

Garden Suburb Infant School

Child-on-Child Abuse Procedure

This document must be read in conjunction with the school's "Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy" and "Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy"

1. Statement of intent

Garden Suburb Infant School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child, both inside and outside of the school premises, and is aware that abuse against children can be inflicted by other children. We implement a whole-school preventative approach to managing child-on-child abuse, ensuring that the wellbeing of children is at the forefront of all action taken.

This document sets out a clear and consistent framework for delivering this promise, in line with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

It will be achieved by:

- Creating a culture of mutual respect amongst all of our children.
- Teaching children about behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable.
- Identifying and making provision for any child that has been subject to abuse.
- Ensuring that members of the governing body, the headteacher and staff members understand their responsibilities under safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, are alert to the signs of child-on-child abuse, and know to refer concerns to the DSL.
- Ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are transparent, clear and easy to understand for staff, children and parents.

The DSL is Miss Sarah Sands (Headteacher).

In the absence of the DSL, child protection matters will be dealt with by the deputy DSL, Miss Sarah Jowsey (Deputy Head).

Mrs Biljana Elia (SENCo) is trained as a DSL, and assists in these matters.

We will ensure the child's wishes and feelings are considered when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems will be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, any system and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.

We ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to the impact this can have on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

2. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- DfE (2018) 'Working together to safeguard children'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'

The policy also has regard to the following non-statutory guidance:

- DfE (2015) 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'
- DfE (2018) 'Information sharing'
- DfE (2021) 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges'
- DfE (2020) 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'
- National Police Chief's Council (2020) 'When to call the police: guidance for schools and colleges'

This procedure supports the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy and Anti-bullying Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

3. Definitions

"Child-on-child abuse" is defined, for the purposes of this document, as any form of abuse inflicted by one child or a group of children, i.e. individuals under the age of 18, against another child or group of children. This policy covers child-on-child abuse both in and outside of school and both in person and online.

"Harmful sexual behaviour" is defined as any sexual behaviour which:

- Does not observe and respect any individuals on the receiving end of the behaviour, e.g. touching someone without their consent.
- Is inappropriate for the age or stage of development of the pupil.
- Is problematic, abusive or violent.

See APPENDIX ONE for information regarding accepted and problematic sexual behaviours, for children in the age group in our school.

4. Purpose of This Document:

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in several ways which would be classified as child-on-child abuse. The purpose of this document is to explore the different forms of child-on-child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

5. Introduction to abuse and harmful behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen to children in schools, and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, 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. Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'.

Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between children and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

- **Physical abuse**

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 young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally, before considering the action to be undertaken.

- **Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse**

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

- **Bullying**

Many kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying, and bullying can be related to almost anything. Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:

- Verbally
- Physically
- Emotionally
- Online (cyberbullying)

Bullying will generally be handled in line with the Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policy; however, particularly severe instances will be handled in line with this policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

- **Discriminatory Behaviour**

This 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 protected characteristics, e.g. 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).

6. Expected action taken from all staff

The school will promote respectful interactions amongst pupils, and all staff will model appropriate and respectful behaviour. Staff will take care to avoid normalising harmful behaviour, particularly harmful sexual behaviour, e.g. by refraining from the use of phrases such as ‘boys will be boys’ or describing such behaviour as ‘just having a laugh’ or ‘part of growing up’, as these phrases can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and normalised abuse.

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and initiator of the harm, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm.

It is important to deal with a situation of child abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred, as soon after the child(ren) may have forgotten. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved.

In all cases of child on child abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Gather the Facts

Speak to all staff who were present and children dependant on age and understanding, using consistent language and open questions.

The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the young people to tell you what happened. Only interrupt the young person from this to gain clarity with open questions, ‘where, when, why, who’. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?):

- Track evidence through observations, Behaviour Report Sheets and CCTV (outside the building).
- Consider the Intent (begin to Risk Assess)
- Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?
- From the Behaviour Report sheet, can you define a trigger?
- Are staff consistent with behaviour management?
- Are all informed of the circumstances and required amount of supervision?
- Are the parents working together with the school on using the same strategies? And are the parents consistent at home?
- Decide on your next course of action

If from the information that you gather you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately. If this is the case, once social care has been contacted and made a decision on what will happen next then you will be informed on your next steps.

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 left to inform parents.

7. Informing parents

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care you have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then you need to inform the parents as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information will 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 young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

8. Points to consider:

What is the age of the children involved?

- How old are the young people involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however, should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following)

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?

What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?

- Can each of the young people give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one young person different from another and why?

What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?

- Do the young people know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the young person's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the young person have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

Repetition

- Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and apparently resolved?

In dealing with an incident of this nature, the answers are not always clear cut. If you are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, please seek advice from Children's Services Social Care.

9. Next Steps

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

For the child who has displayed harmful behaviour, it is important to find out why they have behaved in such a way. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through a CAF/early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the child has been met, it is important that they receive a consequence for 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.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation, the behaviour that the child has displayed 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 they feel at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

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.

10. Preventative Strategies

It is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of child on child abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way.

School culture

The school prioritises cultivating a safe and respectful environment amongst children and ensures that all children are aware that the school adopts a **zero-tolerance stance** on child-on-child abuse of any kind.

