Peer on Peer Abuse Policy & Guidance

Policy Folder: Safeguarding

Outcomes First Group.

Executive Headteacher - Lyndsey Jeffries
Head of School – Natalie Stevens

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD: Natalie Stevens

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1.0 Policy Statement

Outcomes First Group puts the safety of the people we support as the highest priority and is committed to ensuring that children and young people are effectively safeguarded in all services, including schools, residential homes and fostering, at all times.

The Group recognises that children can be capable of abusing their peers, and vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse is taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult and will not be tolerated. The Group has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, and it should never be passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

A contextual safeguarding approach will be taken to understand, and respond to, any occurrences of peer-on-peer abuse, recognising that children and young people who display harmful behaviours must be seen as vulnerable themselves.

The Group is committed to ensuring the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of peer-on-peer abuse. Where such abuse is identified, child protection procedures must be followed. All children and young people who have been affected by the situation will be supported, with wider risks being considered and addressed.

Peer-on-Peer abuse is referenced in the School Safeguarding Policy. However, the specific issues and sensitive nature of peer-on-peer abuse requires this additional guidance, which is written in line with the statutory guidance contained within:

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021;

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (updated December 2020);

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges (September 2021)

This Policy and Guidance should be read alongside the following:

- The School's Safeguarding Policy
- The School's Anti-bullying policy
- The School's Behaviour Policy
- Outcomes First Group's Exploitation policy
- Outcomes First Group's Protecting Children from Radicalisation policy
- Outcomes First Group's Safer Recruitment policy
- Outcomes First Group's Data Protection policy
- Outcomes First Group's Staying Safe Online policy
- Outcomes First Group's Web Filtering policy
- The School's Whistleblowing and Complaints policy
- The School's description and guidance of the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

2.0 What is Peer-on-Peer Abuse?

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

All staff should understand, that even if there are no reports in their schools or colleges it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important if staff have any concerns regarding peer-on-peer abuse, they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or deputy).

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, many of which are listed below, that are actually abusive in nature. 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.

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children, and that it can happen both inside and outside of school, online and offline. Some examples of how this can manifest itself in different behaviours include, but are not 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 nudes and semi-nude images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery); Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: Advice for education settings working with children and young people

• 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; and

• 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)

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school, such as the Behaviour, Anti-bullying, Child Protection and Staying Safe Online policy.

The school should have a clear policy on the use of mobile and smart technology and there **must** be procedures in place for pupils use of mobile phones in school.

All staff must be aware and alert to signs of peer-on-peer abuse that may occur offline and online. All staff should be clear as to the school's policies and procedures, ensuring they are followed as part of their everyday practice.

The School must **ensure that pupils know**:

• how to report any concerns and feel confident that they will be listened to and supported.

• They can also report any concerns by emailing tellus@ofgl.co.uk, which is monitored by the

  Outcomes First Group's Quality Team.

• Are aware of the NSPCC dedicated helpline 0800 136 663

• Are aware of how to contact Childline.

2.1 Vulnerable groups

It is important to always be aware that any child can be at risk of peer-on-peer abuse and that abusers can be younger than their victims.

Research suggests some groups may be more at risk. The Safeguarding Network identifies the following as particularly vulnerable:

• Those aged 10 and upwards (although victims as young as 8 identified).

• Girls and young women are more likely to be victims and boys and young men more likely to be abusers.

• Black and minority ethnic children often under identified as victims and over-identified as perpetrators.

• Young people with intra-familial abuse in their histories or those living with domestic abuse are more likely to be vulnerable.

• Young people in care and those who have experienced loss of a parent, sibling or friend through bereavement.

• Young people who have been abused or have abused their peers.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are more at risk of abuse. Staff must be vigilant in monitoring those pupils who are more vulnerable. Any concerns must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and documented on the school's electronic recording system.

It is recognised that both boys and girls experience peer on peer abuse. Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviour, such as antisocial behaviour. Boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs. Please see the Outcomes First Group's Child Exploitation Policy for Schools for further information.

