

# Peer on Peer abuse – Guidance 2018

## Introduction

Peer on peer abuse left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals and their families. It can be a barrier to their learning and have serious consequences for their mental health. Peer on peer abuse which takes place at school does not only affect an individual during childhood but can have a lasting effect on their lives well into adulthood. By effectively preventing and tackling abuse, we can help to create safe, disciplined environment where our pupils are able to learn and fulfil their potential.

This document has therefore been produced to help us take action to prevent and respond to bullying as part of our overall behaviour policy. It outlines our approach to bullying and the measures we have put into place to tackle bullying.

## Our whole school approach statement

We have employed a whole school approach to safeguarding and child protection. This means involving everyone, including the governing body, all the staff, all the children and their parents or carers. Safeguarding and child protection is a recurrent theme running throughout our policies and procedures.

We hope to make clear to parents, pupils and staff that we have an effective prevention measure in place to tackle peer on peer abuse including sexual abuse and sexual harassment and all other forms of peer on peer abuse. Our approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment is reflected and is part of our wider approach to safeguarding.

If an incident arises, we will deal with it robustly, quickly and appropriately. We will not tolerate any form of peer on peer abuse within our school or by association.

## What is Peer on peer abuse?

Peer on peer abuse is behaviour by an individual or group which can be a one off incident or repeated over time. Peer on peer abuse is behaviour that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.

Peer on peer abuse can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups steered by a dislike for a persons:

Race  
Religion  
Gender  
Sexual orientation  
Special educational needs or disabilities  
Where a child is adopted or in care  
Where a child has caring responsibilities  
Where a child has actual or perceived differences, (for example, physical or cultural differences)

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously our school's first priority. However, emotional abuse can be as damaging if not more damaging than physical violence; teachers will make their own judgements about each specific case. We recognise that abuse often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of abuse having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for the victim to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour.

## Vulnerable pupils

Peer on peer abuse can happen to all children and young people and it can affect their social, mental and emotional health. Our staff will support all pupils who are bullied. This means we will be alert to the effect any form of bullying can have. We will be especially alert to where it may have a severe impact.

We recognise that the impact of Peer on Peer abuse can be especially more severe not only due to the nature and extent of the bullying but because it may be combined with other factors such as those mentioned below that also affect the social, mental and emotional health of the pupil. For example:

Children with special educational needs or disabilities  
Children who are adopted  
Children who are suffering from a health problem  
Children with caring responsibilities  
Children in care  
Children who are frequently on the move (for example those from military families)  
Children who are going through a personal or family crisis.

## Bullying which occurs outside school premises

We will use our disciplinary powers to address pupils' conduct when they are not on school premises and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff, but only if it would be reasonable for the school to regulate pupils' behaviour in those circumstances. This may include bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside local shops, or in a town or village centre.

Where abuse outside of school is reported to our school, we will investigate and take appropriate action. We will consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police for example, if we believe an offence has taken place.

## Cyber-bullying

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a medium for cyber bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience.

If a member of staff seizes an electronic device, (such as a mobile phone) which has been used in the course of cyber bullying;

- We may examine data or files where there is good reason to do so.
- However, we will speak to a parent to inform them of any action taken regarding the search of electronic devices.
- If we seize an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules and the member of staff has reasonable grounds to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, we will give the device to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable.

## Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children Context

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any sex. They can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This may adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable.

We will:

- Make clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- Not tolerate or dismiss sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”
- We will challenge behaviours (which are potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and other private areas of the body.

## Managing the disclosure

Our initial response to a disclosure from a child is taken very seriously. All of our staff know how to complete a TED (Tell, explain describe) conversation which is a vital part of gathering critical information from a child relating to their disclosure.

- We will reassure any child who makes a disclosure that they will be supported throughout their ordeal.
- Our staff receive annual safeguarding updates which address how to deal with disclosures effectively.
- We have a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) who will manage the concern from any member of staff, child or parent.
- The DSL will follow our schools safeguarding policy which will ensure they gather as much information and context pertaining to the disclosure. This information will then be referred to the Local authority referral and assessment team who will advise us of how to proceed with the concern.
- Other agencies such as police and social care may become involved if appropriate.

