Child-on-child abuse

Contents

Surbiton High School: Ethos and Aims

Surbiton High School aims to **inspire, encourage and empower** our young people to discover and embrace their individuality in an intellectually rigorous academic environment. Balanced with outstanding pastoral care, our students become compassionate, respectful, courageous, and inquisitive members of the community, living out the School's motto: *Amor nos semper ducat* (May love always lead us).

Our Values

We are compassionate:
We are kind and we care, in both thought and action. We consider those less fortunate and strive to support and offer aid. We are mindful of the gentle power of positive actions. We support and encourage those around us.

We are respectful:
We respect all people equally. We respect ourselves, our learning, our community, our environment, and the planet we all share. We strive to act with respect and integrity in all things. When we disagree, we do so respectfully.

We are courageous:
When challenged by our fears we are determined, not deterred. We call on resilience for strength when in the heat of the struggle. We bravely chase our dreams and fight for what we believe. When we fall, we pick ourselves up and forge forward.

We are inquisitive:
We understand that a thoughtful question is the key to unlock understanding. We believe where answers provide ends, questions pose exciting beginnings. We are eager to explore, we question to discover, we are curious to learn more of the world at large.

We are a community:
We are united - with a common focus. We value belonging to a wider community: our school community, our local community, our global community. We are inclusive of all, no matter our differences. We value and nurture the connections we form.

We achieve these aims through our *Charter for Happiness and Well-being.* Our pupils:
- **are inspired to deploy their highest strengths to tackle all situations**, developing a growth mind-set and a can-do attitude, equipped with the tools to maximise their positive emotions
- **are encouraged to find their niche**, to be fully engaged in educational activities and to meet the highest challenges that come their way
- **are coached and encouraged to develop strong relationships**, to be empathetic and responsive to the needs of themselves and others
- **are empowered to lead a meaningful life**, to be able to understand what their goals are and to know what they are striving for
- **are empowered to draw strength from celebrating their accomplishments**, in order to tackle new challenges

We achieve these aims through our inculcation of *Learning Habits.* Our children:

- **are inspired in their thinking**, to ask questions, to make connections, to imagine possibilities, to reason methodically and to capitalise on their resources
- **are encouraged to be emotionally invested in their learning**, persevering in the face of difficulties, noticing subtle differences and patterns, managing their distractions, and becoming absorbed in their learning
- **are empowered to be fully involved in their learning**, growing in interdependence, collaborating effectively, listening empathetically to others, and imitating their learning habits
- **are inspired, encouraged, and empowered to be productive**, planning their learning in advance, revising and reviewing their progress, distilling important information, and developing their own meta-learning

United Learning and the United Church Schools' Trust

Surbiton High School is part of *United Learning* and the *United Church Schools' Trust*. The School has an Anglican foundation, valuing its Christian heritage whilst welcoming staff and children from all faiths and none. We share with United Learning its core mission statement "to bring out the best in everyone". We are committed to the aims of United Learning, including its *Framework for Excellence,* which can be found at:
www.unitedlearning.org.uk

The School's Responsibilities

Introduction

The Governors, Senior Leadership Team, and all staff and volunteers at Surbiton High School are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the School.

This policy is designed to provide background information regarding 'Child-on-child' abuse and inform School practice.

Surbiton High School:

- believes that to protect children, all schools should:
    (a) be aware of the level and nature of risk to which their pupils are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context; and
    (b) take a contextual whole-school approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse
- regards the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure and does not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to child-on-child abuse in response to alleged incidents of it.
- recognises national and increasing concern about this issue and wishes to implement this policy to ensure that our pupils are safe.
- staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, 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.