3.0 Recognising peer-on-peer abuse

Signs that a child may be suffering from peer-on-peer abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse and can include, but are not limited to:

• disengagement from classes or struggling to carry out school related tasks to their usual standard

• physical injuries,

• experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing,

• becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic   attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much

• broader changes in behaviour, such as alcohol or substance misuse

• changes in appearance and/or acting in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age

• abusive behaviour towards others.

This list is not exhaustive, and if a child displays these signs, it does not necessarily indicate abuse. Staff must be alert to behaviour that might cause concern and think about what the behaviour might signify. Children should be encouraged to share with them any underlying reasons for their behaviour and, where appropriate, staff might need to engage parents/carers to understand the context more fully.

Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for his/her age or stage of development, staff should always consider whether an underlying concern is contributing to their behaviour and, if so, what the concern is and how the child can be supported going forwards.

3.1 Abuse involving Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence.

Staff must read the Outcome's First Group's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Guidance included at Annex A.

Further detailed information is provided in DFE's advice: [Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges](#) on:

• what sexual violence and sexual harassment constitutes,

• important context to be aware of, including; what is consent, power imbalances, and developmental stages,

• harmful sexual behaviour may be an indication that the perpetrator is a victim of abuse themselves,

• related legal responsibilities for schools and colleges,

• advice on a whole school or college approach to preventing child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment,

• more detailed advice on responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, including safeguarding and supporting both the victim(s) and alleged perpetrator(s).

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into colleges. It can occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur outside of the school premises, and or online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. All staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of **'it could happen here'**.

Whilst any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should be taken seriously, staff should be aware it is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys. The importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour (Harmful Sexual Behaviour HSB) is recognised. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

The NSPCC defines HSB as: "Developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people, and which may be harmful or abusive (derived from Hackett, 2014) it may also be referred to as sexually harmful behaviour or sexualised behaviour… may be harmful towards self or others or be abusive towards another child…or adult."

The **Brook Traffic Light Tool** helps staff to identify, assess and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours. As a minimum, DSLs and Deputy DSLs should complete the Brook e-learning around Harmful Sexual Behaviours to develop their understanding and awareness.

https://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/

Simon Hackett (2010) proposes a **Continuum Model of Behaviours** to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant.

Please see: https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1657/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework.pdf for the full Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework developed by NSPCC in partnership with Research in Practice, Durham University and the NHS.

However, assessing where behaviour fits on this continuum can be complex. It is important to place any child's sexual behaviour within a developmental context and recognise the key differences between the motivations and meanings of such behaviours at varying stages of development.

3.2 Physical Abuse

Physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be a form or peer-on-peer abuse. Such behaviour will not be tolerated and if it is believed that a crime has been committed, it 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.

Hackett's continuum model can also be referred to in this context to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, considering whether the behaviour:

• is socially acceptable or is socially acceptable within the peer group

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

• 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

• involves a misuse of power.

3.3 Online Behaviour

Many forms of peer-on-peer abuse have an element of online behaviour. Online peer-on-peer abuse is any form of peer-on- peer abuse with a digital element. for example, consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or video, online abuse, coercion and exploitation, peer-on-peer grooming, threatening language delivered via online means, distribution of sexualised content and harassment.

Please see Staying Safe Online, Anti-bullying (including Cyberbullying) and Child Protection policies for further information.

4.0 Responding to Alleged Incidents and Concerns

Staff must follow the Outcomes First Group Safeguarding and Child Protection policy if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed. Consideration must be given to the proportionality of the response on a case-by-case basis.

When making decisions about how to deal with allegations, the age and understanding of the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour must be taken into consideration, as well as any relevant personal circumstances and how this relates to their behaviour. Schools must consider any disparity in age between the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour and the victim, the impact the behaviour has had on the victim, and any element of coercion or violence.

Staff must act immediately and report any concerns regarding peer-on-peer abuse to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), within one working day, and document this on the school's electronic recording system.

The DSL must deal with any concerns of peer-on peer-abuse immediately and sensitively. As much information as possible must be gathered from the victim and the young person who has allegedly displayed harmful behaviour in order to gain the facts of what has happened.

The language used must be sensitive, non-judgemental and must not blame the victim. Victims must be supported and reassured that their safety and welfare within the School is the priority. Risk assessments must be implemented where necessary.

Where the DSL believes that there has been significant harm caused to the pupil, a referral must be made to the Local Authority immediately. It is important that schools provide as much information as possible as part of the referral process. This will allow any assessment to consider all the available evidence and enable a contextual approach to address such harm. In agreement with the Local Authority, parents/carers must be informed, where possible, this should be done face-to-face.

If the Local Authority does not believe it meets their threshold for further action and the DSL is not in agreement, this must be challenged with the Local Authority.

4.1   The immediate response to a report

How staff respond to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward.

Staff must:

- Report any concerns about a child's welfare immediately to the DSL rather than waiting to be told. The DSL will support the staff member to report the information to report the incident to other agencies as appropriate e.g., the placing authority and the police.

- Be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. All staff will be trained to manage a report.

- Listen, ask open questions and write down as much as possible. Language must be used that is not victim-blaming, they must be non-judgemental and reassure the child that they have not caused a problem by disclosing.

- Understand that victims may not talk about the whole picture immediately. They may be more comfortable providing information on a piecemeal basis. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged. When it is clear that ongoing support will be required, the victim should be asked if they would find it helpful to have a designated trusted adult to talk to about their needs. The choice of any such adult should be the victims, as far as reasonably possible. Schools and colleges should respect and support this choice.

- Not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the DSL or social care). Staff will only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it. Information can be legally shared even if the pupil states they do not want it to be.

- Produce a written report as soon after the interview as possible, recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later.

- If the concern relates to online abuse, be aware of **searching screening and confiscation** advice (for schools) [searching screening and confiscation advice (for schools)](#) and [UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#) where the report includes an online element. The highlighted advice provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable. **The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child.**

  In some cases, it may be more appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to the police for inspection.

4.2   Considerations by the School

The School will consider:
- The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;
- The ages and developmental stages of the children involved;
- Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse; (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature);
- that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers;
- other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

4.3   Children sharing a classroom

Whilst the DSL establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police:
- The perpetrator will be removed from any classes they share with the victim.
- The school will assess how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport to and from the school.

These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the alleged perpetrator.

4.4 Response to the alleged perpetrator

Any allegation is likely to be traumatic for the alleged perpetrator. In cases of peer-on-peer abuse the alleged perpetrator must also be treated as vulnerable and may require specialist support, which should be organised by the DSL. Staff must be aware that the perpetrator may have suffered or be suffering abuse and/or trauma.

The DSL must ensure that the alleged perpetrators age and understanding is taken into account, as well as trying to understand the reasons why the alleged perpetrator may have harmed a peer. A risk assessment must be completed **immediately** which should balance the proportionality of the allegation alongside the needs of the victim and the alleged perpetrator's right to continue to be educated.

It is good practice for the DSL to meet with the parents/carers of the alleged perpetrator to explain the situation and what measures will be put in place to support their child. The DSL must be led by the police regarding what information can be shared with the alleged perpetrator and their family.

If the alleged perpetrator moves schools, the DSL must ensure that all safeguarding information is shared in advance with the new school. Schools must also inform their Local Authority of all deletions from their admission register when a child is taken off roll.

The DSL must liaise with the Police and Social Care should they wish to take disciplinary action prior to the conclusion of a Police/Social Care investigation. Other professionals investigating an incident does not in itself prevent a school from coming to its own conclusion, on the balance of probabilities, about what happened, and imposing a penalty accordingly. Staff must be alert to possible bullying of the alleged perpetrator either within school or online. Arrangements must be made to safeguard them. Staff must promote a culture where bullying is not tolerated.

