



Child on Child Abuse Policy

WORKING TOGETHER
FOR CHILDREN

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Acronyms

LAC	Local Academy Committee
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
KCSIE	Keeping Children Safe in Education
CPOMS	Child Protection Online Monitoring System
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding HUB

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1. Purpose and Aim

West Park Primary School fully recognises its responsibility to safeguard, promote and protect the safety of all pupils in its care. This means ensuring safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development at West Park Primary School. Ultimately, all systems, processes and policies should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart. West Park Primary School has an attitude of 'it could happen here'. We expect all Staff to share this commitment.

Schools and colleges and their staff are an important part of the wider safeguarding system for children. This system is described in the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interest of the child.

Keeping Children Safe in Education – 2022

The purpose of this Policy is to provide staff, governors, volunteers and the wider school community with the framework needed in order to keep children safe and secure in West Park Primary School. The Policy also informs parents and carers how we are safeguarding their child whilst in our care.

This Policy applies to the whole of West Park Primary School and all on and off-site activities by pupils whilst they are the responsibility of the school.

The Policy forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our school and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2022
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018
- Inspecting Safeguarding in Early Years
- The role of the designated safeguarding lead (Annex B of KCSIE)
- The safeguarding response to children missing from education
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Allegations against Adults Policy
- Complaints Policy

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (everyone under the age of 18) is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2022 as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

West Park Primary School is committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse both within and outside of school. To protect children, we will:

- be aware of the nature and level of risk to which pupils are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to the specific safeguarding context; and
- take a whole-school community contextual safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on child abuse,
- engage proactively with parents and seek their support for the school's Child-on-child Abuse Policy and their readiness to challenge any behaviour at home which could constitute partial or full condolence of inappropriate peer relationships and other friendships.

West Park Primary School believes that it is not acceptable to merely take a reactive approach to child-on-child abuse in response to alleged incidents of it. We believe that in order to tackle child-on-child abuse proactively, it is necessary to focus on all four of the following areas:

- Systems and structures
- Prevention
- Identification
- Response and intervention

We recognise national an increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and child-on-child abuse in the school setting, and encourage parents to hold us to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers, they should inform the School so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

This policy is the school's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute child-on-child abuse. It relates to, and should be read alongside, the school's safeguarding policy and any other relevant policies including, but not limited to the anti-bullying policy and data protection policy.

This policy sets out our strategy for improving prevention and identifying and appropriately managing child-on-child abuse. It is the product of a comprehensive consultation – which has involved students, staff and parents, and a risk assessment. In producing this policy, we have taken careful account of the views of parents, pupils and sought external guidance from outside agencies (Safeguarding Alliance 2022).

This policy applies to all governors, the senior leadership team, and staff. It is reviewed bi-annually, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which students are or may be exposed. A number of staff and students are involved in each review which involves, and is informed by, an assessment of the impact and effectiveness of this policy over the previous time period.

It recognises that abuse is abuse and should never be passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', or 'part of growing up'.

This policy is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (September 2022)

It does not use the term 'victim' and/or 'perpetrator'. This is because our School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in concerns or allegations about child-on-child abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused, and those who are alleged to have abused their peers, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter. Research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers.

The policy uses the terms 'child' and 'children', which is defined for the purposes of this policy as a person aged under 18. We have nonetheless chosen not to restrict our approach to child-on-child abuse under this policy to children but instead to adopt a wider interpretation of our safeguarding responsibilities so that they apply to all students, regardless of age.

2. Our Safeguarding Pledge

Children will:

- Get the help they need when they need it;
- Be seen by a professional such as a teacher, doctor or social worker to make sure children are alright and not put at more risk;
- Be listened to seriously, and professionals will use their power to help children;
- Be able to discuss issues in private, if and when children want to.