This policy:

- sets out our strategy for preventing, identifying and appropriately managing child-on-child abuse.
- applies to all staff including teaching and non-teaching staff.
- is reviewed annually, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which pupils are or may be exposed.
- is the School's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute child-on-child abuse. It relates to, and should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

  - Anti-Bullying Policy
  - Behaviour and Discipline Policy
  - Code of Conduct - pupils
  - Mobile Digital Devices Policy
  - Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
  - It should also be read in conjunction with KCSIE (September 2022)

- does not use the term 'victim' and/or 'perpetrator'. This is because our School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in allegations of or concerns about child-on-child abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused and those who are alleged to have abused their peers.
- acknowledges that 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[1];
- uses the terms 'child' and 'children', which is defined for the purposes of this policy as a person aged under 18[2]. We have nonetheless chosen not to restrict our approach to child-on-child abuse under this policy to children but instead to adopt a wider interpretation of our safeguarding responsibilities so that they apply to all pupils, regardless of age.

Although the starting point is that the School's response to child-on-child abuse should be the same for all pupils, regardless of age, there may be some additional considerations in relation to a pupil aged 18 or over in terms of how local agencies and/or partners respond.

Similarly, the School's response to incidents involving the exchange of youth-produced sexual imagery will need to differ depending on the age of the pupils involved – see Appendix B for further information.

There is also likely to be a more significant criminal justice response in relation to any pupil responsible for abuse who is aged 18 or over is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2022).

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[1] https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/child-abuse-neglect-uk-today-research-report.pdf (see section 5)

[2] The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (ratified by the UK in 1991); the Children Act (1989); and Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges (September 2016) all define "child" as a person aged under 18.

Understanding Child-on-child Abuse

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse). And that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

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)[3].

Peer on peer 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 or youth produced sexual imagery);
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; 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).

These types of abuse rarely take place in isolation and often indicate wider safeguarding concerns. For example, a teenage girl may be in a sexually exploitative relationship with a teenage boy who is himself being physically abused by a family member or by older boys. Equally, sexual bullying in schools and other settings can result in the sexual exploitation of children by their peers. For 16- and 17-year-olds who are in abusive relationships, what may appear to be a case of domestic violence may also involve sexual exploitation.

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 child-on-child abuse takes into account any potential complexity.

What is contextual safeguarding?

This policy encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which:

➢ is an approach to safeguarding children that recognises their experiences of significant harm in extra-familial contexts, and seeks to include these contexts within prevention, identification, assessment and intervention safeguarding activities[3]

➢ recognises that as children enter adolescence, they spend increasing amounts of time outside of the home in public environments (including on the internet) within which they may experience abuse; and

➢ considers interventions to change the systems or social conditions of the environments in which abuse has occurred. For example, rather than move a child from a school, professionals could work with the school leadership and student body to challenge harmful, gendered school cultures, thus improving the pre-existing school environment.

When does behaviour become problematic or abusive?

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

Sexual behaviours

As the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) explains "children's sexual behaviours exist on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to highly abnormal and abusive. Staff should recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviours. As both problematic and abusive sexual behaviours are developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage, a useful umbrella term is harmful sexual behaviours or HSB." This term has been adopted widely in the field, and is used throughout the NSPCC's and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, as well as this policy.

For the purpose of the NSPCC's and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, and as adopted in this policy, harmful sexual behaviours are defined as "Sexual behaviours expressed by children…that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child…or adult[4].

Professor Simon Hackett (Durham University) chaired the practice development subgroup which produced the Operational Framework for Children and Young People Displaying Harmful Sexual Behaviours on behalf of the NSPCC[5]. He proposed the following continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented

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[3] Firmin, C. 2017. Abuse Between Young People: A Contextual Account. Oxon: Routledge (due to be published in December 2017

[4] https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/publications/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework.pdf

[5] Operational framework for children and young people displaying harmful sexual behaviours, London, NSPCC.

by children, which may be helpful when seeking to understand a [pupil's/student's] sexual behaviour and deciding how to respond to it.

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
• Developmentally expected • Socially • acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Problematic and concerning behaviour • 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	• Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure compliance • Intrusive • Informed • consent lacking or not able to be freely given • May include elements of expressive violence	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour • Sadism

Hackett's continuum relates exclusively to sexual behaviour and is not exhaustive. The Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool can also be very helpful in identifying sexual behaviours by children[6]. Staff should always use their professional judgment and discuss any concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Where an (alleged) incident involves a report of sexually harmful behaviour, staff should consult the DfE's Advice.

Other behaviour

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on aspects of Hackett's continuum to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, 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

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

- 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

It should be borne in mind that there are some aspects of Hackett's continuum which may not of course be relevant or appropriate to consider in response to other alleged behaviour involving reports of other types of abuse. For example, the issue of consent and the nuances around it, is unlikely to apply in the same way in cases where the alleged behaviour is reported to involve emotional and/or physical abuse, as it could in cases of alleged sexual behaviour which is reported to involve harmful sexual behaviour.

In addition, the School could be required to deal with cases involving a range of alleged behaviours including sexual behaviour, emotional, physical behaviour and digital behaviour.

It should also be recognised that the same behaviour presented by different children may be understood at different points on a spectrum, depending on the particular context. For example, an incident involving youth-produced sexual imagery may be inappropriate in one context, for example, when exchanged between two children in a consenting relationship, and abusive in another, for example, when it is (a) shared without the consent of the child in the image; (b) produced as a result of coercion; or (c) used to pressure the child into engaging in other sexual behaviours.

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. For example, a physical fight between two children may not constitute child-on-child abuse where the fight is a one-off incident, but may be abusive where the child's/children's behaviour subsequently deteriorates into a pattern of bullying behaviour and requires a safeguarding response from a multi-agency partnership – including a statutory assessment of whether this has led, for example, to a risk of significant harm to a child.

The importance of intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour does not just apply on an individual pupil basis but could also apply across the pupil body.

Behaviour generally considered inappropriate may in fact indicate emerging concerning behaviour to which schools need to take a whole-school approach in order to prevent escalation.

It will also be important to consider the wider context in which the alleged behaviour is reported to have occurred, and which may trigger the need for a referral. For example, some behaviour that is considered inappropriate may be capable of being dealt with internally. However, if there are wider safeguarding concerns relating to the child/children in question, a referral to statutory agencies may be necessary. Where the behaviour which is the subject of the concern(s)/allegation(s) is considered or suspected by the DSL to constitute peer-on-peer abuse, the School will follow the procedures set out below.

How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?

All staff should be alert to the well-being of pupils and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of

the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ.

Signs that a child may be suffering from child-on-child abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse (please see "Recognising Different Types of Abuse" section of the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy for indicators of abuse) and can include:

- increased absence from school or failing to attend school, disengaging from classes or struggling to carry out school related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected;
- a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups
- signs of assault or unexplained 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 including alcohol, substance misuse or signs of self-harm;
- changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age;
- a significant decline in performance;
- abusive behaviour towards others.

Abuse affects children very differently. The above list is by no means exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse. The behaviour that children present with will depend on their particular circumstances. Rather than checking behaviour against a list, staff are trained to be alert to behaviour that might cause concerns, to think about what the behaviour might signify, to encourage children to share with them any underlying reasons for their behaviour, and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents/carers so that the cause(s) of their behaviour can be investigated. Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for his/her age, staff should always consider whether an underlying concern is contributing to their behaviour (for example, whether the child is being harmed or abused by their peers) and, if so, what the concern is and how the child can be supported going forwards.

The power dynamic that can exist between children is also very important when identifying and responding to their behaviour: in all cases of child-on-child abuse, a power imbalance will exist within the relationship. This inequality will not necessarily be the result of an age gap between the child responsible for the abuse and the child being abused. It may, for example, be the result of their relative social or economic status. Equally, while children who abuse may have power over those who they are abusing, they may be simultaneously powerless to others.

Are some children particularly vulnerable to abusing or being abused by their peers?

Any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to the strength of peer influence during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers. For example, an image of a child could be shared, following which they could become more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to how others now perceive them, regardless of any characteristics which may be inherent in them and/or their family. Peer group dynamics can also play an important role in determining a child's vulnerability to such abuse. For example, children who are more likely to follow others and/or who are socially isolated from their peers may be more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse.

Children who are questioning or exploring their sexuality may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their peers.

A Whole-School Approach

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 child-on-child abuse, they should speak to a member of the Safeguarding Team.

How can the School raise awareness of and prevent child-on-child abuse?

School environment

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

- Maintaining an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.;

- Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, pupils, and parents about this issue.

This includes:

- training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes (a) Contextual Safeguarding; (b) the identification and classification of specific behaviours; and (c) the importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing. Training includes case studies which the staff design themselves;
- educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via the PSHE and the wider curriculum. For example, by addressing gender inequality in a statistics class, or by reviewing literature in an English class which addresses bullying and its effect on mental health;
- pupils are being told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse.
- ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the School's DSL who can then monitor and advise;
- challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom);
- creating conditions in which our pupils can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships;
- creating a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to; and
- responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately.

Responding to Concerns or Allegations of Child-on-child Abuse

General Principles

It is essential that all concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our School environment.

When managing allegations, we will:

- manage reports with two members of staff present (preferably one being the designated safeguarding lead or deputy. At least one member of staff will be female).
- reassure all 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 sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- include a thorough investigation of the concerns/allegations and the wider context in which they may have occurred (as appropriate);
- treat all children involved as being at potential risk - while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves.
- ensure a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter;
- understand that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved, and consider and address the effect of wider socio-cultural contexts - such as the child's/children's peer group (both within and outside the School); family; the School environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence.
- Consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child's/children's needs and to mitigate risk; and the potential complexity of child-on-child abuse and of children´s experiences and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent.
- Listen to the views of the child/children affected.
- Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/children and their parents/carers/guardians and obtain consent to any referral before it is made, unless informing the parent will put the young person at risk of harm.
- Undertake an 'early help assessment'.
- Ensure any decision not to inform the parents/carers/guardians would generally be made in conjunction with other services such as children's social care and/or the police, who would take the lead in deciding when the parents/carers/guardians should be informed.
- Manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents/carers/guardians informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so.

What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or maybe abusing their peer(s)?

If a pupil is in immediate danger, or at risk of significant harm, a referral to children's social care (if the pupil is aged under 18) and/or the police will be made immediately. Any member of staff can make a referral. Where

referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made (see p.8 of the Safeguarding Child Protection policy).

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay (in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy) so that a course of action can be agreed.

How will the School respond to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse?

The DSL will discuss the concerns or allegations with the member of staff who has reported them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected - see Appendix C for further information

The School will treat all allegations of child-on-child abuse as a safeguarding concern and, as such, the decisions on management will be determined by this.

The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will ensure they are engaging with children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required.

Individual risk and needs assessment

Where there is an incident of child-on-child abuse, the School will carry out a robust risk and needs assessment in respect of each child affected by the abuse. These risk assessments will:
- assess and address the nature and level of risks that are posed and/or faced by the child;
- engage the child's parents/carers/guardians and draw upon local services and agencies to ensure that the child's needs are met in the long-term (unless informing the parent will put the young person at risk of harm. Any decision not to inform the parents/carers/guardians would generally be made in conjunction with other services such as children's social care and/or the police, who would take the lead in deciding when the parents/carers/guardians should be informed.
- consider whether any targeted interventions are needed to address the underlying attitudes or behaviour of any child; and
- be reviewed at regular intervals in light of the child's on-going needs to ensure that real progress is being made which benefits the child.

If at any stage the child's needs escalate, the DSL should contact the Kingston and Richmond SPA

Support and intervention for the pupil who has been harmed

- in all incidents of child-on-child abuse, school counselling or one to one support via a mentor will be offered
- additional support from an external agency (such as the NSPCC and Bernardo's) will be offered where appropriate

- where a pupil feels able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends, the pupil will continue 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 PSHE that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently. If a pupil feels particularly vulnerable, a risk assessment will 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.