4.5 Local Procedures

The DSL will be familiar with the local referral procedures for safeguarding and child protection concerns. They must also be familiar with local responses to sexual violence and harassment, and these must shape their own responses. The DSL will ensure that staff are aware and understand the local processes and that they are familiar with local support services.

Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the DSL will be working alongside the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.

The placing authority **must** be notified immediately where it has been identified that there are immediate safeguarding concerns. It is recommended as best practice that steps are taken to convene a multi-agency professionals meeting to review any potential risks and agree actions to be taken to safeguard the young person/young people. The DSL is responsible for this.

4.6 Reporting to the Police

Where a crime has been committed the DSL must immediately contact the police.

Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.

Where a report has been made to the police, the school will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

Where there is a criminal investigation, the school will work closely with the relevant agencies to support all children involved (including potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought in order to help manage the situation sensitively.

Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator, the school will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the school or college take do not jeopardise the police investigation.

The DSL must inform the Chair of Governors, Regional Director and Group Head of Safeguarding/Director of Audit.

4.7 Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment

If a pupil alleges that they have been raped, assaulted by penetration or sexually assaulted, this must be reported to the Police and Social Care immediately. The pupil's parents/carers should normally be informed unless there is a risk of greater harm to the pupil.

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the DSL will make an immediate risk and needs' assessment which will be recorded within one working day and recorded on the school's electronic recording system. The risk and needs assessment should consider:
- The victim, especially their protection and support;
- whether there may have been other victims,
- The alleged perpetrator(s); and

- All the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them.

The risk assessment must be shared with the police (where requested), local authority, Head Teacher, Chair of Governors for the school, the Regional Director, and the Group Head of Safeguarding. Consideration must be given to informing Outcomes First Groups Corporate Affairs/Commercial Director in case of media interest.

Risk assessments will be kept under review by the DSL.

Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, a risk assessment should also be completed.

Staff must ensure that their response to sexual violence, harassment or harmful behaviours between children of the same sex is equally robust as it is for sexual violence and harassment between children of the opposite sex.

The DSL must inform the Chair of Governors, Regional Director and the Group Head of Safeguarding/Director of Audit of any reports of sexual violence, harassment of harmful behaviours.

5.0 After the outcome/conclusion of the incident

Schools must:

- take a contextual safeguarding approach;
- take all necessary action to learn from the incident and prevent future incidents from occurring, such as through targeted education around specific types of peer-on-peer abuse;
- offer support for the victim and ensure it is provided wherever possible. Appropriate risk Assessments must be implemented to provide reassurance and safety for the victim;
- ensure that they **do not** adopt a victim blaming approach;
- complete an investigation into the incident, carried out by the DSL. The investigation must consider the occurrence of the incident itself, whether it is an isolated incident, and the personal circumstances of the young person who is alleged to have displayed harmful behaviour;
- if necessary, make appropriate referrals to support services for the young person who has displayed harmful behaviours;
- complete and implement a risk assessment for the young person who has displayed harmful behaviours in order to safeguard them and other pupils.

5.1 The end of the criminal process

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the school will update its risk assessment and ensure relevant protections are in place for all children. The school will consider any suitable action following the School's Behaviour policy. If the perpetrator remains in school, expectations regarding the perpetrator will be clearly set out if they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions the school thinks are reasonable and proportionate about the perpetrator's timetable.

Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other pupils in the school. The school will take measures to protect all children involved, especially from any bullying or harassment offline and online.

Where cases are classified as "no further action" (NFA'd) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, the School will continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. The School will continue to support all parties in this instance.

5.2 Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing.

Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified, and addressed.

If a report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the DSL 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 and this is a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to children's social care may be appropriate.

If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school or college, should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per their own behaviour policy.

