



Hazel Court School

Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

Context and Definition

Peer abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others. All staff should recognise that children can abuse other children. This is generally referred to as 'peer-on-peer' abuse and can take many forms. All staff should be aware of safeguarding issues from peer abuse including:

- bullying (including cyberbullying)
- physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- 'up-skirting', which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

This abuse can:

- be motivated by perceived differences e.g., on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other differences
- result in significant, long lasting and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to the victim; vulnerable children are at particular risk of harm.

Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs or significant disruption in their own lives. They may have exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering abuse' educational under-achievement or be involved in crime.

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the first priority of any education setting, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical. School staff, alongside their Designated Safeguarding Lead, have to make their own judgements about each specific case and should use this policy guidance to help.

We are aware that peer on peer abuse is not necessarily carried out with intent due to the child's level of vulnerability, therefore it is essential that we gather the facts within the initial stage to ensure that the incident is being dealt with appropriately in relation to development stage and understanding of the pupil/s involved.

Responsibility

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2020 states that: ‘All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. All staff should be clear about their school’s or college’s policy and procedures with regard to peer-on-peer abuse.

Governors and Trustees should ensure that their Safeguarding child protection policy includes:

- procedures to minimise the risk of peer-on-peer abuse
- how allegations of peer-on-peer abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with
- clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other child affected by peer-on-peer abuse will be supported
- a clear statement that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up”
- recognition of the gendered nature of peer-on-peer abuse (it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys will be perpetrators), but that all peer-on-peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously; and
- the different forms peer on peer abuse can take

Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

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

Sexual violence and sexual harassment This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will follow the DfE Guidance: Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges 2018. Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may include:

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature?), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them

Bullying This 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 such as size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose
- Online Bullying / Cyber bullying Online Bullying / Cyberbullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, e-mail, chat rooms etc.) to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. Online bullying can take many forms:
 - abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
 - posting abusive comments on social media sites
 - sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
 - stealing someone’s online identity
 - spreading rumours online
 - trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms or games
 - developing hate sites about another person
 - prank calls or messages
 - group bullying or exclusion online
 - anonymous messaging
 - encouraging a young person to self-harm
 - pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

Sexting The term 'sexting' relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content; these are created and sent electronically. They are often 'shared' via social networking sites and instant messaging services. This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, DSL, will follow the UKCCIS: Sexting in schools and colleges 2016 guidance.

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 ceremony 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 – for example 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.

Teenage Relationship Abuse Teenage relationship abuse is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner. This abuse may be child sexual exploitation.

Expected Staff Action

Staff should consider the seriousness of the case, CPOMS the incident and make a quick decision whether to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately before taking any further in-school actions.

Recognising Peer Abuse

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed by the DSL and Head or Assistant Head of School and consider:

- chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved
- difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability
- all alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident
- whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
- what was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery?
- the effect on the victim
- any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret
- the child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred
- whether this was a one-off incident, or longer in duration

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the pupil/student(s) and the parents/carers when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Taking Action

- always take complaints seriously, and use CPOMS and alert DSL/Head of school - they will follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. If MASH and the police intend to pursue this further, they may ask to interview the young people in school or they may ask for parents/carers to come to school to be spoken to. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take
- gain a statement of facts from the pupil/student(s) - or witness if pupils are unable to give a statement
- assess needs of victim and alleged perpetrator

- consider referral to Police or Social Care
- contribute to multi-agency assessments
- consider a risk management meeting
- record all incidents and all action taken on CPOMS

Young people at Hazel Court School have a variety of special educational and emotional needs and all have individual communication needs. To gain information we would use the communication resources specific to each individual and adjust our approach according to our in-depth knowledge that we have of each person.

The school has a wealth of PSHE resources which includes RSE specific symbols to support the use of topic boards/AAC devices and the use of 'Talking Mats' to give each individual a voice.

Outside professional help would be sourced where necessary.

Please see Appendix A: Safeguarding Handbook for Schools

Recording Sexualised Behaviour

- be clear, explicit and non-avoidant, and avoid vague statements or euphemisms
- record as soon as possible on CPOMS, as you can quickly forget or confuse detail
- use proper names for body parts but record exactly any language or vocabulary used by the child. Use the child's exact words in quotation marks
- note where and when the incident happened and whether anyone else was around
- 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.
- Take into consideration the pupils' own communication needs and methods. Ask the young people to tell you what happened in a way that is appropriate to them.
- Use open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?). Do not interrogate or ask leading questions.

Informing Parents/Carers

The best way to inform parents/carers/carers is face to face, however due to the fact that a majority of our pupils are transported to and from school via school transport, this isn't always possible, and so a telephone call is likely to take place instead.

Parents/carers should be informed on the same day the incident took place. The nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents/carers whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another. When speaking to parents/carers be clear about what school will be putting into place to prevent another incident.

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 one to one support via a staff member, or they may want time away from the class. 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 within the school improving peer groups/relationships with other young people, or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required. If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

For the Young Person Who Has Displayed Harmful Behaviour 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 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 to consider whether it is appropriate to 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 elsewhere.