Disciplinary Action

The School will consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any pupil/s involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it.

Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including:

- to ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;
- to demonstrate to the child/children and others that child-on-child abuse can never be tolerated; and
- 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.

Decisions on the appropriate sanction will be made by the Senior Vice Principal and / or the Principal in accordance with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy and, where appropriate the Exclusion, Expulsion, Removal and Review Policy and Procedures.

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.

It is important to find out why the pupil who has displayed harmful behaviour 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. Support from identified services 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.

On-going proactive work to a contextual whole – school approach

The School's response to concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse should be part of on-going proactive work by the School to embed best practice and take a contextual whole-school approach to such abuse. As such the School's response can become part of its wider prevention work. This response may include the School asking itself a series of questions about the context in which an incident of child-on-child abuse occurred in the School, the local community in which the School is based, and the wider physical and online environment - such as:

- what protective factors and influences exist within the School (such as positive peer influences, examples where child-on-child abuse has been challenged etc.) and how can the School bolster these?
- how (if at all) did the School's physical environment contribute to the abuse, and how can the School address this going forwards, for example by improving the School's safety, security and supervision?
- did wider gender norms, equality issues and/or societal attitudes contribute to the abuse?
- what was the relationship between the abuse and the cultural norms between staff and pupils, and how can these be addressed going forwards?
- does the abuse indicate a need for staff training on, for example, underlying attitudes, a particular issue or the handling of particular types of abuse?
- how have similar cases been managed in the past and what effect has this had?
- does the case, or any identified trends, highlight areas for development in the way in which the School works with children to raise their awareness of and/or prevent child-on-child abuse? Does the School's PSHE curriculum and lessons that address underlying attitudes or behaviour such as gender and equalities work?
- are there any lessons to be learnt about the way in which the School engages with parents/carers/guardians to address child-on-child abuse issues?
- are there underlying issues that affect other schools in the area and is there a need for a multi-agency response?
- does this case highlight a need to work with certain children to build their confidence and teach them how to identify and manage abusive behaviour; and
- were there opportunities to intervene earlier or differently and/or to address common themes amongst the behaviour of other children in the School?
- Answers to these questions can be developed into an action plan that is reviewed on a regular basis by school leadership and the DSL.

Appendix A: further resources

Child-on-child abuse statistics

The crime survey data from 2020:
file:///H:/Downloads/Sexual%20offences%20in%20England%20and%20Wales%20overview%20year%20ending%20March%202020.pdf
This includes information around sexual violence and street-based violence perpetrated by young men.

Parliament publication:
https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8117/CBP-8117.pdf

Identifying, assessing and responding to behaviour

The following links are designed to help professionals working with children to identify, categorise and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours by children:

NSPCC's and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework:
https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework
which contains the continuum model proposed by Simon Hackett (2010), and provides schools with information about what to expect from local partnerships.

Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool:
https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/the-sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool

Educating staff and children

Preventing youth violence and gang involvement:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418131/Preventing_youth_violence_and_gang_involvement_v3_March2015.pdf

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

Anti-bullying guidance:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1069688/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

Cyber bullying:
file:///H:/Downloads/Cyberbullying-guidance2.pdf

Tender works with schools providing educational programmes for children and staff training aimed at preventing domestic abuse and sexual violence and promoting healthy relationships based on equality and respect: http://tender.org.uk/

Childnet: http://www.childnet.com/

Support and interventions

The charity, the Lucy Faithful Foundation (LFF), provides services to agencies working with children and their families – for those with problematic sexual behaviour on the internet and in the 'real world': https://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/

Red Balloon Learning Centres:
http://www.redballoonlearner.org/

Leap Confronting Conflict:
http://www.leapconfrontingconflict.org.uk/

Barnardo's: https://www.barnardos.org.uk/

General

Contextual Safeguarding Practitioners' Network: www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk

Appendix B: Youth-produced Sexual Imagery Policy

Whilst professionals refer to the issue as 'sexting' there is no clear definition of 'sexting'. According to research, many professionals consider sexting to be 'sending or posting sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi- nude photographs, via mobiles or over the internet.' Yet, recent NSPCC research has revealed that when children are asked 'What does sexting mean to you?' they are more likely to interpret sexting as 'writing and sharing explicit messages with people they know.' Similarly, a recent ChildLine survey has revealed that many parents think of sexting as flirty or sexual text messages rather than images.

This policy only covers the sharing of sexual imagery by children. Creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of under-18s is illegal, and therefore causes the greatest complexity for schools (amongst other agencies) when responding. It also presents a range of risks which need careful management. On this basis, this policy introduces the phrase 'youth produced sexual imagery' and uses this instead of 'sexting'. This is to ensure clarity about the issues this advice addresses.

What is youth produced sexual imagery?

'Youth produced sexual imagery' best describes the practice because:
'Youth produced' includes children sharing images that they, or another child, have created of themselves.

'Sexual' is clearer than 'indecent'. A judgement of whether something is 'decent' is both a value judgement and dependent on context.

'Imagery' covers both still photos and moving videos (and this is what is meant by reference to imagery throughout the policy).

What types of incidents are covered by this policy?

Yes**:**
- A child creates and shares sexual imagery of themselves with a peer (also under the age of 18).
- A child shares sexual imagery created by another child with a peer (also under the age of 18) or an adult.
- A child is in possession of sexual imagery created by another child.

No:
- The sharing of sexual imagery of children by adults constitutes child sexual abuse and schools should always inform the police.
- Children sharing adult pornography or exchanging sexual texts which do not contain imagery.
- Sexual imagery downloaded from the internet by a child.
- Sexual imagery downloaded from the internet by a child and shared with a peer (also under the age of 18) or an adult.

Disclosure

Disclosure about youth produced sexual imagery can happen in a variety of ways. The child affected may inform a class teacher, the DSL in School, or any member of the School staff. They may report through an existing reporting structure, or a friend or parent may inform someone in School or colleague, or inform the police directly.

All members of staff (including non-teaching staff) should be aware of how to recognise and refer any disclosure of incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery. This will be covered within staff training and within the School's child protection policy.

Any direct disclosure by a child should be taken very seriously. A child who discloses they are the subject of sexual imagery is likely to be embarrassed and worried about the consequences. It is likely that disclosure in School is a last resort and they may have already tried to resolve the issue themselves.

Handling incidents

All incidents involving youth-produced sexual imagery should be responded to in line with the School's Safeguarding Child Protection policy.

When an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery comes to a member of staff's attention:

•   The incident should be referred to the DSL as soon as possible.
•   The DSL should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate School staff.
•   The DSL will follow the procedures and guidance set out in Sexting in schools and colleges:
•   responding to incidents and safeguarding children30.
•   There should be subsequent interviews with the children involved (if appropriate).
•   Parents should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the child at risk of harm.
•   At any point in the process if there is a concern a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.

Education

Teaching about safeguarding issues in the classroom can prevent harm by providing children with skills, attributes and knowledge to help them navigate risks. The School will provide children with opportunities to learn about the issue of youth produced sexual imagery, as part of its commitment to ensure that they are taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities.

Appendix C: Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment – A Quick Reference Guide

Responding to reports- Process

Initial Response - Process

- **all** victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe
- staff take appropriate action in accordance with their child protection policy and national and local guidance. (e.g. Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges– DfE 2018)
- If the victim does not give consent to share information, staff may still lawfully share it, if it can be justified to be in the public interest, for example, to protect children from harm and to promote the welfare of children
- parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risk)
- Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police (and potentially children's services). Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of referring to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice approach, in these cases.
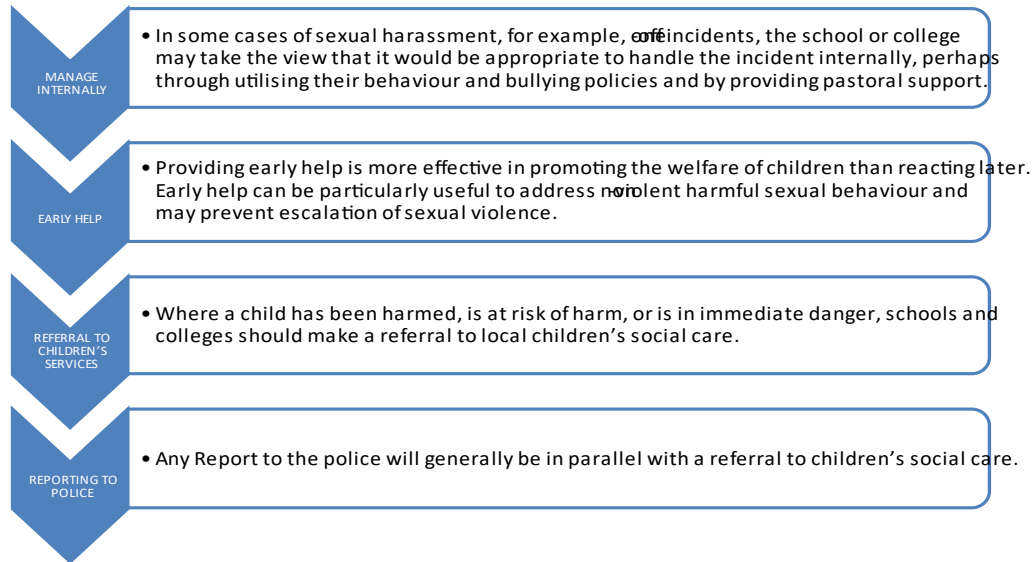
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Initial Response - Process

There are four likely scenarios:

MANAGE INTERNALLY
- In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, the school or college may take the view that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising their behaviour and bullying policies and by providing pastoral support.

EARLY HELP
- Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.

REFERRAL TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES
- Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, schools and colleges should make a referral to local children's social care.

REPORTING TO POLICE
- Any Report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to children's social care.

Risk Assessment - Process

- 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.

- The risk assessment should consider: the victim, the alleged perpetrator and other members of the school community (e.g. children, staff).

- It should consider actions/measures required to protect and support.

- Should be recorded (written or electronic) and should be kept under review. At all times, the school or college should be actively considering the risks posed to all their pupils and students and putting adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe. This could include adhering to bail conditions.

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Ongoing Response - Process

- Schools and colleges should work with professionals as required to understand why a child may have abused a peer. It is important to remember that, as a child, any alleged perpetrator is entitled to, deserving of, and should be provided with, a high level of support to help them understand and overcome the reasons for their behaviour and help protect other children by limiting the likelihood of them abusing again.
- Any child will likely experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.
- It is important that if the alleged perpetrator does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children, adult students and staff.

Ongoing Response - Process

- The needs and wishes of the victim should be paramount (along with protecting the child) in any response.
- Consider the proportionality of the response. Support should be tailored on a case by-case basis.
- Victims may not disclose the whole situation immediately.. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged and in some cases the child may benefit from a designated trusted adult of their choice.
- It may be necessary for schools and colleges to maintain arrangements to protect and support the victim for a long time.
- There may be times when the victim finds it difficult to maintain a full-time timetable and may express a wish to withdraw from lessons and activities. If required, schools and colleges should provide a physical space for victims to withdraw.
- Whilst they should be given all the necessary support to remain in their school or college, if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another school or college should be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education

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Conclusion - Process

- Disciplinary action can be taken whilst other investigations by the police and/or children's social care are ongoing. The fact that another body is investigating or has investigated 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. This is a matter for the school and should be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis.

- The school should consider if, by taking any action, they would prejudice an investigation and/or any subsequent prosecution. Careful liaison with the police and/or children's social care should help the school make a determination.

- Taking disciplinary action and still providing appropriate support are not mutually exclusive actions. They can, and should, occur at the same time if necessary.

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