CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING - CHILD ON CHILD ABUSE

Policy applies from EYFS to Sixth Form and to all Staff	
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Version	Date	Paragraph	Material change	Approval
09.22 v1	01.09.2022	7	New paragraphs inserted to provide detail re. Harmful Sexual Behaviour.	Mr Luke Goodman
12.22 v1	02.12.2022	4 and Appendix 2	New procedure for dealing sexual violence and sexual harassment allegations inserted in Appendix 2.	Mr Luke Goodman
09.23 v1	01.09.2023	N/a	No material changes.	Mr Chris Collins
09.24 v1	01.09.2024	All	Policy updated in full to reflect Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners (May 2024) and best practice.	Mr Chris Collins

Clifton High School is committed to child protection and safeguarding children and young people and expects all staff, visitors and volunteers to share this commitment.

Related Policies

Acceptable use of ICT Agreement for pupils
Behaviour Policies
Child Protection and Safeguarding
Child Protection and Safeguarding - Anti-Bullying
Online Safety
Pupil Code of Conduct – Infant and Junior School/Senior School

1. Introduction

All members of staff at Clifton High School are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse both within and outside of the School.

Children may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which are classified as child-on-child abuse. This policy sets out the School's strategy for preventing, identifying, supporting and appropriately managing child-on-child abuse.

This policy applies to all members of staff, governors, visiting music teachers, peripatetic staff, sports coaches and all volunteers, visitors and contractors who are working on site during term time. It should be read in conjunction with the Schools' Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Local Safeguarding Partnership's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

2. The School's approach to tackling child-on-child abuse

The School takes the following approach to child-on-child abuse:

- a whole-school contextual approach, in which policy is tailored to the School's specific safeguarding context;
- a preventative and not a reactive approach;
- the early identification of vulnerability to child-on-child harm by reviewing attendance, behaviour, attainment and safeguarding records at least on a termly basis;
- that abuse is abuse, and should never be passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', or 'part of growing up';
- a safeguarding approach including in relation to those children who are alleged to have abused other children, as many children who carry out child-on-child abuse are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by other children or adults prior to their abuse of other children. Accordingly, the terms 'victim' and 'perpetrator' are not used;
- that the procedures set out in this policy apply to all pupils, including those over the age of 18 (although the response will in some respects be different for pupils over the age of 18). Reference to 'child' and 'children' therefore include pupils who are 18 and 19 years old.

3. What is child-on-child abuse?

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 associations with other children.

Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), relationship abuse (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse'), domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour and/or prejudice-based violence including gender-based violence. Refer to Appendix 1 Figure 1. Examples of online child-on-child abuse include sexting, online abuse, child-on-child grooming, the distribution of youth involved sexualised content, and harassment.

4. What is contextual safeguarding?

A contextual safeguarding approach is an approach to safeguarding children which:

- recognises that children may have experienced harm in extra-familial contexts, acknowledges that safeguarding incidents and behaviours may be associated with factors outside of the School, and seeks to include those contexts within prevention, identification, assessment and intervention safeguarding activities;
- recognises that as children enter adolescence they spend increasing amounts of time outside of the home in public environments (including online) within which they may experience abuse, and seeks to understand the impact of these wider social contexts; Refer to Appendix 1 Figure 2;
- considers interventions to change the systems or social conditions of the environments in which abuse has occurred. For example, rather than move a child from a tutor group, pastoral and safeguarding staff could work with the Phase Leader/Head of Year and pupil body to challenge a harmful or insensitive culture, thus improving the school environment; and
- looks at the way professionals approach child protection when risks occur outside the family, thereby encouraging all those within a local safeguarding partnership to consider how to work alongside, rather than just refer into, children's social care.

Clifton High School will minimise the risk of child-on-child harm by taking a contextual approach to safeguarding by increasing safety in the contexts of which harm can occur - this can include the school environment itself, peer groups and outside of school. It is recognised that a one size fits all approach may not be appropriate for all pupils, and as such education will be tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of individual children, including children who are or have been subjected to abuse, and children with special educational needs or disabilities.