Professionals will:

- Be involved with children and help them understand decisions made about their lives;
- Provide children with a named adult to help them;
- Share information to protect children;
- Minimise disruption to other parts of children's lives;
- Work together effectively on children's behalf;
- Be competent, confident, properly trained and supported;
- Work to continually improve how and what is done to help children.

3. Understanding child-on-child abuse

For these purposes, child-on-child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children, and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships and wider peer associations. child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to): serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence and abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or prejudice-based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence.

Examples of online child-on-child abuse would include sexting, online abuse, child-on-child grooming, the distribution of youth involved sexualised content, and harassment.

Research suggests that child-on-child abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse affecting children in the UK. For example, more than four in ten teenage schoolgirls aged between 13 and 17 in England have experienced sexual coercion. Two thirds of contact sexual abuse experienced by children aged 17 or under was committed by someone who was also aged 17 or under.

4. Sexualised behaviours

Professor Simon Hackett of Durham University has proposed the following continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children, which may be helpful when seeking to understand a student’s sexual behaviour and deciding how to respond to it.

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmentally expected • Socially acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problematic and concerning behaviour • Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected • No overt elements of victimisation • Consent issues may be unclear • May lack reciprocity or equal power • May include levels of compulsivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given • May include elements of expressive violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusion instrumental violence which is psychologically and/ or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour • Sadism

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff may draw on aspects of Hackett’s continuum to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, whether it:

- is socially acceptable,
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time,
- is socially acceptable within the peer group,
- is problematic and concerning,
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability,
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning,
- involves a power imbalance between the child/ children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power, and
- involves a misuse of power.

5. Whole School Approach

The school actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

Educating all Local Academy Members (LAC), Senior Leadership Team (SLT), staff, pupils, and parents about this issue. This includes: training all LAC, the SLT, and staff on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify, and respond to it. This includes:

- a) Contextual Safeguarding
- b) The identification and classification of specific behaviours, including digital behaviours
- c) The importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how 'low level' they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing
- d) Social media and online safety, including how to encourage children to use social media in a positive, responsible, and safe way, and how to enable them to identify and manage abusive behaviour online.

Training includes educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse, positive, responsible, and safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts about consent, via PSHE and the wider curriculum.

Pupils are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse. They are regularly informed about the school's approach to such issues, including its **zero-tolerance policy** towards all forms of child-on-child abuse.

Educating pupils about consent includes teaching them basic facts such as:

- a) a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- b) the age of consent is 16
- c) sexual intercourse without consent is rape

Engaging parents on these issues by:

- a) talking about them with parents, both in groups and one to one,
- b) asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the school address those risks,
- c) involving parents in the review of school policies and lesson plans, and
- d) encouraging parents to hold the school to account on this issue, in part as a result of visibility of this policy.

Supporting the on-going welfare of the pupil body by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise pupil mental health, and by providing counselling and therapy to address underlying mental health needs.

These interventions can be 'de-clinicised' and brokered through a positive relationship with the school and its staff.

Working with LAC, SLT, and all staff, pupils and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the school community

Creating conditions in which our pupils can aspire to, and realise, safe and healthy relationships fostering a whole-school culture:

- a) which is founded on the idea that every member of West Park Primary School is responsible for building and maintaining safe and positive relationships, and helping to create a safe school environment;
- b) in which violence and abuse are never acceptable;
- c) in which pupils are able to develop trusting relationships with staff, and in which staff understand, through regular discussion and training, the importance of these relationships in providing pupils with a sense of belonging, which could otherwise be sought in problematic contexts;
- d) in which pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to which:
 - proactively identifies positive qualities in pupils;
 - nurtures these qualities;
 - teaches and encourages pupils to think about positive hopes for the future; and
 - supports students in developing small-scale goals that enable realistic ambitions.
- e) which provides supervised activities to students that give them the experience of having their needs met that might otherwise apparently be met in abusive circumstances. These can include experiencing status, excitement and a degree of risk
- f) where we respond to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately

Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to our SLT (through CPOMs) and teaching staff so they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who may be in need of additional support and by challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse, both inside and outside the classroom.