6.0 Support for Children Affected by Sexual Assault

Where there is a criminal investigation, the alleged perpetrator will be removed from any shared classes with the victim and consideration will be given as to how best to keep them a reasonable distance apart on the school premises or on

school transport. This is in the best interest of the children concerned and should not be perceived to be a judgement of guilt before any legal proceedings. The School will work closely with the police.

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 or setting 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 will consider any suitable sanctions using their Behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion.

Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the 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 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.

Schools should be aware that sexual assault can result in a range of health needs, including physical, mental, and sexual health problems and unwanted pregnancy. Children and young people that have a health need arising from sexual assault or abuse can access specialist NHS support from a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). (See Annex C for further details)

The victim should be given all the necessary support to remain in their school, however, if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another setting should be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This should only be at the request of the victim and following discussion with their parents or carers.

If the victim does move for any reason, the DSL must ensure that the new education setting is aware of any ongoing support needs and should discuss with the victim and their parents/carers the most suitable way of doing this. The DSL must transfer the child protection file.

All the above will be considered with the needs and wishes of the victim at the heart of the process (supported by parents/carers as required). Any arrangements should be kept under review.

Further support for victims of sexual assault is available from a variety of agencies (see Annexes B and C).

7.0 Prevention strategies

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

• Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, pupils, parents and carers about this issue. This will include training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it and challenge attitudes that underly such abuse.

• Taking appropriate action to ensure that children and young people learn about appropriate relationships with adults, online safety, as well as sex and healthy relationships. RSHE lessons, Relationships Education, and Relationships and Sex Education will focus on important age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate issues in line with Government guidance.

• Supporting children to understand what abuse is and the impact it can have on those who experience it.

• Creating a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment and have them listened to. Pupils are clear about how to report abuse or any concerns about possible abuse or harmful behaviour. This includes being able to access in private, relevant websites or help lines, such as Childline and the NSPCC, to seek advice and help.

• The School recognises that some children and young people are more vulnerable by virtue of their complex health or behavioural needs, or disabilities. All staff have a responsibility to be the 'eyes and ears' and report all concerns to the DSL. Consideration will be given as to whether additional support for children with protected characteristics is required.

• Engaging with parents/carers on this issue by:

  • Talking with parents/carers about it and asking them what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the School address those risks;

  • Involving them in the review of School policies and lesson plans; and

  • Encouraging them to hold the School to account on this issue.

  • Ensuring that all peer-on-peer abuse issues are fed back to the Headteacher and DSL, so they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who may need additional support.

  • Working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, pupils and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the School community.

  • Working with multi-agency partners to further understand and address peer-on-peer abuse and reduce its occurrence.

7.1 Risk Assessment (proactive school-wide)

The School will conduct a risk assessment to determine the risks to which their students are or may be exposed and will assess and monitor those risks. This is a proactive assessment of the risks facing pupils and distinct from the assessments that must be conducted following concerns or allegations.

The risk assessment may include:
• the composition of pupil population, including specific characteristics that affect their vulnerability   to peer-on-peer abuse for example, gender, age, special educational needs and/or disabilities, sexual orientation and/or religious belief.
• Which pupils are more at risk of being affected by peer-on-peer abuse?
• Any relevant trends in behaviour.
• Environmental factors and local awareness, for example, high levels of gang activity.
• Online activities and vulnerabilities.

This should be reviewed and updated at least annually and reviewed after any incident of peer-on-peer abuse.

Annex A

<u>Harmful Sexual Behaviour Guidance</u>

A contextual safeguarding approach will be taken to understand, and respond to, any occurrences of harmful sexual behaviour, recognising that children and young people who display harmful behaviours must be seen as vulnerable themselves.

1. What is Harmful Sexual Behaviour?

Harmful sexual behaviour can include children and young people using sexually explicit words or phrases, inappropriate touching, using sexual violence or threats, penetrative sex with other children/young people. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online face-to-face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of **any age and sex.** From primary through to secondary stage and into colleges. It can occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

All staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of **'it could happen here".** Schools and colleges should be aware of and respond appropriately to all reports and concerns about sexual violence and/or sexual harassment both online and offline, including those that have happened outside of the school.

Age and stages of development of children and young people are critical factors in harmful sexual behaviour; however, it is not defined by these 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 pre-pubescent 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, smaller in stature or has other vulnerabilities. Power is a key factor in the reasons why young people display harmful sexual behaviours towards peers. Evidence shows that girls are more likely to be subject to sexual violence and sexual harassment than boys, and that boys are more likely to perpetrate such violence and harassment, however either gender can be victim or perpetrator.

2. Stages of sexual development

It is important that anyone who works with children and young people has a good understanding of how children develop sexually. This can help in recognising healthy sexual behaviours that are developmentally appropriate and identifying if a child is displaying behaviour that is inappropriate or potentially harmful.

Sexual development begins in infancy and is a natural part of growing up. Some children may develop later or earlier than others depending on their understanding, their own overall development and environment. The NSPCC provides some examples of age-appropriate healthy sexual behaviour.

0- to 4-years-old

At this stage, children display natural exploratory behaviour emerging for the first time such as:
- enjoying being naked
- kissing and hugging people they know well, for example friends and family members
- touching or rubbing their own private parts as a comforting habit
- showing curiosity about or attempting to touch the private parts of other people
- being curious about the differences between boys and girls
- talking about private body parts and their functions, using words like 'willy', 'bum', 'poo'
- role playing about different relationships, for example marriage.

5- to 9-year-olds

As children get a little older, they become more conscious of sex and their own sexuality. This can be displayed by:
- becoming more aware of the need for privacy

- asking questions about sex and relationships, such as what sex is, where babies come from and same-sex relationships
- kissing, hugging and holding hands with a boyfriend or girlfriend
- using swear words or slang to talk about sex after hearing other people use them.

9- to 13-year-olds
During these ages, children begin to get more curious about sex. Examples of healthy sexual behaviour during this stage are:
- having a boyfriend or girlfriend (of the same or different gender)
- using sexual language as swear words or slang
- wanting more privacy
- looking for information about sex online (this might lead to accidentally finding sexual pictures or videos)
- masturbating in private

13- to 17-year-olds
During adolescence, sexual behaviour becomes more private with young people, and they begin to explore their sexual identity. They might be:
- forming longer-lasting sexual and non-sexual relationships with peers
- using sexual language and talking about sex with friends
- sharing obscenities and jokes that are within the cultural norm
- experimenting sexually with the same age group
- looking for sexual pictures or videos online.

For further information, please visit:
https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-health-development/healthy-sexual-development-children-young-people

3. **Understanding sexual behaviour**

It is essential that those working with children and young people can distinguish normal from abnormal sexual behaviours. Hackett's (2010) continuum model demonstrates the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant.

Healthy sexual behaviours are:
- Developmentally expected and age appropriate
- Socially acceptable
- Consensual, mutual, reciprocal
- Shared decision making

Problematic Sexual behaviours are:
- Problematic and concerning behaviours
- Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected
- No overt elements of victimisation
- Consent issues may be unclear
- May lack reciprocity or equal power
- May include levels of compulsivity

Abusive Sexual behaviours are:
- Victimising intent or outcome
- Includes misuse of power
- Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance
- Intrusive
- Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim
- May include elements of expressive violence

Sexual harassment between children/young people means 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' . It can occur online and/or face to face and can occur simultaneously between the two. 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.

All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers (online and offline). Staff should be clear about their school's or college's policy and procedures with regard to peer-on-peer abuse.

4.   Risk Factors

'Peer relationships are increasingly influential during adolescence, setting social norms which inform young people's experiences, behaviours and choices and determine peer status. These relationships are, in turn, shaped by, and shape, the school, neighbourhood and online contexts in which they develop. ' (Contextual Safeguarding Briefing, Dr Carlene Firmann, 2017). Young people's peer groups, communities and social media activity can be either key risk factors or key protective factors.

Children and young people can develop harmful sexual behaviours because of trauma or abuse. They may have experienced:
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Severe neglect
- Parental rejection
- Family breakdown
- Domestic abuse
- Parental substance misuse

It is important to remember that being abused does not mean that children or young people will go on to abuse others.
Key risk factors and vulnerabilities of young people who sexually abuse others are that   they may:
- have poor self-regulation and coping skills
- experience social anxiety and a sense of social inadequacy
- have poorly internalised rules for social behaviour
- possess a poorly developed or primitive sense of morality
- lack secure and confident attachments to others
- exercise limited self-control, and act out their emotional experiences through negative or otherwise inappropriate behaviour
- have little insight into the feelings and needs of others and, indeed, their own emotions
- place their own needs and feelings ahead of the needs and feelings of others
- exhibit a poorly defined sense of personal boundaries
- have developed strong and not easily corrected cognitive distortions about others, themselves, and the world they share
- struggle to interact socially or have issues with social competence.

Staff must remember this is not an exhaustive list and **must** remain alert to possible signs of sexual abuse, violence, harassment or harmful behaviours by pupils in school.
Staff must follow section 4 of the Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy if they have any concerns, or if a pupil discloses that they have been harmed.

Annex B: Helplines and support for young people

Childline: https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/

NSPCC: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/
Barnardo's: https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/sexual-abuse
Safeline: https://www.safeline.org.uk/what-we-do/young-people/
Mind:https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/useful-contacts/
https://www.safe4me.co.uk/support-services/ - provides an A-Z directory listing details of national and local services offering specialist support, advice and resources for children and young people, families and professionals on a broad range of needs, concerns and topics.

Annex C: Help and Support for children and young people that have health needs arising from sexual assault or abuse

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) – Centres can be found through a location search at:
https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Rape-and-sexual-assault-referral-centres/LocationSearch/364
The NHS provides a range of advice, help and support including advice about the risk of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STI), reporting to the police and forensics.
Rape Crisis https://rapecrisis.org.uk/
The Survivors Trust https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/
The Male Survivors Partnership: Male Survivors Partnership
Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS) previously referred to as CAMHS. Services vary depending on local authority. Most CAHMS have their own website, which will have information about access, referrals and contact numbers.
Internet Watch Foundation works internationally to remove child sexual abuse online images and videos and offers a place for the public to report them anonymously.
Childline/IWF Remove a nude image shared online Report Remove is a free tool that allows children to report nude or sexual images and videos of themselves that they think might have been shared online, to see if they can be removed from the internet.

Annex D: Useful Publications and Websites

NICE guidance contains information on developing interventions; working with families and carers; and multi-agency working.

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation has developed a HSB Toolkit, which 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: NSPCC Learning: Protecting children from harmful sexual behaviour and NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/

https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/

https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) DFE

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges (September 2021)

Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health   education DFE

Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges - Ofsted

UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people

Safeguarding Network - Peer on Peer Abuse and Preventing youth violence and gang involvement

Peer-on-peer abuse toolkit by Farrer &Co Guidance on peer-on peer abuse policy and template peer-on-peer abuse policy: https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/clients-and-sectors/safeguarding/farrer--co-safeguarding-peer-on-peer-abuse-toolkit-2019.pdf

Towards a Contextual Response to Peer-on-Peer Abuse - CSE Network

Beyond Referrals: CSN Beyond Referrals: Levers for Addressing HSB in Schools Toolkit

Sexual bullying: developing effective anti-bullying practice- A guide for school staff and other professional Anti-Bullying Alliance

Project deSHAME- Digital Exploitation and Sexual Harassment Amongst Minors in Europe Understanding, Preventing, Responding

It's Just Everywhere- a study on sexism in schools –and how we tackle it - National Education Union and UK Feminista

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