Following any incidents of child-on-child harm, the Safeguarding Team will review and consider whether practice or environmental changes can be made in relation to any lessons learned. This can include making changes to staffing and supervision, making changes to the physical environment and considering the utilisation and delivery of safeguarding topics on the curriculum.

5. When does behaviour become problematic or abusive?

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

5.1 Sexual behaviours

"*Children's sexual behaviours exist on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to highly abnormal and abusive. Staff should recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour... As both problematic and abusive sexual behaviours are developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage, a useful umbrella term is* ***harmful sexual behaviours*** *or HSB*." [NSPCC] HSB may include inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, sexual touching and sexual violence and sexual harassment.

HSB can occur online and/or face-to-face. The ages and the stages of development of the children involved are critical factors: sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' age difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or shorter.

HSB can progress on a continuum. Addressing inappropriate behaviour can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future. Children displaying HSB have often experienced their own abuse and trauma. It is important that they are offered appropriate support. Refer to Appendix 1 Figure 3.

Staff should always use their professional judgment and discuss any concerns about HSB with the DSL.

Where an alleged incident involves a report of HSB, in addition to following the procedures set out in this policy, staff should also consult Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 Part Five: Child-On-Child sexual violence and sexual harassment. They may also refer to page 14 and 15 of NSPCC's and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework and the Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool (https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/category/sexualbehaviours-traffic-light-tool).

5.2 Other problematic/abusive behaviour

When dealing with alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff need 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/ socially acceptable within the peer group;

- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time;
- 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/or
- involves a misuse of power.

The same behaviour presented by different children may be understood at different points on a spectrum, depending on the particular context. For example, an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery may be inappropriate in one context, for example, when exchanged between two children in a consenting relationship, and abusive in another, for example, when it is (a) shared without the consent of the child in the image; (b) produced as a result of coercion; or (c) used to pressure the child into engaging in other sexual behaviours.

5.3 Early help

Early help is support for children that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse.

Behaviour which is not abusive at first may potentially become abusive quickly or over time. Intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour is vital, and could potentially prevent their behaviour from progressing on a continuum to become problematic, abusive and/or violent and ultimately requiring greater/more formal engagement with specialist external and/or statutory agencies. For example, a physical fight between two children may not constitute child-on-child abuse where the fight is a one-off incident, but may be abusive where the child's/children's behaviour subsequently deteriorates into a pattern of bullying behaviour and requires a safeguarding response.

The importance of intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour does not just apply on an individual pupil basis, but could also apply across the pupil body.

5.4 Whole school approach

Behaviour generally considered inappropriate may in fact indicate emerging concerning behaviour to which the School will need to take a whole-school approach in order to prevent escalation. For example, where multiple boys are making inappropriate comments about girls,

one-off sanctions are unlikely to be effective and wider actions should be considered, such as arranging for an external person to deliver a year group intervention exercise and/or revising Clifton High School's PSHE programme.

5.5 Wider safeguarding concerns

It is important to consider the wider context in which the alleged behaviour is reported to have occurred, and which may trigger the need for a referral. For example, some behaviour that is considered inappropriate may be capable of being dealt with internally. However, if there are wider safeguarding concerns relating to the child/children in question, a referral to statutory agencies may be necessary. Where the behaviour which is the subject of the concern(s)/allegation(s) is considered or suspected by the DSL to constitute child-on-child abuse, the School will follow the procedures set out in section 10 below.

6. Sexual Violence/Sexual Harassment

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. There may be many reasons why a child engages in sexually harmful behaviour, and it may be just as distressing to the child who instigates it as it is to the child it is intended towards. Children can, and sometimes do, abuse other children in this way.

6.1 Tackling sexual violence/sexual harassment

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- making it 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 physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras, pulling down trousers and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them; and
- 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.