It may be that the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others, in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a 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/carers. 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.

Preventative Strategies

Peer on peer abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most robust policies and support processes. It is important to develop appropriate strategies to proactively prevent peer on peer abuse. This school has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them – in a way that is appropriate to their individual needs and levels of understanding.

There is a strong and positive PHSE/SMSC/SRE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives pupils and students an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. Staff will not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood.

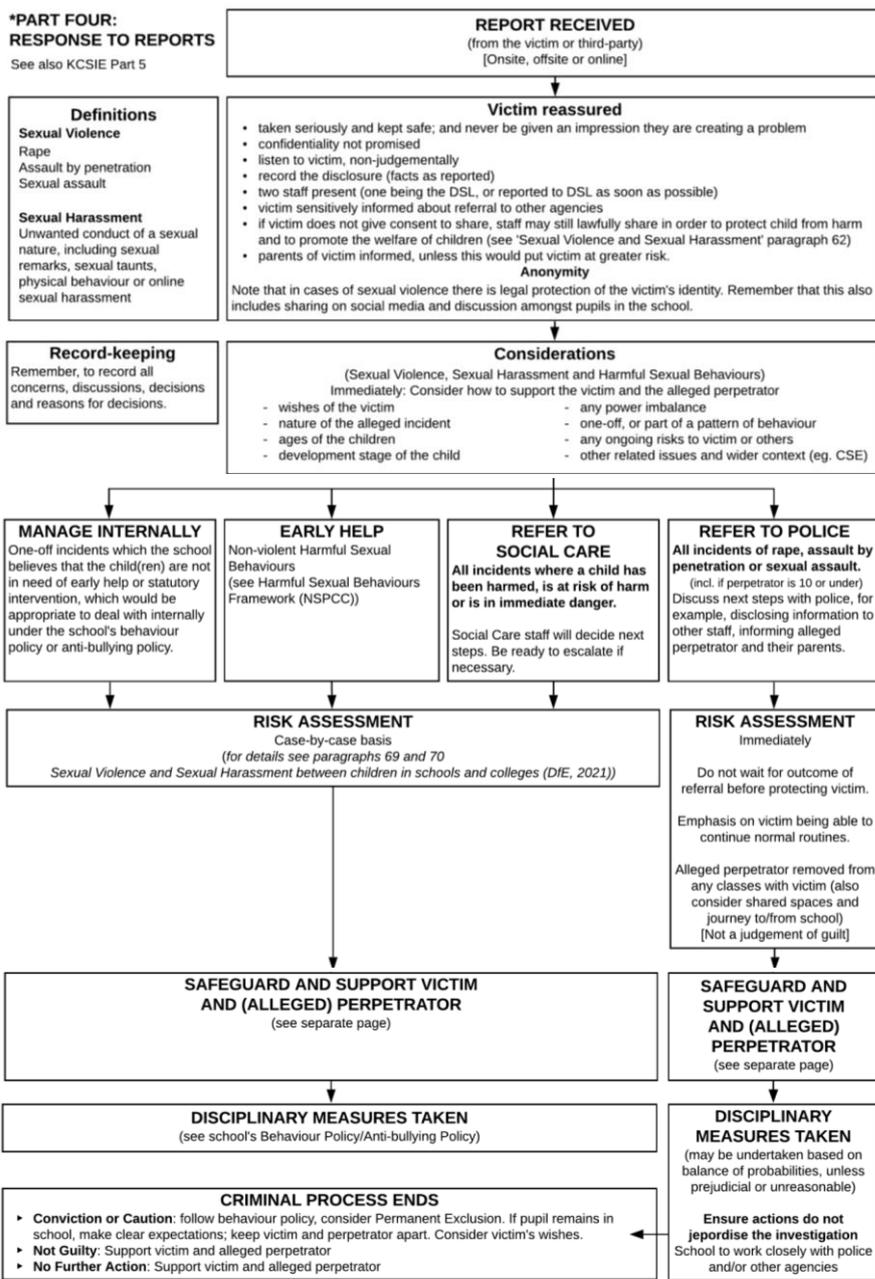
Staff will consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. Young people are part of changing their circumstances and, through school council and pupil voice for example, we encourage young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour'.

We will also work closely with parents and carers and support them with resources for reinforcement at home if necessary.

Action Plan for Implementation 2021 - 2022

Action	Person/s responsible	Completion date	RAG
Highlight/ introduce the policy to staff	KC & JB	22.10.21	
Complete RSHA curriculum update	HR	22.10.21	
Review signs and symbols to include abusive behaviours	HR	22.10.21	
Twilight training as part of RSHA focus	SMT	17.12.21	
Work with all students on peer-to-peer abuse	All teachers	17.12.21	
Parent/carer awareness term 2 – newsletter, online training	SG	17.12.21	
Lesson observations focus on RSHA term 4	SLT	01.04.22	

Appendix A: Safeguarding Handbook for Schools



Source: *Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children in schools and colleges (DfE, 2021) SVSH Flow Chart for Schools 2021 v.1.0