6. Multi-agency working

West Park Primary School actively engages with Hartlepool and Stockton on Tees Safeguarding Children's Board in relation to child-on-child abuse, and works closely with, for example, children's social care, the police, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and all other relevant agencies in accordance with the Hartlepool and Stockton on Tees Safeguarding Children's Board procedures, and other schools.

The relationships the school has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the school is able to prevent, identify early, and appropriately handle cases of child-on-child abuse. They help the school to:

- develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate within our local context, as well as the preventative and support services which exist;

- ensure that its students are able to access the range of services and support they need quickly;
- support and help inform the school's local community's response to child-on-child abuse;
- increase the school's awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in its local area to enable it to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by its pupils.

The school actively refers concerns and allegations of child-on-child abuse where necessary to children's social care, the police, Hartlepool and Stockton on Tees MASH (First Contact HUB), and/or other relevant agencies in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's procedures. This is particularly important because child-on-child abuse can be a complex issue, and even more so where wider safeguarding concerns exist. We recognise that it is often not appropriate for one single agency (where the alleged incident cannot appropriately be managed internally by the school itself) to try to address the issue alone – it requires effective partnership working.

7. Responding to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse

It is essential that all concerns and allegations of child-on-child abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our school environment. Any response should:

- include a thorough investigation of the concern(s) or allegation(s), and the wider context in which it/they may have occurred (as appropriate) – depending on the nature and seriousness of the alleged incident(s), it may be appropriate for the police and/or children's social care to carry out this investigation,
- treat all children involved as being at potential risk
 - while the child who is allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. West Park Primary School will ensure that a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter,
- take into account:
 - that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved, and consider and address the effect of wider sociocultural contexts – such as the child's/ children's peer group (both within and outside the school); family; the school environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence. We will consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child/ children's needs and to mitigate risk and:
 - the potential complexity of child-on-child abuse and of children's experiences, and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent. While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited they are not consenting,
 - the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/ children and their parents, and obtain consent to any referral before it is made.
 - The school should manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so. It is particularly important to take into account the wishes of any child who has allegedly been abused, and to give that child as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and how they will be supported.

What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s)?

All staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected or actual abuse or disclosures of abuse.

If a member of staff has any concerns about a child regarding possible Child- on-Child abuse they must report this immediately to the DSL.

If a member of staff has reported a concern or disclosure to the DSL and is not satisfied with the action taken by that person, the Staff member with concerns should speak with the DSL again or the Headteacher.

In exceptional circumstances such as an emergency or where there is a concern that the appropriate action has not been taken by the school, staff should make a direct referral to Children's Services the contact details of which are in key contacts.

It is noted however that any member of staff can make a referral to Children's Services at any time. If a member of staff makes a referral directly, he or she should inform the DSL as soon as possible.

Any member of staff, volunteer or visitor to the school who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred must report it immediately to the DSL.

Immediately after the event complete a safeguarding concern on the safeguarding platform (CPOMS) or the physical safeguarding form.
This must be done immediately

- Using a Safeguarding Online Platform**
- On the home page click "Report a Concern"
 - Add the name of the pupil
 - Enter a summary of the concern
 - Enter the date and time of the concern
 - Enter the details of the concern
 - Identify whether it is an urgent concern
 - Detail the action taken
 - Attach any relevant attachments
 - Submit your concern

- Using the Safeguarding Form**
This is only in instances where the online platform is not accessible
- Record the pupil's name
 - Record your name and date
 - Confirm whether a body chart has been used
 - Record clear details of the concern
 - Record any further action required
 - Sign and date the form
 - Return immediately to the DSL **do not delay**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated

Monitor the Concern

Refer the Concern

Decision log updated on Safeguarding Platform

Decision log updated on Safeguarding Platform

Those logged as team members will be asked to monitor the pupil and feedback to the Designated Safeguarding Lead on a daily basis

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will refer the concern to the relevant external agency **immediately** dependent upon the nature of the referral

RECORD
Communications, monitoring, decisions and/or actions **must be recorded immediately**. This should be done on the Safeguarding Platform.