6.2 Reporting and responding to sexual violence/sexual harassment

6.2.1 Reporting sexual violence/sexual harassment

Clifton High School has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment. Any allegations of sexual violence and sexual harassment involving pupils must always be

referred immediately to the DSL. The DSL and the Safeguarding Team will then follow the procedure set out in Appendix 2 and the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 Part Five: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Proportionate action will be taken and consider whether a case can be managed internally, through early help, or should involve other agencies as required. It is important to explain that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them, and this should be explained in such a way that avoids alarming or distressing them.

6.2.2 Reporting to the Police and Social Care

Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes. Where a report of this nature is made, it should be referred to the police via 101. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the case should still be referred to the police. A concurrent referral to social care must also be made for all children directly involved.

6.3 Risk and needs assessment

Where a report of sexual violence is made, the DSL or DDSLs should make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The risk and needs assessment for a report of sexual violence should consider:

- the child who has allegedly been subjected to abuse, especially their protection and support;
- whether there may have been other children who have been subjected to abuse;
- the child who has allegedly carried out the abuse;
- all the other children, (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the School, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms, and
- the time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer.

Risk assessments should be recorded on CPOMS and be kept under review. This should be reviewed every 3 months or every time there is an occurrence of an incident. These should involve the pupil and parents and address contextual risks. At all times, the School should be actively considering the risks posed to all pupils, and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe.

The DSL (or a DDSL) should ensure they engage with local authority children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. The school risk assessment is not intended to replace the detailed assessments of

expert professionals. Any such professional assessments should be used to inform the School approach to supporting and protecting their pupils and students and updating their own risk assessment.

School transport is a potentially vulnerable place for a child who has allegedly been subjected to abuse and/or a child who has allegedly carried out the abuse following any incident or alleged incident. The School, as part of its risk assessment, should consider any additional potential support needed to keep all the children safe.

6.4 Contextual safeguarding

Abuse rarely takes place in isolation and often indicates wider safeguarding concerns. For example, a teenage girl may be in a sexually exploitative relationship with a teenage boy who is himself being physically abused by a family member or by older boys. Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives. Any response to child-on-child abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of child-on-child abuse and capture the full context of children's experiences. This can be done by adopting a contextual safeguarding approach and by ensuring that our response to incidents of child-on-child abuse considers any potential complexity.

7. Are some children particularly vulnerable to abusing or being abused?

7.1 Situational and individual factors

Any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to the strength of other children's influence during childhood and adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can determine/increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by other children, for example:

- An image of a child could be shared, following which that child could become more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to how others now perceive them, regardless of any characteristics which may be inherent in them and/or their family.
- Peer group dynamics: children who are more likely to follow others and/or who are socially isolated from other children may be more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse.
- Children with SEND and children who are questioning their sexuality are more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse.

7.2 Children with special educations needs and medical or physical health conditions

Children with SEND or certain medical or physical health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration.
- Being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children.
- The potential to be disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs.
- Communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges.
- Cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours at school.

Children with SEND are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Any reports of abuse involving children with SEND will therefore require close liaison with the DSL or DDSLs and the SENCO.

7.3 Children who are or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bi or gender questioning

The fact that a child or a young person may be lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm, however, they can sometimes be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who are.

Risks can be compounded where children lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced, and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

LGBT inclusion is part of the statutory Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education and Health Education.

8. How can a child who is being abused by other children be identified?

All staff should be alert to the wellbeing of pupils and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse.

Signs that a child may be suffering from child-on-child abuse can overlap with those indicating other types of abuse and can include:

- failing to attend school, disengaging from classes or struggling to carry out school related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected;
- physical injuries;
- experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing;

- becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much;
- broader changes in behaviour including alcohol or substance misuse;
- changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age; and/or
- abusive behaviour towards others.

Refer to Appendix 1 of the *Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy* for indicators of abuse.

Abuse affects children very differently. The above list is by no means exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse. The behaviour that children present with will depend on their particular circumstances. Rather than checking behaviour against a list, staff are trained to be alert to behaviour that might cause concerns, to think about what the behaviour might signify, to encourage children to share with them any underlying reasons for their behaviour, and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents so that the cause(s) of their behaviour can be investigated. Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for his/her age, staff should always consider whether an underlying concern is contributing to their behaviour (for example, whether the child is being harmed or abused by other children) and, if so, what the concern is and how the child can be supported going forwards.

