

WEST PARK ACADEMY

Child on Child Abuse Policy and Procedure



Designated Safeguarding Lead:	Mrs Jenna Ford, Vice Principal
In case of absence of Mrs Ford:	Mrs Sam Hirst, Principal
Link Trustee for Safeguarding:	Mr Maurice Jones
Link Trustee for Children Looked After:	Mrs Abigail Rowcroft
Date of Board of Trustees Approval:	September 2023
Date to be Reviewed:	September 2024

In all cases of actual or suspected abuse the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed and the relevant Local Authority Child Protection Procedures followed

Introduction

All staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child-on-child abuse, according to paragraph 46 of the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, published by the Department for Education (DfE).

This is most likely to include, but not limited to, bullying (including cyber-bullying), gender-based violence/sexual assaults and sexting.

Staff should be clear as to the school's policy and procedures for child-on-child abuse.

Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy should be read in conjunction with our Child on Child Abuse Policy.

This policy includes information on:

- Procedures to minimise the risk of child on child abuse
- How allegations will be investigated and dealt with
- How victims of abuse will be supported

It reflects the different forms child on child abuse can take, as well as the different gender issues that can influence it. It includes information about sexting, and the school's approach to it. All stakeholders should be aware that child on child abuse should not be passed off as "banter" and will not be tolerated

Whilst it is recommended that child on child abuse is part of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with this there is a separate policy.

At West Park Academy we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

Purpose and Aim

We recognise that children may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which could be classified as abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child on child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

At West Park Academy we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- **Anti-Bullying Policy**
- **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**
- **Online E-Safety Policy**

Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together, 2015, highlighting that every assessment of a child, '*must be informed by the views of the child*' and within that '*It is important to understand the resilience of the individual child when planning appropriate services*'. (Working Together, 2015:23) This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

Introduction to abuse and harmful behaviour

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

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

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- 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)
- Abuse in intimate relationships between peers (this is sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth-produced sexual imagery)
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals, which 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

Defining sexual violence and sexual harassment between children.

The main messages from part 1 KCSIE of the advice are:

- Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between 2 children of any age and any sex or 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

- Can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal)
- Are never acceptable
- It's important that **all** victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support
- Some children are more vulnerable. It's more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and more likely but not exclusively that sexual harassment will be perpetrated by boys. Children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans (LGBTQ+), or perceived to be so, may also be particularly targeted by their peers
- You should make clear that it's not "part of growing up", "banter", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys" and should not dismiss or tolerate this behaviour
- A whole school preventative approach is important, as many incidents can be driven by wider societal factors, such as sexist language and stereotypes
- Children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual violence and harassment and additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse in these children

The advice defines rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, consent and sexual harassment. It also links to further guidance from the NSPCC on considering whether behaviour constitutes harmful sexual behaviour.

Bullying (physical, name calling, homophobic etc.) Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

An Imbalance of Power. Young people 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, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Cyber bullying

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

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

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

Sharing of nude and semi-nude images

This 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 could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private Academy, 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.

Prejudiced Behaviour

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

Expected action taken from all staff

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and initiator of the harm, the following steps can help to 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 the child(ren) may forget and this information should be collated in **CPOMs** under the appropriate category and the **Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputies** should be informed immediately. 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 when they become involved. For example; do not use the word perpetrator, this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

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

Gather the Facts

Staff must speak to all the young people involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use **consistent language** and **open questions** for each account. The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the young people to tell you what happened. Only interrupt the young person from this to gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?)

Consider the Intent (begin to Risk Assess)

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

Decide on your next course of action

If from the information that you gather you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also). If this is the case, once social care has been contacted and made a decision on what will happen next then you will be informed on your next steps.

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

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

Informing parents

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care you have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then you

need to inform the parents as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents.

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

Points to consider:

What is the age of the children involved?

How old are the young people involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? (In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following)

Where did the incident or incidents take place?

Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?

What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?

Can each of the young people give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one young person different from another and why?

What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?

Do the young people know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the young person's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the young person have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

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

CIAT: 01325 406252

Repetition

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

Next Steps

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

For the young person who has been harmed

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends. In which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PSHE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in the Academy 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 young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

In this circumstance, it is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an early help referral which may lead to an early help assessment 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 young person receive a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation, the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual safety plan may be required. It will be decided by the safeguarding leads as to whether this is required and should be completed via a multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

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

After care

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). In which case, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

Preventative Strategies for Schools and Settings

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

Firstly, and most importantly for West Park Academy staff, is recognition that child on child abuse can and will occur in any school/setting even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff.

This can be supported by ensuring that West Park Academy has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them.

This can be strengthened through a strong and positive curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. At West Park our curriculum plays a crucial role in preventative education.

This is in the context of a whole-school approach to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain and a culture of zero tolerance to sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia and sexual violence/harassment. This will be underpinned by:

- Our Positive Behaviour Policy
- A pastoral support system of ELSAs and HSFC
- A planned programme of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), which is inclusive and delivered regularly, tackling issues such as:
 - Healthy and respectful relationships
 - Boundaries and consent
 - Stereotyping, prejudice and equality
 - Body confidence and self-esteem
 - How to recognise an abusive relationship (including coercive and controlling behaviour)

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 perceptions of

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

Noticeboards and posters around school signpost children to designated adults in school however staff are well aware that children may feel more confident to disclose information to a more familiar adult that they trust and as such all adults are prepared for this through training and CPD. Support services on a wide range of issues are also displayed to enable children to seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes are brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of child on child abuse.

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

Further resources

Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Command has developed resources to help support young people with developing confident, healthy approaches to relationships and the internet. These include videos, toolkits and activities that can be used in lessons and assemblies, or shared with parents.

Childnet International has an online safety PSHE toolkit with films and lesson plans exploring issues such as:

- Cyber-bullying
- Sexting
- Peer pressure
- Self-esteem

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has a range of safeguarding teaching resources including lesson plans on personal safety, healthy relationships and online bullying. Its 'Speak out Stay safe' programme also includes interactive assemblies and workshops on safeguarding for pupils in KS1 and KS2.