How will the school respond to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse?

The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation (s) with the agency and agree on a course of action, which may include:

- **Manage internally with help from external specialists where appropriate and possible.**
Where the alleged behaviour between peers is abusive or violent and would not be dealt with appropriately within the agreed Behaviour Policy, scenarios listed below should ordinarily apply. However, where support from local agencies is not available, the school may need to handle concerns or allegations internally. In these cases, the school will engage and seek advice from external specialists (either in the private and/or voluntary sector).
- **Undertake/contribute to an inter-agency early help assessment, with targeted early help services provided to address the assessed needs of the child/children and their family.** These services may, for example, include family and parenting programmes, responses to emerging thematic concerns in extra familial contexts, a specialist harmful sexual behaviour team, CAMHS and/or youth offending services.
- **Refer the child/children to children's social care for a section 17/47 statutory assessment.**
Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to children's social care (and, if appropriate, a report to the police) is made immediately. This referral will be made to children's social care in the area where the/each child lives. Depending on the safeguarding procedures issued by the Local Safeguarding Partnership in that area, there will normally be an initial review and assessment of the referral, in accordance with that area's assessment framework. As a matter of best practice, if an incident of child-on-child abuse requires referral to and action by children's social care and a strategy meeting is convened, then the school will hold every professional involved in the case accountable for their safeguarding response, including themselves, to both the/each child who has experienced the abuse, and the/each child who was responsible for it, and the contexts to which the abuse was associated.
- **Report alleged criminal behaviour to the police.** Alleged criminal behaviour will ordinarily be reported to the police. However, there are some circumstances where it may not be appropriate to report such behaviour to the police. All concerns or allegations will be assessed on a case by case basis, and in light of the wider context.
- **Implement safety plans – the school will always carry out a safety plan/risk assessment in respect of:**
 - a) Any child who is alleged to have behaved in a way that is considered to be abusive or violent;
 - b) Any child who has reportedly been abused or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child, or
 - c) Any child who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child as deemed appropriated by the DSL.

Where it is alleged that a child has behaved in a way that is considered to be inappropriate or problematic (as opposed to abusive or violent), the DSL will use their professional judgement – based

on the particular concern(s) and/or allegation(s) raised, and the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question – to determine whether (as explained above) it would be appropriate to contact children’s social care, and to carry out a safety plan.

Where other children have been identified as witnesses to alleged abuse or violence, consideration should also be given by the DSL to whether there might be any risks to those children, and whether a safety plan would be appropriate in relation to any risks presenting to them.

8. Information sharing, data protection and record keeping

When responding to concern(s) or allegation(s) of child-on-child abuse, the school will:

- always consider carefully, in consultation with children’s social care, the police and other relevant agencies (where they are involved), how to share information about the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the student(s) affected, their parents, staff, and other students and individuals,
- record the information that is necessary for the school and other relevant agencies (where they are involved) to respond to the concern(s) or allegation(s) and safeguard everyone involved,
- keep a record of the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including relevant authorities, and ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and to only use it for the agreed legal purpose, and
- be mindful of and act in accordance with its safeguarding and data protection duties, including those set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (July 2018) and the *HM Government advice on Information Sharing* (updated in July 2018).

9. Disciplinary action

The school may wish to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved. However, if there are police proceedings underway, or there could be, we will work in partnership with the police and/or children’s social care.

Where a matter is not of interest to the police and/ or children’s social care, the school may still need to consider what is the most appropriate action to take to ensure positive behaviour management (see School Behaviour Policy)

The school’s response to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse should be part of on-going proactive work by the school to embed best practice and in taking a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to such abuse. As such the school’s response can become part of its wider prevention work.