The power dynamic that can exist between children is very important when identifying and responding to their behaviour: in all cases of child-on-child abuse, a power imbalance will exist within the relationship. This inequality will not necessarily be the result of an age gap between the child responsible for the abuse and the child being abused. It may, for example, be the result of their relative social or economic status. Equally, while children who abuse may have power over those who they are abusing, they may be simultaneously powerless to others.

9. Multi-agency working

The School actively engages with its local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse, and works closely with, Bristol Keeping Children Safe Partnership and Bristol Safeguarding in Education Team and the police and/or other relevant agencies (in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's procedures) and other schools. The School will actively refer concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse to children's social care or other relevant agencies, where necessary.

10. Reporting and responding to a report of child-on-child abuse

All concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse will be handled sensitively, proportionately, appropriately and promptly.

If a pupil speaks to a member of staff about child-on-child abuse that they have witnessed or are a part of, the member of staff should listen to the child and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement. The member of staff should not ask leading questions and only prompt the child where necessary with open questions - where, when, what, etc. The member of staff should be clear about how the report will be progressed and should not promise confidentiality as it is very likely that information will need to be shared with others.

The pupils involved should be kept separate from each other and if appropriate have their mobile phones removed (if they have them) to avoid collusion or intimidation.

Staff should ensure that the child is not given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting or make them feel ashamed for making a report. Staff should, where possible, take the child's wishes into consideration in any intervention and any action is taken to ensure safety of the target and other children.

10.1 Reporting concerns

If a member of staff thinks that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by other children, or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing other children, they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay (in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy) so that a course of action can be agreed.

If a pupil is in immediate danger, or at risk of significant harm, a referral to children's social care (if the pupil is aged under 18) and/or the police should be made immediately. If in doubt as to whether to make a report to the Police, staff should follow the NPCC When to Call the Police guidance. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made.

Members of staff should record the report as an incident on CPOMs selecting Child Protection as the incident category.

The DSL will discuss the concerns or allegations with the member of staff who has reported them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps necessary to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected.

10.2 Responding to reports of child-on-child abuse

Any response will be co-ordinated by the DSL (or in their absence a DDSL) and should:

- include a thorough investigation of the concern(s) or allegation(s), and the wider context in which it/they may have occurred; and
- treat all children involved as being at potential risk. While the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, they may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. The School should 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; and
- take the age and understanding of the pupil who is alleged to have committed child-on-child abuse into account in decision making.

If the report includes an online element, members of staff should follow the School's searching, screening and confiscation policy set out in the Behaviour Policies and also the DfE's Searching, Screening and Confiscation advice for schools. Staff should not view or forward illegal images of a child and should follow the DfE guidance in relation to illegal images.

The DSL will use their professional judgment to decide whether it is appropriate for the alleged behaviour to be to be dealt with internally (with or without specialist external support) or externally. In borderline cases the DSL may wish to consult with children's social care and/or any other external agencies on a no-names basis to determine the most appropriate response.

Any response could also take into account:

- that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved. The effect of wider socio-cultural contexts should be considered 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. Consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child's/children's needs and to mitigate risk;
- the potential complexity of child-on-child abuse and of children s̀ experiences. The interplay between power, choice and consent should be considered. While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited they are not consenting; and
- 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.

A detailed log of actions, discussions, and decisions should be recorded on CPOMS selecting Child Protection as the incident category.

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.

10.3 Abusive or violent behaviour

If the behaviour includes sexual violence and/or sexual harassment, the DSL will follow the procedure set out in Appendix 2.

If the behaviour is abusive/violent but does not include sexual violence and/or sexual harassment, the DSL should contact Bristol First Response immediately, and in any event within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of it. The DSL will discuss the allegations/concerns and agree on a course of action, which may include:

- **Dealing with behaviour internally**
  If the DSL (and children's social care) believes that the behaviour can be dealt with internally, the School will usually engage and seek advice from relevant specialists (either in the private and/or voluntary sector), as appropriate. These might include psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors etc.
- **Requesting an early help assessment**
  Undertake/contribute to an inter-agency early help assessment, with targeted early help services provided to address the assessed needs of a child/children and their family These services may, for example, include CAMHS, a specialist harmful sexual behaviour team, and/or youth offending services.
- **Requesting a section 17/section 47 statutory assessment by Children's Social Care**
  A referral will be made to children's social care in the area where each child involved lives.
- **Reporting 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, for example, where the exchange of youth produced sexual imagery does not involve any aggravating factors. All concerns/allegations will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and in light of the wider context and staff should refer to the NPCC When to Call the Police guidance.

10.4 Risk and needs assessment

Where there is an incident of child-on-child abuse, the School will carry out a robust risk and needs assessment in respect of each child affected by the abuse. The risk assessments will:

- assess and address the nature and level of risks that are posed and/or faced by the child;
- engage, where appropriate, the child's parents and local services and agencies to ensure that the child's needs are met in the long-term;

- consider whether any targeted interventions are needed to address the underlying attitudes or behaviour of any child; and
- be reviewed at regular intervals for an as long as the School feels that the child needs support .

If at any stage the child's needs escalate, the DSL should contact Bristol Safeguarding Partnership and act in accordance with the local safeguarding and child protection procedures, to determine the appropriate course of action.

10.5 Disciplinary action

The School may wish to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate, however if there are police proceedings underway, or there could be, the School's response will depend on the disciplinary action (if any) that police and/or social care decide to take.

Pupils who abuse others should be held responsible for their abusive behaviour but the disciplinary action taken will be done in a manner that will meet their needs as well as protecting others.

10.5.1 Positive behaviour management

Subject to any Police and/or social care involvement, the School will consider what (if any) action is needed to ensure positive behaviour management. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, to:

- ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;
- demonstrate to the child/children and others that child-on-child abuse can never be tolerated; and
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

When considering what disciplinary action is appropriate, the School should consider its duty to safeguard all children in its care from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the child-on-child abuse and the causes of it.

10.5.2 Exclusions

The School will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using removal or exclusion as a response. If the School does decide to ask a parent to remove their child from the School or to exclude a pupil because of child-on-child abuse, it will provide

support to that child and their family during that process. It will also provide support to other children who have been involved in the child-on-child abuse.

Asking a parent to remove their child or exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child who has committed the child-on-child abuse and the other children in the School.

Consideration must be given to sharing information with the school which the child moves to regarding the child-on-child abuse in order to ensure the protection of children in the new school.

10.5.3 Wider action

Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of child-on-child abuse, and the School will always consider the wider actions that may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards, as set out in sections 11 and 12 below.

11. Preventative action

The School will adopt a whole school approach to tackling child-on-child abuse and will do the following to prevent it occurring:

- **Create a culture that reduces the risk of child-on-child abuse occurring**
    - **Create a positive culture** in which our pupils can have safe and healthy relationships and feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to.
    - **Promote positive values** by working with governors, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, pupils and parents to promote positive values and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the School community.
    - **Challenge attitudes** that underlie abuse (both inside and outside the School).
- **Raise awareness through education** including:
    - Training governors, members of staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes contextual safeguarding; the identification and classification of specific behaviours; and the importance of taking abuse seriously;
    - Educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via the PSHE and Life Skills curriculum and the wider curriculum. Pupils are told

what to do if they witness or experience 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 informed about the School's approach, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse; and
    - Engaging parents by group and one to one meetings and school communications.
- **Deliver targeted work to help protect pupils who have been identified as being at risk, and pupils who are a potential risk to other pupils**
- **Have systems in place for pupils to report concerns**
  Encouraging pupils to report child-on-child abuse issues to the DSL and the School's Safeguarding Team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who may need additional support. This is done through regular pastoral meetings, including formal 1:1 Head of Year line manager meetings, at which all concerns about pupils (including child-on-child abuse issues) are discussed, and through the CPOMS.
- **Work with the local authority** to undertake, for example, a Contextual Safeguarding School Assessment which would fit into a systems approach to Contextual Safeguarding.
- Assess the context in which an incident of child-on-child abuse occurred so that the School can **learn lessons** and **address and structural and/or cultural issues at the School.**

12. Confidentiality and sharing information

The golden rules for sharing information (including personal information)

- Protecting a child from harm takes priority over protecting their privacy. The Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation helps information sharing.
- You do not need consent to share personal information about a child if they are at risk,
- Wherever it is practicable and safe to do so, engage with the child and their parents and explain who you intend to share information with, what information you will share and why.
- Seek advice promptly (from the DSL or the Data Protection Lead) if you are uncertain about whether you can share information.
- Only share information that is relevant and accurate.
- Record your reasons for sharing (or deciding not to share) information.

Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners 2024.

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12.1 Confidentiality

12.1 Confidentiality

If a member of staff speaks to a child about a suspected case of child-on-child abuse, the member of staff should never promise confidentiality as it is very likely that it will be in the best interest of the child to inform their parents (which would be the usual approach, unless this would put the child at greater risk) and/or seek advice and guidance from others in order to provide support and engage appropriate agencies.

12.2 What information to share and who to share it with

The member of staff should discuss with the DSL (with the Data Protection Lead, if appropriate) whether (and what) information should be shared. The School will consider carefully, in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies (where they are involved), how to share the information.

12.3 Consent

A child who is suspected to have suffered abuse may ask the school not to tell anyone about abuse, particularly in the cases of sexual violence or sexual harassment. However, consent is not required for sharing data in a safeguarding context and data protection law allows members of staff to share information when required to identify children at risk of harm and to safeguard them.

In an emergency staff should not hesitate to share information to safeguard a child. The DSL or DDSL will have to balance the child's wishes against their duty to protect child who has allegedly been subjected to abuse and other children.

12.4 Recording decisions

The School will keep a record of the decision-making process for sharing information and 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

13. Resources

Topical Safeguarding information from Bristol Safeguarding in Education Team:

- **Anti-bullying practice:** Anti-Bullying Alliance's 3 step Response to Bullying Framework - Guidance to help educators develop a consistent, reflective and more effective approach to responding to bullying incidence in schools and other settings.
- Preventing and tackling bullying (2013; Updated 2017) - Guidance for schools on preventing and responding to bullying.

- The Anti-Bullying Alliance website holds a lot of free resources for education settings. Bristol is an All Together Local Authority

Sexual Violence and Sexual harassment:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 Part Five: Child-On-Child sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- Sexting in schools and colleges (2016) - Guidance for schools and colleges on responding in instances of 'sexting'.

Local Guidance:

- Be Safe is a multi-agency partnership service working with children and young people with problematic/harmful sexual behaviour in Bristol. Be Safe offers holistic assessment and therapeutic intervention services informed by strength based, systemic, cognitive behavioural therapy, resolutions, relapse prevention and attachment based approaches. Click here to visit their website.

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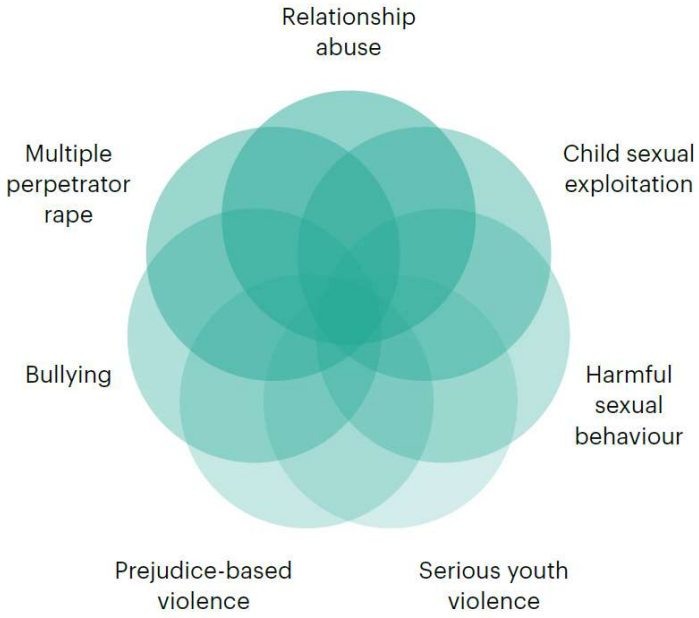
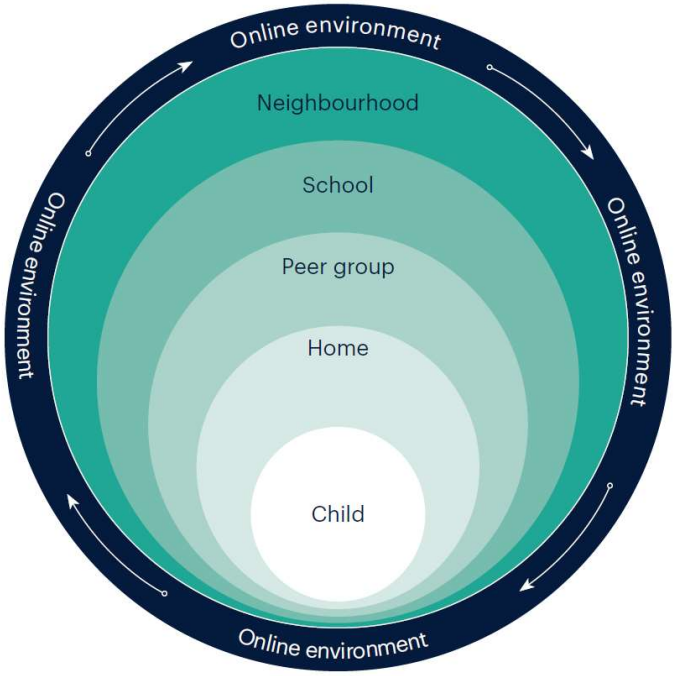
Appendix 1

Fig.1 - Holistic account of child-on-child abuse:



This diagram was developed from Firmin's holistic account of child-on-child abuse: Firmin C., and Curtis G., Ms Understood Partnership, *Practitioner Briefing #1: What is peer-on-peer abuse? (*2015): http://www.msunderstood.org.uk/assets/templates/msunderstood/style/documents/MSUPB01.pdf

Fig.2 – Contextual circles of adolescent vulnerability



This diagram is drawn from Firmin's Contextual Circles of Adolescent Vulnerability. Firmin, C., Abuse Between Young People: A Contextual Account, 2017. Oxon: Routledge

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Fig.3 – Sexual behaviours continuum model

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
• Developmentally expected • Socially acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• 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	• 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	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour • Sadism

Brook, Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool: https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/the-sexual-behaviourstraffic-light-tool and please also see the NSPCC's, Research in Practice's and Professor Simon Hackett's harmful sexual behaviour framework, 2019, page 28: https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/researchresources/2019/harmful-sexual-behaviour- framework/

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Appendix 2 – Procedure to follow when sexual violence or harassment is reported

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PART FOUR: RESPONSE TO REPORTS

Summary of responses

REPORT RECEIVED
(from the victim or third-party)
[Onsite, offsite or online]

Definitions

Sexual Violence
Rape
Assault by penetration
Sexual assault

Sexual Harassment
Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, including sexual remarks, sexual taunts, physical behaviour or online sexual harassment

Victim reassured

- taken seriously and kept safe
- confidentiality not promised
- listen to victim, non-judgementally
- record the disclosure (facts as reported)
- two staff present (one being the DSL, or reported to DSL as soon as possible)
- victim sensitively informed about referral to other agencies
- if victim does not give consent to share, staff may still lawfully share in order to protect child from harm and to promote the welfare of children (see 'Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment' paragraph 43)
- parents of victim informed

Anonymity

Note that in cases of sexual violence there is legal protection of the victim's identity. Remember that this also includes sharing on social media and discussion amongst pupils in the school.

Record-keeping

Remember, to record all concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions.