The school promotes respectful interactions amongst children, and all staff model appropriate and respectful behaviour. Staff will take care to avoid normalising harmful behaviour, particularly harmful sexual behaviour, e.g. by refraining from the use of phrases such as 'boys will be boys' or describing such behaviour as 'just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up'.

The school will ensure that wider societal factors that exacerbate the problem of child-on-child abuse are reflected in its approach to creating a preventative culture. This means that individuals who are more likely to be abused, e.g. girls or LGBTQ+ pupils, or who are at increased risk of acting as a perpetrator in abusive situations, e.g. due to abusive home situations or anger management issues, are given additional support from an early stage.

The school manages all early help and intervention for pupils showing early signs of harmful behaviour, or early signs of being the victim of harmful behaviour, in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Curriculum

The school maintains the position that education surrounding respectful and healthy attitudes and behaviour towards others is the best way to combat child-on-child abuse in the school. All staff, not just teaching staff, are responsible for passing this knowledge on to pupils.

Relevant curriculum areas are:

- Personal, Social, Health and Economics (PSHE)
- Relationships and Health
- Science (Naming body parts)
- Computing (Internet Safety)

In order to prevent child-on-child abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, the school will educate children about abuse, its forms and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

The school will also ensure that children are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Such content will be age and stage of development specific, and tackle issues such as the following:

- Healthy relationships
- Respectful behaviour
- Stereotyping and equality
- LGBTQ+ identities and relationships
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong
- Addressing cultures of sexual harassment

The children are taught how to raise concerns and make a report, including concerns about their friends or peers. They are taught to identify the trusted adults they can talk to if they need help.

The curriculum will ensure that pupils of all ages are taught about and understand the concept of consent and its importance in an age-appropriate way.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the DSL and the headteacher. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme. The next scheduled review date for this policy is January 2024.

APPENDIX ONE

Understand and Respond to Children's Sexual Behaviour (5 – 11)

Children pass through different stages of development as they grow. Each child is an individual and will develop in their own way. But there is a generally accepted range of behaviours linked to a child's age and stage of development.

Children in this age group continue to seek information and understanding about themselves and the world around them through play. They are often interested in pregnancy, birth, gender and differences between gender, which can form part of healthy and developmentally expected sexual exploration.

As children grow through their early years and develop into later childhood, they continue to pass through different stages of development. We know that children remain individual and unique throughout their whole childhood and there is a wide range of generally accepted and expected behaviours within this age group.

Brook Advisory have devised a traffic light system, which is used by agencies to support understanding of accepted and expected behaviours.

Green category behaviour in children aged 5-11

These are natural and expected behaviours. This doesn't mean that you would want these behaviours to continue, but they do provide an opportunity to talk, teach, explain about what is appropriate:

- Increased sense of privacy about their body
- Body touching and holding own genitals
- Masturbation, usually with awareness of privacy
- Curiosity about other children's genitals involving looking at and/ or touching the bodies of familiar children
- Curiosity about sexuality e.g. questions about babies, gender, relationships, sexual activity
- Telling stories or asking questions using swear words, 'toilet' words or names for private parts
- Use of mobile phones and Internet in relationships with known peers

Amber category behaviour in children aged 5-11

These can be of concern and have the potential to be outside safe and healthy behaviours if they persist. They require a response from a protective adult, extra support and close monitoring:

- Self masturbation in preference to other activities, whether in private or in public or with peers, and/or causing self injury
- Explicit talk, art or play of sexual nature
- Persistent questions about sexuality despite being answered
- Persistent nudity and/or exposing private parts in presence of others
- Persistently watching or following others to look at or touch them
- Pulling other children's pants down or skirts up against their will
- Persistently mimicking sexual flirting behaviour too advanced for age, with other children or adults
- Touching genitals/private parts of animals
- Covert/secret use of mobile phone and Internet with known and unknown people which may include giving out identifying details
- Attempts to do any of the above in secret

Red category behaviour in children aged 5-11

These are outside healthy and safe behaviours. These behaviours can signal a need for immediate protection and support from a childcare professional, e.g. health visitor, GP or social worker:

- Compulsive masturbation to the point of self harm or seeking an audience
- Disclosure of sexual abuse
- Persistent bullying involving sexual aggression
- Simulation of, or participation in, sexual activities, including sexual behaviour with younger or less able children, e.g. oral sex, sexual intercourse
- Accessing the rooms of sleeping children to touch or engage in sexual activity
- Presence of a sexually transmitted infection
- Any sexual activity with animals
- Use of mobile phones and Internet for sending or receiving sexual images

The following website is a useful source of information, which uses the Traffic Light System to help adults understand the behaviours which are expected and acceptable at different ages:

<https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/traffic-light-tools.htm>

Responding to Children Who Display Sexualised Behaviour – NSPCC Guide.

It's important to be able to distinguish developmentally typical sexual behaviours from those that may be problematic or harmful, and make sure children get appropriate support. Always consider the child's holistic needs and safeguarding concerns alongside any sexualised behaviour and follow due procedures accordingly. The following guide is a tool to support objective decision making about a child or young person's sexual behaviour and does not replace professional judgement or policy and legislation:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/2685/responding-to-children-who-display-sexualised-behaviour-guide.pdf>