

# Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment Policy

Middle Barton School



**Approved by:**

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Governors

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# Child on Child Abuse and Sexual Harassment

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## 1. Overview

Child on child abuse and sexual harassment is an area of national concern and this document is designed to provide additional focus. It should be read in conjunction with our existing Child protection, anti-bullying and Behaviour policies.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two or more children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into college. It can occur also 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 will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their wellbeing and 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. It is important that **all** victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Staff should be aware that some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows girls, children with SEND and LGBT children are at greater risk.

Safeguarding issues can present via child-on-child abuse, whereby a pupil is subject to significant harm by another pupil or pupils. This includes sexual violence and sexual harassment between children.

## 2. Ways in which child-on-child abuse can manifest

Child-on-child abuse usually manifests as one, or a combination, of the following:

- **Bullying:** if a child is suffering or at risk of significant harm, a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern. Bullying can take different forms, including cyberbullying, racist and religious bullying and homophobic bullying. It's important to bear in mind that some types of behaviour or communication may constitute a criminal offence.
- **Domestic violence:** teenage relationship abuse involves controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between intimate partners or family members aged 16 or over. It can be psychological, physical, sexual, financial and/or emotional
- **Child sexual exploitation (CSE):** defined as an individual or group taking advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person into sexual activity, (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. CSE:
  - Can be perpetrated by other children
  - May have occurred even if the sexual activity appears consensual; for example, if the child is legally old enough to consent but lacks the freedom or capacity to do so. This applies if the child is fearful or under the influence of harmful substances
  - Does not always involve physical contact – it may occur through use of technology
  - Can sometimes be mistake for 'normal adolescent behaviours'
  - Is never the victim's fault, even if there is some form of exchange
- **Harmful sexual behaviour:** involves a child engaging in discussions or acts that are inappropriate for their age or stage of development, whether online or offline. It includes sexualised language or role play, viewing pornography, sexual harassment and sexual violence (see below). It also includes 'sexting', whereby a sexually explicit text, image or video is sent or received. Note: it is a criminal offence to possess or distribute sexual content of under-18s.

- **Sexual harassment:** unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which can include:
  - Sexual comments about another's body
  - Unwanted physical contact
  - Interfering with clothing
  - Comments about another's sexual experience
  - Sexual "jokes" or taunting including innuendo
  - Sexual name-calling
  - Sexual gestures
  - Online sexual harassment

Sexual harassment creates an atmosphere that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence

- **Sexual violence:** rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Note: the age of consent is 16, and a child under 13 can never consent to sexual activity. Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- **Serious youth violence:** this form of abuse applies to victims aged 1-19 who are subject to offenses such as violence, sexual offenses, robbery, or gun or knife crime. This may occur within the context of gang activity
- **Sexual harassment:** When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school/college. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names
- sexual "jokes" or taunting
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes.
  - displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
  - upskirting (this is a criminal offence<sup>137</sup>),
  - online sexual harassment - this may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include: Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos. Taking and sharing nude photographs of U18s is a criminal offense. Sharing of unwanted explicit content. Sexualised online bullying. Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media. Sexual exploitation; coercion and threats, and coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they're not comfortable with online.

### 3. Dealing with child on child abuse and sexual harassment

#### 3.1 What to look for

Child-on-child abuse is a complex issue and will have varied warning signs. However, staff should be alert to:

- Changes in behaviour or demeanor; for example, a child becoming withdrawn
- Signs of depression or anxiety
- Avoidance of particular individuals
- Unexplained injuries
- Unusually poor performance at school
- Sudden development of sexualised behaviour or language

- Exclusion or isolation from peers
- Acts of servitude

### 3.2 What to do

- Report all incidents of child on child abuse and sexual harassment in line with our Behaviour, Anti bullying and Child Protection Policy.
- It should **never** be passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “a part of growing up” or “boys being boys”
- Recognise the gendered nature of child-on-child abuse (that girls will more likely be victims and boys more likely be perpetrators), but that all forms are unacceptable and will be taken seriously
- Recognising, acknowledging, and understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported
- Challenging physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them
- Ultimately, it is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.
- If you or another member of staff think a child is in **immediate danger**, call 999

### 3.3 What the school will do

- Include training on child on child abuse and sexual harassment in staff meetings and briefings.
- Ensure that staff are aware that safeguarding issues can manifest via child-on-child abuse and that they know the school’s policy and procedures with regards to this issue
- Ensure pupils are taught about what constitutes acceptable behaviour and learn about topics such as healthy and respectful relationships, self-esteem and gender roles. Ensure that they understand the consequences of child-on-child abuse, and address any culture of abuse, of any form, that may develop

## 4. Vulnerable children

While child-on-child abuse can affect all children, research shows that some are particularly vulnerable:

- Young people aged 10 or over
- Girls and young women, with boys and young men more likely to be identified as abusers
- Boys and young men in gang-affected neighbourhoods
- Those with a history of abuse within their families
- Young people in care
- Those who have experienced loss through bereavement
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities
- LGBT students

Studies have also found that black and ethnic minority children are often under-identified as victims and over-identified as perpetrators.

## **5. Guidelines on how victims, perpetrators and any other child affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported**

- Staff know to speak to a member of the safeguarding or pastoral team if they are concerned that a child is experiencing, or at risk of, child-on-child abuse
- Where staff share concerns, We should co-ordinate a plan of action and trigger safeguarding procedures. This may include a referral to your local authority children's social care team, and/or the local police.
- Consider the school environment and the implications where victims and perpetrators attend the same school. For example, the DfE says that in the case of a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, a school should consider the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator immediately; if rape or assault by penetration is reported, the alleged perpetrator should be removed from any classes they share with the victim
- Consider the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Review the support in place for both victims and perpetrators, including how you protect anonymity where appropriate. Perpetrators may need help to understand the implications of their behaviour
- Consider the wider context of both the victim and perpetrator to build a picture of why the abuse may be occurring

## **6. Preventing child-on-child abuse**

Our PSHE, RSHE and Computing curriculum as well as assemblies ensure that students are taught about all aspects of safeguarding in an age-appropriate and inclusive way, for example:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- How to stay safe online.
- What respectful behaviour looks like
- Consent
- Gender roles, stereotyping and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour