

**A Place to Flourish**  
***“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10)***



# **Child-on-Child Abuse Policy**

<b>Date of review/adoption</b>	Spring 2024
<b>Date of next review</b>	Spring 2025
<b>Notes</b>	Written to reflect new KCSiE September 2022

Signed ...*C. Robertson*... Chair of Governors

Date .....05.02.2024.....

*\*Electronically signed and approved at Full Governing Board Meeting held on  
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# BLUNDESTON CEVC PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY

## 1 Introduction

Children and young people can be harmful to one another in a number of ways. This is classified as child-on-child abuse, recognising that this type of abuse can involve, and occur between, children of different ages.

This policy has been written to reflect changes to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2022), in conjunction with the guidance, 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges' (September 2021).

Both of these documents may be used, and referred to, in order to support staff dealing with incidents of child-on-child abuse.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#).

## 2 Abusive and harmful behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and it is necessary to consider what abuse is, what it looks like, how it can be managed, what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm. Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'.

Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific, e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing-type violence. It is important to consider the different forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy.

## 3 Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between children and this list is not exhaustive.

Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail, followed by advice and support on the actions to be taken.

### 3.1 Sexual violence/sexual harassment

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary school, and beyond. 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 online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable (KCSiE, September 2021).

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 (KCSiE, September 2021).

### **3.2 Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may include hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a child has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally, before considering the action or sanction to be taken.

### **3.3 Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse**

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

Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

### **3.4 Bullying**

Bullying is unwanted and negative behaviour between children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both children who are bullied, and who bully others, may be affected deeply and for a long period of time.

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

- an imbalance of power - children who bully use their power, such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity, to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- repetition - bullying behaviours happen more than once, or have the potential to happen more than once.

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

### **3.5 Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, email, chat rooms or social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, to harass, threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. It is important to state that cyberbullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, Section 1, which states that electronic communications that are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information, or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim, would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, Section 127, which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking, or distributing, indecent images of children under the age of 18, then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Outside of the immediate support children may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

### **3.6 Youth produced sexual imagery (sexting)**

Youth produced sexual imagery (sexting) is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference. However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images can end up anywhere.

By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, children and young people may not even be aware that they could be breaking the law (these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003).

### **3.7 Initiation/Hazing**

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe, and sometimes, violent ceremonies. The idea behind this practice is that it welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them.

After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation because they all experienced it as part of 'a rite of passage'. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse and harassment.

### **3.8 Upskirting**

Upskirting is where a picture is taken under another person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of obtaining sexual gratification, or to cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.

### **3.9 Prejudiced behaviour**

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

## **4 Expected action to be taken by staff**

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

It is important to deal with a situation of child on child abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred, as soon after, the child(ren) may have forgotten the exact details. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents/carers when they become involved. For example, staff will not use the word 'perpetrator' as this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

In all cases of child-on-child abuse, it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to children and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Staff dealing with incidents will receive appropriate training and, if possible, two members of staff should be present when dealing with incidents, with at least one of these being the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy DSL.

### **4.1 Gather the facts**

Staff will speak to all the children involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account. The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the child to explain what happened. Staff will use open questions, e.g. 'where, when, why, who' (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?)

All victims will be reassured that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward, and that they will be supported and kept safe.

An accurate record of what the child has said will be recorded on CPOMS.

#### **4.2 Consider the intent (begin to risk assess)**

Staff will aim to ascertain whether the incident was deliberate.

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a Deputy DSL), will make an immediate risk and needs assessment.

This will be considered on a case by case basis and will consider:

- the victim, especially their protection and support
- whether there may have been other victims
- the alleged perpetrator(s)
- all the other children (and, if appropriate, staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harm
- risk assessments will be recorded (written or electronically) and will be kept under review.

#### **4.3 Decide on the next course of action**

If from the information gathered, the school believes any child to be at risk of significant harm, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a Deputy DSL) will make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately (where a crime has been committed the police will be involved also). Once social care have been contacted and have made a decision on what will happen next, the school will be informed of the next steps.