## Children sharing a classroom

Any report of sexual violence is likely to be traumatic for the victim. However, reports of rape and assault by penetration are likely to be especially difficult with regard to the victim and close proximity with the alleged perpetrator is likely to be especially distressing. Whilst we establish the facts of the case and start the process of liaising with children's social care and the police, the alleged perpetrator and victim will be removed from any classes they share. We will also consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport to and from the school where it is within our power to do so. These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator. In all cases the initial report will be carefully evaluated considering any immediate evidence, the wishes of the victim, and the nature of the allegations.

## Safeguarding and supporting the victim

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and will help our decision making process regarding safeguarding and supporting the victim. We will:

- Consider the age and the developmental stage of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the potential risk of further abuse.
- Consider the needs and wishes of the victim. The victim will be listened to and acknowledged. It is important they feel in as much control of the process as is possible.
- Ensure that the victim will never be made to feel they are the problem for making a report or made to feel ashamed for making a report.

- Consider the proportionality of the response. Support should be tailored on a case-by-case basis. The support required regarding a one-off incident of sexualised name-calling is likely to be vastly different from that for a report of rape.

## Safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help our decision making process regarding safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator: We will consider:

- How we will continue to provide the alleged perpetrator with an education, safeguarding support as appropriate and implementing any disciplinary sanctions.
- The age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator and nature of the allegations. 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.
- The proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case-by-case basis. An alleged perpetrator may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviour in young children may be a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and or materials.

Advice will be taken, as appropriate, from children's social care, specialist services and the police.

**We will risk assess the situation at the earliest stage of the report and will continue to review the risk throughout the internal and or external investigation of the report of abuse.**

## Prevention

Our school's response to Peer on peer abuse will not start at the point at which a child has been abused. Our staff proactively gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place. This might involve talking to pupils about issues of difference, perhaps in lessons, through dedicated events or projects, or through assemblies. Staff themselves will be able to determine what will work best for their pupils, depending on the particular issues they need to address. Our school has created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. That culture extends beyond the classroom to the corridors, the dining hall, the playground, and beyond the school gates including travel to and from school. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest. Our school will:

- Involve parents to ensure that they are clear that the school does not tolerate any form of peer on peer abuse. We will make parents aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being abused by their

peers. We want Parents to feel confident that our school will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way that protects the child. We will expect parents to reinforce the value of good behaviour at home

- Will involve pupils. All pupils understand the school's approach and are clear about the part they can play to prevent peer on peer abuse, including when they find themselves as bystanders
- Regularly evaluate and update our approach to take account of developments in technology, for instance updating 'acceptable use' policies for computers and take into account what can still be improved.
- Implement disciplinary sanctions. The consequences of peer on peer abuse will reflect the seriousness of the incident so that others see that abuse is unacceptable and will be sanctioned.
- Openly discuss differences between people that could motivate abuse, such as religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality or appearance related difference. Also children with different family situations, such as looked after children or those with caring responsibilities. We teach children that using any prejudice based language is unacceptable
- Provide effective staff training on how to deal with peer on peer abuse. All school staff understand the principles and purpose of the school's policy, how to resolve problems, and where to seek support.
- Make it easy for pupils to report bullying so that they are assured that they will be listened to and incidents acted on. Pupils should feel that they can report abuse which may have occurred outside school including cyber-bullying
- Create an inclusive environment where pupils can openly discuss their experiences of peer on peer abuse, without fear of further abuse or discrimination
- We recognise that some Children with special educational needs or disabilities may lack the social or communication skills to report such incidents so we ensure our training builds in regular awareness of this.
- We frequently address the impact of abuse within our school and what constitutes appropriate, safe and acceptable behaviour with our children and staff.