Child on Child Abuse Policy

March 2025

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1 Introduction

1.1 This policy details the school's approach to dealing with abusive and challenging behaviours between children and their peers and outlines preventative strategies and responses to such behaviours. The policy is used in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024*.

2 Abusive and harmful behaviour

2.1 Children may be harmful to one another in several ways which would be classified as child-on-child abuse. This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- *Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).*
- *Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse').*
- *Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse).*
- *Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence).*
- *Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.*
- *Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.*
- *Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery).*
- *Upskirting which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm.*
- *Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).*

2.2 Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual, and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

2.3 Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'.

3 Expected action taken by all staff

3.1 As with all safeguarding concerns all staff are expected to follow the school's policy and procedure. All staff should act in the best interests of the child. Immediate consideration

should be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator, as well as any other pupils that are involved or impacted.

3.2   In the case of sexualised behaviours, we will use the Sexual Behaviour Traffic Light Tool, which uses a traffic light system to categorise the sexual behaviours of children and is designed to help professionals:

- *Make decisions about safeguarding children*
- *Assess and respond appropriately to sexual behaviour in children*
- *Understand healthy sexual development and distinguish it from harmful behaviour*

https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/concerned-about-a-child-or-young-persons-sexual-behaviour/how-to-tell-if-a-childs-sexual-behaviour-is-age-appropriate/

By categorising sexual behaviours as green, amber or red, professionals across different agencies can work to the same standardised criteria when making decisions and can protect children with a unified approach.

4   The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

4.1   The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed of any incidents as soon as possible so they can make decisions around next steps. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

'It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe' KCSIE 2024, Pg. 112.

4.2   **Contact MASH.** If the information that you have available to you at any point indicates that a child may be at risk of significant harm or has suffered significant harm, then you must make a safeguarding referral to the MASH immediately (where a crime/potential crime has been committed the police should also be notified).

If social care and the police intend to pursue this further, they may ask to interview the children in school, or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to also. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

It may also be that social care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case you may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, you agree with the decision, you may then be required to inform parents.

4.3   **Contact LCSS.** Consideration should be given to contacting the Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS) for contact details) and carrying out a no names consultation for advice and support.

4.4 **Begin to Risk Assess.** At this point the Designated Safeguarding Lead must consider intent. Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for one child to be able to harm another? We must include all risk factors and identify what we can put in place to mitigate and lower the risk.

4.5 **Inform parents and guardians.** *Please note when referring to parents this applies to parents of victim and alleged perpetrator.* If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care you have agreement to inform parents/guardians or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then you need to inform the parents/guardians within the timeframe agreed. If other services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents.

The best way to inform parents is face to face. Although this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a child may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

4.6 If a child is deemed to be *'Gillick Competent'* following the *'Fraser'* guidelines and does not wish you to share the information with parents, then the school must consider this (unless this has occurred through significant harm in which case a criminal/social care case is likely or the child is under the age of 13).

https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/gillick-competency-and- fraser-guidelines/

4.7 In all circumstances where risk of harm to the child is evident, then the Designated Safeguarding Lead will encourage the child to share the information with their parents and support them to do this.

4.8 If the child does not give consent, the school can evidence that they are acting in the best interests of the child. The evidence and justification for this decision would need to be clearly documented to ensure that we are not actively breaching the rights and choices of the child. This would apply to parents of all children that are involved.

5 Points to consider when investigating an incident

5.1 **What is the age of the children involved?** How old are the children involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of five who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration. However, this should not be overlooked if other factors of concern are present (see following).

5.2 **Where did the incident or incidents take place?** Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so, was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this area?

5.3 **What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?** Can each of the children give the same explanation of the incident? What is the effect on the children involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case is it regular and repetitive? Does one child's version differ from another's and if so, why?

5.4 **What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?** Do the children know/understand what they are doing? e.g., do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and what constitutes inappropriate touching? Could the child's behaviour have been prompted by something they may have heard or been learning about? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived?

5.5 **Does the child understand the impact of their behaviour on the other person?** In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If you are concerned or unsure as to whether there is any risk involved, please seek advice from the MASH or the Locality and Community Support Service.

5.6 **Patterns of behaviour.** Has the behaviour been repeated by or to an individual on more than one occasion? Has the behaviour persisted after it has already been discussed or dealt with?

6   Next Steps

6.1 **For the children involved**. Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to use this information to ensure that future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved. Consider whether a restorative approach with all the children involved children is appropriate. *https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/access-learning/restorative-practice*

6.2 **For children who have been harmed**. The level of support required depends on the individual child. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends. It is important that children are monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, children may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with children or restorative work with all those involved may be required.

6.3 **For a whole class or year group.** If the child 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. It may be that through the continued curriculum

certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently, e.g. a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse, etc.

6.4 **For children who have displayed harmful behaviour**. It is important to understand why the child has behaved in such a way. It may be that the child 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. Support from identified services may be necessary through an Early Help referral and the child may require additional support from family members.

Please note: if a referral has been made social care and police must make decisions before schools take any actions.

6.5 Once the support required to meet the child's needs has been put in place, it is important that the child understands the impact of their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g., making amends with the child they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour, it may be a requirement for the child to engage in one-to-one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth justice service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that the child cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the school will need to be provide the child with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

6.6 Following the conclusion of any investigation, a child's behaviour may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the child and the risks towards others are measured by all those agencies involved including the child and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the child or protective strategies if the child feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

6.7 Sonning Common Primary School may also choose a consequence such as external exclusion or internal/external, fixed-term suspension for a period to allow the child to reflect on their behaviour this is to be in line with our school's Behaviour Policy.

6.8 **After care.** It is important that following the incident, the children 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 children do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g., self-harm). In which case, regular reviews with the children following the incident(s) are imperative.

7 Preventative Strategies for Schools and Settings

7.1 At Sonning Common Primary School, we develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent peer on peer abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way, through our PSHE scheme of work.

7.2 Most importantly is the recognition that peer on peer abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. It is important to continue to recognise and manage risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting children to talk about issues with staff.

7.3 This is supported by ensuring that Sonning Common Primary School is an open environment where children feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This is strengthened through our strong and positive PHSE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour that gives our children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another.

7.4 To enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure the whole workforce feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of children, including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, whole staff training, CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to children in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice is required. It is incredibly important that staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that staff consider each issue and everyone before acting. If staff minimise the concerns raised, it may result in a child seeking no further help or advice.

7.5 It is important that signposting is available to children if they do not feel confident raising an issue with staff. It is useful to have a resource board with support services on a wide range of issues so that children can seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to children about specific issues to prevent peer on peer abuse.

8 References and useful links

- *Whatis.com* http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/cyberbullying
- *'This is abuse' campaign* 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
- *Department for Education* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014224/Sexual_violence_and_sexual_harassment_between_children_in_schools_and_colleges.pdf

- ***Keeping Children Safe In Education 2021***
  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1021914/KCSIE_2021_September_guidance.pdf

9   Contacts

Name	Phone number	URL or email address
MASH	**0345 050 7666**	http://www.oscb.org.uk/concerned-about-a- child/
Out Of Hours Emergency Duty Team	**0800 833 408**	
LCSS North	**0345 2412703**	LCSS.North@oxfordshire.gov.uk
LCSS Central	**0345 2412705**	LCSS.Central@oxfordshire.gov.uk
LCSS South	**0345 2412608**	LCSS.South@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Designated Officer (LADO)	**01865 810603**	Lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Kingfisher Team (CSE)	**01865 309196**	
Police:	**999**	
Emergency Non-emergency	**101**	
OSCB		oscb.oxfordshire.gov.uk
Childline	**0800 1111**	
Forensic CAHMS	**01865 902613**	https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/refer/
CAHBS	**01865 902613**	https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/refer/

10   Dissemination

10.1   The Policy is available on the school web site and a paper copy can be obtained from the main school admin office on request.

11   Reviewing the Policy

11.1   This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head teacher and monitored by the Chair of Governors with changes made to ensure that the Policy is relevant and up to date.

12 Appendix 1: Types of abuse

12.1 This appendix gives more detailed information on the types of abuse that may occur in an educational setting.

12.2 There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers 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.

12.3 **Physical abuse (e.g., biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling, etc.)**

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, 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 child has engaged in such behaviour, including accidently before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

12.4 **Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse (e.g., inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault, etc.)**

Sexually harmful behaviour from children is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. 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 well as the child it is aimed at. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

12.5 **Sexual violence and 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. This can happen both inside and outside of school/college.

For the purposes of the DfE advice, sexual violence refers to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, including rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (described in the guidance and in KCSiE). It is important that schools and colleges are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way.

Sexual harassment means 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school. The references regarding sexual harassment are 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 and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature.*
- *online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:*
- *non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and videos.*
- *sexualised online bullying.*
- *unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media.*
- *sexual exploitation; coercion and threats; and*
- *upskirting.*

12.6 Bullying (physical, name calling, homophobic, etc.)

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both children who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- *An imbalance of power: Children who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.*
- *Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.*

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason, e.g., size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

12.7 Cyber bullying

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and is also supported by the Communications Act 2003.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of children under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support children may require in these instances, we will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

12.8 **Youth Produced Sexual Imagery (Sexting)**

Youth produced sexual imagery (Sexting) is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference.

However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, children are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

12.9 **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 several different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies.

The idea behind this practice is that it 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.

12.10 **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 – in particular, prejudices to do with 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 (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

12.11 **Teenage relationship abuse**

Teenage relationship abuse is defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner.