of abusing their peers and that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online. 'It could happen here.'

 • Addressing inappropriate behaviour (even if it appears to be relatively innocuous) can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future.

• the indicators and signs of Child on Child abuse

• the systems in place for children to confidently report abuse and know their concerns will be treated seriously

• how allegations of Child on Child abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with

 • the processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected by Child on Child abuse will be supported

• there is a zero tolerance approach to peer-on-peer abuse at Marsh Lane Primary School and it is everyone's responsibility to challenge inappropriate behaviour between children and young people

• all inappropriate behaviour must be addressed (even if it appears harmless) as we understand this is an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future

• downplaying certain behaviours as "just banter" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment for children and young people and a culture that normalises abuse

• even if there are no reports of peer-on-peer abuse at Marsh Lane Primary School, this doesn't mean it is not happening

• that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys' perpetrators, but that all Child on Child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously

•   the different forms Child on Child abuse can take All staff and Governors have signed to say that they have read, understood and agreed to work within this policy framework. Parents have access to this policy.

Purpose and Aim

Children may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as Child on Child abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of Child on Child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

At Marsh Lane Primary School we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

• Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

• Online Safety Policy

• Anti-Bullying Policy

• Behaviour Policy

Framework and Legislation

• This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (WTTSC), highlighting that every assessment of a child, should 'reflect the unique characteristics of the child within their family and community context' (WTTSC, 2018:28).

• This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child and to be mindful of the contexts children live in.

• This should be read alongside the Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges DfE Guidance, 2021

What is Child on Child Abuse?

For these purposes, Child on Child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships, and wider peer associations.

Child on Child abuse can take various forms, including: serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), relationship abuse, domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or gender-based violence.

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

• bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)

• abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers

• 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 to engage in sexual activity with a third party

• consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting, now referred to as consensual or non-consensual sharing of nudes semi-nudes images and/or videos)

• up-skirting, 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).

For more information on the definition of some of the above behaviours, see Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges DfE guidance, September 2021 page 10- 13.

Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives and spaces in which they spend their time. Any response to Child on Child abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of Child on Child abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's experiences. This can be done by adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that our response to incidents of peer-on-peer abuse takes into account any potential complexity (Farrer and Co. 2017).

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'part of growing up'.

Research suggests that Child on Child abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Some abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence.

Barriers to disclosure will also be different. As a result, schools need to explore the gender dynamics of Child on Child abuse within their settings and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender imbalanced environments (Farrer and Co. 2017). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

Children with Special Educational Needs Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can face additional safeguarding challenges. These can include:

• assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration
• being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children
• the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs
• communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers. To address these additional challenges, schools and colleges should consider extra pastoral support for children with SEND particularly ensuring appropriate support for communication is in place when investigating any form of Child on Child abuse including. (KCSIE, 2022)

Language
For the purposes of this policy the language used will refer to alleged victims and alleged perpetrators as research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of Child on Child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers. (Farrer and Co. 2017). The language used to children and parents in the reporting of any incidents that may have occurred could impact on any future rehabilitation of children and young people following any investigations that may occur.

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 below.

Physical abuse
Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, 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.

Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse
Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate,
problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and
may cause developmental damage. A
useful umbrella term is "harmful sexual behaviour" (HSB). HSB can occur online and/or face
to face and can also occur simultaneously between the two. HSB should be considered in a
child protection context.

When considering HSB, ages and the stages of development of the children are critical factors.
Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much
older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is prepubescent and the other is not.
However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older
child is disabled or smaller in stature.

Confidential, specialist support and advice on HSB will be sought from the specialist sexual violence sector:
• contact Rape Crisis (England & Wales) or The Survivors Trust for information, advice, and details of local specialist sexual
violence organisations.
• NICE guidance contains information on, amongst other things: developing interventions; working with families and
carers; and multi-agency working.
• The Lucy Faithfull Foundation has developed a HSB toolkit, which amongst other things, provides support, advice and
information on how to prevent it, links to organisations and helplines, resources about HSB by children, internet safety,
sexual development and preventing child sexual abuse.
• The NSPCC provides free and independent advice about HSB: NSPCC Learning: Protecting children from harmful sexual
behaviour and NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework
 • Contextual Safeguarding Network – Beyond Referrals (Schools) provides a school self- assessment toolkit and guidance
for addressing HSB in schools.
• StopItNow - Preventing harmful sexual behaviour in children - Stop It Now provides a guide for parents, carers and
professionals to help everyone do their part in keeping children safe, they also run a free confidential helpline

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 well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from
inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another, sexual assault, or abuse. See
https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/category/sexual-behaviourstraffic-light-tool

Sexual Violence
Sexual violence refers to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described
below:
• **Rape:** A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another
person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

- **Assault by Penetration:** A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
- **Sexual Assault**: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (Schools should be aware that sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent, can still constitute sexual assault.)
- **Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent:** A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an activity, the activity is sexual, B does not consent to engaging in the activity, and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (This could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.)

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment means 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school/college. When referencing sexual harassment, it is done in the context of child on child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

• sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;

• sexual "jokes" or taunting;

• physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence - it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature; and

• online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:

o consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos19. As set out in UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (which provides detailed advice for schools and colleges) taking and sharing nude photographs of U18s is a criminal offence – further information below;

o sharing of unwanted explicit content;

o up-skirting (is a criminal offence20) – further information below;

o sexualised online bullying; o unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media;

o sexual exploitation; coercion and threats.

Marsh Lane Primary School considers sexual harassment in broad terms. Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates a culture that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence. Therefore, all staff have the duty to address inappropriate behaviour (even if it appears to be relatively innocuous) as it can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future.

Bullying (inclusive of all types)

The definition of bullying is, 'a person who habitually seeks to harm or intimidate those who they perceive as vulnerable'. (Taken from the Oxford, Cambridge and Collins dictionary, updated 2018)

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. (Preventing and Tackling Bullying July 2017)

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 (section 1), which states that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim, would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, (section 127) which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false and used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Consensual or non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and/or videos Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery) refers to the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams by young people **under the age of 18** online. This could be via social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can occur in any relationship, to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference. However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Upskirting

'Upskirting' is where someone takes a picture under a persons clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their 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. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any sex can be a victim. The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019, which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019. '

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 – in particular, prejudices to do with 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 (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

Measuring the behaviour

Simon Hackett's continuum of behaviour (taken from Farrer and Co. 2017) can be a useful guide to measure the behaviour that has occurred and consider the circumstances around the incident (s).

The continuum looks at whether it:

• is socially acceptable

• involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time

• is socially acceptable within the peer group

• is problematic and concerning

• involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability

• involves an element of coercion or pre-planning

• involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power

• involves a misuse of power

Behaviour which is not abusive at first may potentially become abusive quickly or over time. Intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour which may be displayed by a child is vital and could potentially prevent their behaviour from progressing on a continuum to become problematic, abusive and/or violent – and ultimately requiring (greater/more formal) engagement with specialist external and/or statutory agencies.

Expected action taken from all staff

All staff should be alert to the wellbeing of children and young people by thinking 'it could happen here'. All inappropriate behaviour must be addressed and not downplayed, even if it appears harmless. Staff should be vigilant for signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by Child on Child abuse. They should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ (Farrer and Co. 2017). Some children may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally but their behaviour may change and they will act in ways that they hope adults will notice or they could be overheard telling a friend.

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator of the harm, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm.

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately by gathering the information as soon as possible to get a true, accurate account of the facts around what has happened, so that nothing is forgotten.

It is equally important to deal with a situation of peer abuse sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. For example; not using the word perpetrator, as this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

In all cases of Child on Child abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff should be able to reassure victims of abuse that they are being taken seriously and will be supported so they would never be made to feel ashamed or that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment.

Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Staff should also be mindful of contextual safeguarding and that wider safeguarding concerns may influence the child's account of the event(s). Alongside this, peer pressure and the impact of sharing information about the incident(s) may also influence a child's account.

With regard to reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment, consideration should also be given to: the wishes of the victim balanced with the school's duty and responsibilities to protect other children; the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) has been displayed; the ages and developmental stages of the children involved; any power imbalance between the children due to age, maturity, confidence, disability or learning difficulty; if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse; that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers; ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff; and, other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

Gather the Facts

In cases specifically relating to Sexual violence and sexual harassment, part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2022 states that two members of staff (one being the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be present to manage the report, where possible.

Where the report includes an online element, (sharing nudes and semi-nudes), the key consideration is for staff to follow advice for education settings working with children and young people (searching screening and confiscation advice (for schools) and UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes) and not to view or forward illegal images of a child. It may be more appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to the police for inspection.

In all circumstances, staff need to speak to all the children involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account. The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the young people to tell you what happened. Only interrupt the young person from this to reflect back, using the child's language and gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'.

- What happened?
- Who observed the incident?
- What was seen?
- What was heard?
- Did anyone intervene?

It is important to note that whilst leading questions should be avoided, staff can ask children if they have been harmed and what the nature of that harm was. A full and clear record of exactly what the young person has said in their own language should be made and stored using CPOMs (Online Management System for reporting safeguarding).

Consider the intent (begin to Risk Assess)

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?

Decide on your next course of action.

If from the information that you gather you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also). This action would, in most circumstances be undertaken by the Designated Safeguarding Lead but in the event of their

absence the referral can be made by another member of staff. If this is the case, once social care has been contacted and made a decision on what will happen next then you will be informed on your next steps.

If social care and the police intend to pursue this further, they may ask to interview the young people in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to also. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

It may also be that social care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case you may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, you agree with the decision, you may then be left to inform parents.

Informing parents

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care you have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then you need to inform the parents as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents. Parents would not be informed if by doing so the child was put at further risk of significant harm.

If a young person is deemed to be 'Gillick Competent' following the 'Fraser' guidelines and does not wish you to share the information with parents, then the school must consider this especially for example if the young person is pregnant and this is why they are being bullied (unless this has occurred through significant harm in which case a criminal/social care case is likely or the young person is under the age of 13).

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 or even with them (they may be scared to tell parents that they are being harmed in any way).

Where school can evidence they are acting in the best interests of the young person they would not be criticised, however this would be the case if they actively breached the rights and choices of the young person.

The best way to inform parents is face to face. The nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

Points to consider

• 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 if other issues arise (see following).

• 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?

• 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?

• 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?

• In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If you are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, please seek advice from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Team

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 to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

Outcomes

The outcome of the investigation will follow your local threshold guidance. Therefore, either a referral has been made to either the police/social care for a full investigation. It may have resulted in Children's Services undertaking a further assessment, or as a school/setting you may have identified additional services/intervention that are non-statutory and in which case completed an Early Help Assessment. It may be that on investigation, a decision has been made to handle the incident (s) internally and which case the school may implement a risk assessment plan. When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In any of the above outcomes the school has a duty of care to manage the education needs of both children/young people in which case a risk assessment plan may be needed irrespective of the outcome.

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.

For the young person who has been harmed (alleged victim)

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 cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PHSE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

 If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

The school's response to a report from a child is incredibly important as it can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward. It is important that all victims are reassured and that they are taken seriously and appropriate action is taken, in some cases this may be reviewing the shared space or classes that the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator share.

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour (alleged perpetrator)

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary.

Particular support from identified services, e.g., ACT (Assessment, Consultation and Therapy) may be necessary through an early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members. Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that the young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation, the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multiagency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

The school may also choose a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion/seclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

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). In which case, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

Disciplinary Action

The school/setting will need to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including

(a) to ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;

(b) to demonstrate to the child/children and others that Child on Child abuse can never be tolerated; and

(c) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

However, these considerations must be balanced against the child's/children's own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action the School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the Child on Child abuse and the causes of it.

The school/setting will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed moves or exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognising that even if this is ultimately deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this policy may still be required. Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the School. Engaging in Fair Access Panel Processes to assist with decision-making associated to managed moves and exclusions can also be beneficial (Farrer and Co. 2017).

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports

If it is established that a report is unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the designated safeguarding lead should consider whether the child and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else. This could be a cry for help and a referral to children's social care may be appropriate. If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school, should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it, following the school behaviour policy. With regard to the above, accurate record keeping is vital to identify potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour so they can be identified, and addressed.

Review of Circumstances

Following any incident of harm, it is necessary for the School/Setting to consider if anything could have been done differently. Use of PGSF proforma for internal lessons learnt, can support in identifying under the business model of PGSF what identified changes within the school/setting need to occur. This demonstrates how proactive the school is in continually reviewing its policies and systems in effectively keeping children safe.

Preventative Strategies for Schools and Settings

For all schools and settings, it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of Child on Child abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way. Firstly, and most importantly for schools and settings is recognition that Child on Child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff.

This can be supported by ensuring that each school/setting has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This can be strengthened through a strong and positive PHSE/SMSC 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.

To enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure the whole workforce and Local Advisory Committee feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is necessary for whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to young people in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice. It is incredibly important that staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a young person seeking no further help or advice.

Parents need to be informed and included in policy forming, lesson plans and through open and frank conversations, training/courses about what Child on Child abuse is and how the school and setting will be tackling it. This can help to alleviate any concerns and worries and create a joined-up approach.

It is important that signposting is available to children in the event that they do not feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. It is useful to have a resource board for older children, with support services on a wide range of issues so young people can seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of Child on Child abuse.

It is useful to ensure children are part of changing their circumstances and that of the procedures within schools. Having a school council and pupil voice and encouraging young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour' will go far in helping to create a positive ethos in school and one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

Multi agency working can consolidate in house procedures in school. By accessing advice, support and guidance, effective decisions can be made in collaboration to improve outcomes for children who may be at risk of harm. Seeking advice and guidance can act as a preventative measure so that the right course of action is taken at the earliest opportunity. It is also necessary that the School actively refers concerns/allegations of Child on Child abuse where necessary to front door services/children's social care and the police where appropriate. This is particularly important because Child on Child abuse can be a complex issue, and even more so where wider safeguarding concerns exist. It is often not appropriate for one single agency (where the incident cannot be managed internally) to try to address the issue alone – it requires effective partnership working (Farrer and Co. 2017)

Schools which excel at tackling bullying (and peer abuse) have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. That culture extends beyond the classroom to the corridors, the dining hall, the playground, and beyond the school gates including travel to and from school. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest. (Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017).

Ratified by Governors : October 2022

Signed by (Chair of Governors) :

To be reviewed by Governors : October 2023