Considerations

(Sexual Violence, Sexual Harassment and Harmful Sexual Behaviours)
Immediately: Consider how to support the victim and the alleged perpetrator

- wishes of the victim
- nature of the alleged incident
- ages of the children
- development stage of the child
- any power imbalance
- one-off, or part of a pattern of behaviour
- any ongoing risks
- other related issues and wider context

MANAGE INTERNALLY

One-off incidents which the school believes that the child(ren) are not in need of early help or statutory intervention, which would be appropriate to deal with internally under the school's behaviour policy or anti-bullying policy.

EARLY HELP

Non-violent Harmful Sexual Behaviours
(see Harmful Sexual Behaviours Framework (NSPCC) and the Brook Traffic Light Tool)

REFER TO SOCIAL CARE

All incidents where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm or is in immediate danger.

Social Care staff will decide next steps. Be ready to escalate if necessary.

REFER TO POLICE

All incidents of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault.

Discuss next steps with police, for example, disclosing information to other staff, informing alleged perpetrator and their parents.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Case-by-case basis

RISK ASSESSMENT

Immediately

Do not wait for outcome of referral before protecting victim.

Emphasis on victim being able to continue normal routines.

Alleged perpetrator removed from any classes with victim (also consider shared spaces and journey to/from school)
[Not a judgement of guilt]

SAFEGUARD AND SUPPORT VICTIM AND (ALLEGED) PERPETRATOR

(see separate page)

SAFEGUARD AND SUPPORT VICTIM AND (ALLEGED) PERPETRATOR

(see separate page)

DISCIPLINARY MEASURES TAKEN

(see school's Behaviour Policy/Anti-bullying Policy)

DISCIPLINARY MEASURES TAKEN

(may be undertaken based on balance of probabilities, unless prejudicial or unreasonable)

Ensure actions do not jepordise the investigation
School to work closely with police and/or other agencies

CRIMINAL PROCESS ENDS

- **Conviction or Caution**: follow behaviour policy, consider Permanent Exclusion. If pupil remains in school, make clear expectations; keep victim and perpetrator apart. Consider victim's wishes.
- **Not Guilty**: Support victim and alleged perpetrator
- **No Further Action**: Support victim and alleged perpetrator

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Source:
Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children in schools and colleges (DfE, 2018)

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Appendix 3 – Further Resources - Educating staff, children, and parents

Disrespect Nobody Home Office Campaign - https://www.disrespectnobody.co.uk/

Serious Youth Violence – Home Office 'This is abuse campaign for schools' - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/410010/2015-03-08_This_is_Abuse_campaign_summary_report__2_.pdf

http://www.childnet.com/ufiles/Cyberbullyingguidance2.pdf

Fritz, D. and Firmin, C., 2016 Learning Project 1: Evidencing peer-on-peer abuse in educational Settings https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/assets/documents/Learning-Project-1-Briefing.pdf

AVA Prevention Platform - http://www.preventionplatform.co.uk/
Has produced guidance for schools on how to develop students' understanding and skills to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG)

Tender - http://tender.org.uk/
Works with schools providing educational programmes for children and staff training, aimed at preventing domestic abuse and sexual violence and promoting healthy relationships based on equality and respect

Childnet - http://www.childnet.com/ufiles/Cyberbullyingguidance2.pdf
Provides cyber bullying guidance -https://www.childnet.com/resources/pshe-toolkit

Provides guidance for children and their parents on the nuanced features of live streaming and the specific risks children can face - https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals/resources/live-streaming/

Digital Awareness UK - https://www.digitalawarenessuk.com/

Provides digital awareness training to educators, parents and students and has produced video resources for students and parents, in collaboration with the Girls Day School Trust

The NSPCC – *has produced a range of resources aimed at educating children, staff, and parents about child-on-child abuse. This includes (but is not limited to):*

PANTS (The Underwear Rule) resources for parents, and staff - https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule/

Speak Out Stay Safe programme of assemblies and workshops which teaches children to speak out if they are worried https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/working-with-schools/speak-out-stay-safe-service/

Share aware campaign https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/