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

It may also be the case that social care feel that it does not meet their criteria. If this is the outcome, the DSL may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, the DSL agrees with the decision, the school may then be left to inform the parents/carers.

#### **4.4 Informing parents/carers**

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from social care and/or the police, the school have agreement to inform the parents/carers, or have been allocated that role from the other services involved, the DSL will then inform the parents/carers as soon as possible.

If services are not going to be involved then, equally, this information may need to be shared with the parents/carers. The best way to inform

parents/carers is face to face. Although this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident, and the type of harm/abuse a child may be suffering, can cause fear and anxiety for the parents/carers whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

#### **4.5 Points to consider**

- What is the age of the children involved?
- Is there any age difference between those involved? (In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills, may show a particular interest in exploration around this stage). This, however, should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following points).
- Where did the incident or incidents take place?
- Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so, was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?
- What was the explanation given by all the children involved about what occurred?
- Can each of the children give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the children involved?
- Is the incident an example of bullying (e.g. regular and repetitive)?
- Is the version of one child different from another and why?
- What is each child's understanding of what occurred?
- Did the children know/understand what they are doing, e.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch?
- Is the child's explanation in relation to something they may have heard, or been learning about? Could this have prompted the behaviour?
- Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived?
- Does the child have an understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?
- Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion?
- In the same way, has the behaviour persisted after the issue has already been discussed or been dealt with and appropriately resolved?

In dealing with an incident of this nature, the answers may not always be clear cut.

If the school is concerned, or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, the DSL will seek advice from social care.

#### **5 Next steps**

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

For the child who has been harmed, any support they require depends on the individual child. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one-to-one support. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with the support of their family and friends. In these instances, it is necessary that this child continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future.

If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the child may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other children, 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 cyberbullying etc.

Certain relevant issues may be discussed and debated within school through our RSHE (Life Skills) curriculum.

If the child feels particularly vulnerable, it may be that a risk assessment needs to 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.

For the child who has displayed harmful behaviour, it is important to find out why the child has behaved in such a way, if possible. It may be that the child 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 be necessary.

Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an Early Help referral and the child may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the child has been met, it is important that they receive a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice, e.g. making amends with the child they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying.

In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour, it may be a requirement for the child to engage in one-to-one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed, this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing, it may be that this child cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In this instance, the child will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation, the behaviour that the child has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others. If this is the case, an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the child and the



risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved, including the child and their parents/carers.

This may mean additional supervision of the child, or protective strategies being put in place, if it is felt that the child is at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

The school may also choose a sanction as a consequence, such as an internal exclusion, detention or fixed term exclusion. Any sanction will be issued in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

## **6 After care**

It is important that following the incident, the children involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the effects of the incident(s).

The school recognises that sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident.

It is important to ensure that the children do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). This means that regular reviews with the children following the incident(s) are imperative.

## **7 Preventative strategies**

For all schools, it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of child-on-child abuse, rather than manage these issues in a reactive way.

Firstly, and most importantly for schools, is recognition that child-on-child abuse can occur at any school, even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms in place. It is therefore important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting children to talk about any issues, and through sharing information with all staff.

This process can be supported by ensuring that the school has an open environment where children feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This is supported through the school's RSHE (Life Skills) curriculum, which tackles issues such as prejudiced behaviour, and gives children an open forum to talk things through.

To enable such an open and honest environment, it is necessary to ensure the whole workforce feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge children's perceptions, including the use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is important that staff talk to children appropriately and without prejudice.

It is incredibly important that staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary for staff to consider each issue, and each individual, in their own right, before taking action.

If staff don't take any concerns raised seriously, it may result in a child not seeking further help or advice in the future.

It is important that signposting is available to children in the event that they do not feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. Around our school, we have safeguarding posters widely displayed, as well as posters for helplines specifically for children.