



Saint Pierre School,

16 Leigh Road, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 1LE

Child – On – Child Abuse Policy

Policy Owner (Position)	Last Updated By (Name)	Date of Last Review	Date Next Review Due
Headteacher	Peter Lane	9 th Dec 24	9 Dec 25

1. 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 child-on-child abuse and can take many forms.

All staff should be aware of safeguarding issues from child 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. Part five of this guidance sets out how schools and colleges should respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- upskirting, 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): the policy should include the school's or college's approach to it. The DFE provides Searching Screening and Confiscation Advice for schools. The UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) Education Group has published Advice for Schools and Colleges on Responding to Sexting Incidents; and
- 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 adults are at particular risk of harm. Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs e.g.;
- significant disruption in their own lives
- exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering abuse
- educational under-achievement
- 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 and/or Deputy, have to make their own judgements about each specific case and should use this policy guidance to help.

Within Saint Pierre we are aware that child on child 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.

Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to explore some forms of child on child abuse. The policy also includes a planned and supportive response to the issues.

At Saint Pierre we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Anti-Bullying including Online Bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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 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.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

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”; and
- 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

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that usually involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour may be 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.

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.

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.

Expected Staff Action

Staff should consider the seriousness of the case 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 children should be completed 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 child 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 children and the parents 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
- gain a statement of facts from the pupil(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

Recording Sexualised Behaviour:

- be clear, explicit and non-avoidant, and avoid vague statements or euphemisms
- record as soon as possible, as you can quickly forget or confuse detail
- Follow the prompts on your safeguarding and child protection recording form
- 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

Gather the Facts:

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.

Consider the Intent:

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 you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately; 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 to come to school to be spoken to. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take

Informing Parents/Carers:

The best way to inform parents/carers is face to face where possible and practical. 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 be clear about what school will be putting into place to prevent another incident.

Recording

Ensure that a written report is completed within 24 hours of the incident and passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead on completion

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 child 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.

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). For this reason, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative. 11.

Preventative Strategies

Peer on child 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 child on child 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 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. 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’.