



WREKIN  
PREP

# Child on Child Abuse Policy

## September 2023

Last review: Sept 2023 (Mr A.Grant)

Date for next review: Sept 2024

# **Child-on-child Abuse Policy 2023**

## **Introduction**

The governors, senior leadership and management team, and all staff (which term shall apply to all volunteer staff members) at Old Hall (the School) are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the School.

In particular, we:

- believe that in order to protect children, all schools should (a) be aware of the nature and level of risk to which their pupils are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context; and (b) take a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse,
- regard the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure. We do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to child-on-child abuse in response to alleged incidents of it,
- recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and child-on-child abuse in the school setting, and,
- encourage parents to hold us to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers, they should inform the School so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

### **For these purposes, child-on-child abuse is:**

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

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

This policy is in line with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2022 and should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and e-Safety Policy.

**"All** staff should be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect understanding that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school/college, inside and outside of home and online. Exercising professional curiosity and knowing what to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse and neglect so that staff are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.

**All** school and college staff should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events and cannot be covered by one definition or one label alone. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another.” **KCSIE 2023**

## **What is Contextual Safeguarding?**

This policy encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach. Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to safeguarding children which:

- Recognises their experiences of significant harm in extra-familial contexts, and seeks to include these 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 on the internet) within which they may experience abuse; and
- 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 school, professionals could work with the school leadership and pupil body to challenge harmful, gendered school cultures, thus improving the pre-existing school environment.

## **Types of Abuse<sup>†</sup>**

At Old Hall all staff are trained to understand that children can abuse other children and we refer to this as child-on-child abuse. Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying);
- 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;
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm;
- sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery), and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

## **Purpose and Aim**

The School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse in the ways outlined later in this document (Preventative Strategies).

The School actively engages with TWSP in relation to child-on-child abuse, and works closely with, for example, children's social care, the police and other schools. The relationships the school has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the school is able to prevent, identify early, and appropriately handle cases of child-on-child abuse. The DSL (or deputy) will regularly review behaviour incident logs which can help to identify any changes in behaviour and/or concerning patterns or trends at an early stage.

The School recognises that any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to the strength of peer influence, especially during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers. We know that research suggests:

- child-on-child abuse may affect boys differently from girls (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators). However, all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously;
- children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers without SEND, and
- some children may be more likely to experience child-on-child abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs.

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<sup>†</sup> See Appendix for detailed descriptions of types of abuse.

## **Response to child-on-child abuse (including reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment)**

The School will undertake pre-planning, training for staff and implement the procedures in this policy to help us develop the foundation for a calm, considered and appropriate response to any reports.

The School will always reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. We will never give a victim the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor will we make a victim feel ashamed for making a report.

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay.

The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the member of staff who has reported it/them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected.

All staff, especially the DSL will give immediate consideration as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator (and any other children involved/impacted). If any of the children involved has SEND, the DSL will liaise with the SENCO to assist in the management of the report.

Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL will consider what urgent action can be taken, this may include seeking specialist help, such as advice from [The Internet Watch Foundation](#) and the police in preventing the images spreading further and removing the images from the internet.

The DSL will use their professional judgement to: (a) assess the nature and seriousness of the alleged behaviour, and (b) determine whether it is appropriate for the alleged behaviour to be to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required.

In borderline cases the DSL may consult with Family Connect, and/or other relevant agencies on a no-names basis (where possible) to determine the most appropriate response.

It is important to deal with situations quickly and sensitively. Prompt information gathering is important to avoid key points being forgotten. Sensitivity is needed - the word 'perpetrator' can create a blame culture and leave a pupil labelled. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with sensitive matters.

***All staff within school need to be prepared to deal with an issue of child-on-child abuse, following the approaches indicated below.***

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**o Gather the Facts**

Speak to all the young people involved separately to gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account. 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:

- What happened?
- Who observed the incident?
- What was seen?
- What was heard?
- Did anyone intervene?

**o Consider the Intent (Risk Assess)**

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another? Include your professional perspective in your report.

**o Decide on your next course of action**

The situation may be one that is covered within the school's formal policies. If so, follow the guidance within them. All concerns and allegations of child-on-child abuse must be reported to a member of the Safeguarding Team as soon as is practicable.

**o Action, follow-up and informing parents**

Actions should be appropriate and in line with the school's behaviour policy which includes a use of sanctions. It is important that situations are further monitored to ensure all pupils involved remain safe and protected. It will normally be appropriate to keep parents informed of how a matter has been resolved.

**o Further points to consider:**

- What is the age of the pupils involved?
- Is there any significant age difference between those involved?
- Where did the incident or incidents take place?
- Do all pupils give the same explanation of the incident?
- Do the pupils know/understand what they have been doing?
- Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived?
- Does the pupil have an understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?
- Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion?

## Serious Incidents

Where the DSL considers or suspects that the alleged behaviour in question might be abusive or violent or where the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question might otherwise require it, the DSL will contact Family Connect or the local social care team for the child and/or the police immediately and, in any event, within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of the alleged behaviour. The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the agency and agree on a course of action, which may include:

1. management internally;
2. early help;
3. referral to children's social care; and
4. reporting to the police.

The School will always carry out a written safety plan/risk assessment in respect of:

- any child who is alleged to have behaved in a way that is considered to be abusive or violent;
- any child who has reportedly been abused or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child, or
- any child who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child as deemed appropriate by the DSL.

It may be appropriate to contact children's social care and/or police to assist in carrying out a safety plan. The DSL may use and consider the <https://www.telfordsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk/site/index.php>

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

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

- always consider carefully, in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies (where they are involved), how to share information about the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the pupil(s) affected, their parents, staff, and other pupils and individuals;
- record the information that is necessary for the school and other relevant agencies (where they are involved) to respond to the concern(s) or allegation(s) and safeguard everyone involved;
- keep a record of the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including relevant authorities, and ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and to only use it for the agreed legal purpose, and
- be mindful of and act in accordance with its safeguarding and data protection duties.

The School will use the following guidance to assist in the managing of reports [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges: advice for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding leads.](#)

In relation to sexting, also known as youth produced sexual imagery, this school will where necessary consult with guidance produced by [The UK Council for Child Internet Safety \(UKCCIS\) Education Group Sexting in Schools and Colleges](#) and DfE guidance [Searching, screening and confiscation](#). The DSL (or deputy) will take the lead on these issues.

## **Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children**

The Old Hall community believes that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

The School understands that, although extremely unusual in Primary education on a national level, 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.

We recognise that children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable. We will ensure that **all** victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Staff are aware that some groups are potentially more at risk. We know that evidence shows girls, children with SEND and LGBTQ+ children are at greater risk.

The School will ensure that staff are aware that:

- sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and are not an inevitable part of growing up;
- tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys” is not acceptable, and
- behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts will be challenged and dealt with seriously and in a timely manner. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them and is not acceptable.

## **Supporting Pupils**

The support required by all pupils involved will depend on those young people. We will work to find the most appropriate forms of support for them. This support may include:

- One to one support via a mentor (in-house)
- Support via family and friends
- Early Help
- Support from external services (CAMHS, victim support etc)
- Input into relationship development.
- Therapeutic counselling

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group. For example a speaker on cyberbullying, relationship abuse, etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PHSEE certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.



## **Preventative Strategies**

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

- o Educating all governors, the senior leadership team, staff, pupils, and parents about this issue. This includes: training all governors, the senior leadership team, and staff on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify, and respond to it.

This includes:

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

Training will be carried out by way of biennial Safeguarding Awareness sessions with the Telford and Wrekin Education Safeguarding team, Online Safety workshops and, for governors in particular, through workshops run by the WOHT Safeguarding teams. Educating parents on these matters will be carried out by way of regular communications, the publishing of key policies and through the regular "Working with Parents" workshops.

- o Educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse, positive, responsible and safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts about consent, via PSHEE and the wider curriculum. For example, by reviewing literature in an English class which addresses bullying and its effect on mental health. Pupils are made aware what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse. They are regularly informed about the School's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse. Educating pupils about consent includes teaching them basic facts such as:
  - (i) a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity;
  - (ii) the age of consent is 16; and
  - (iii) sexual intercourse without consent is rape
- o Working with governors, the senior leadership team, and all staff, pupils and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the school community,
- o Creating conditions in which our pupils can aspire to, and realise, safe and healthy relationships fostering a whole-school culture:
  - which is founded on the idea that every member of our School community is responsible for building and maintaining safe and positive relationships, and helping to create a safe school environment in which violence and abuse are never acceptable, in which pupils are able to develop trusting relationships with staff, and in which staff understand, through regular discussion and training, the importance of these relationships in providing pupils with a sense of belonging, which could otherwise be sought in problematic contexts,
  - in which pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to,

- which:
  - (i) proactively identifies positive qualities in pupils;
  - (ii) nurtures these qualities;
  - (iii) teaches and encourages pupils to think about positive hopes for the future; and
  - (vi) supports pupils in developing small-scale goals that enable realistic ambitions, and
- responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately,
- ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the School's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who may be in need of additional support.

All staff will maintain vigilance and work together to ensure the School's approach is both pre-emptive of and responsive to incidents of child-on-child abuse, alleged or otherwise. The School will continue to monitor, consult, reflect and be ready to adapt and act where it finds weaknesses. Such an approach will ensure the safeguarding agenda at the School retains a high profile.

### **Links**

Internet Watch Foundation: <https://www.iwf.org.uk/>

Government advice for schools and colleges on how to prevent and respond to reports of sexual violence and harassment between children:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges>

The UK Council for Child Internet Safety guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

DfE guidance on searching, screening and confiscation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>

## APPENDIX - Types of Abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Other forms of abuse that may not necessarily be classed as child-on-child abuse are listed in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

**Physical Abuse:** 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 or sanction to be undertaken.

**Sexual Abuse:** inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, touching, assault etc. 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.

Although extremely rare among primary-aged children, staff recognise that sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of **any** age and sex.

**Sexual Violence:** when referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

- o **Rape:** A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
- o **Assault by Penetration:** A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
- o **Sexual Assault:** A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

**Sexual Harassment:** When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child on child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

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

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;
- sexual "jokes" or taunting;
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature, and
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:
  - o non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos;
  - o sexualised online bullying;
  - o unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media;

- o sexual exploitation; coercion and threats; and
- o upskirting.

**Bullying:** physical, name calling, spreading rumours, making threats. It may be connected to gender, religion, race, sexual orientation or even hair colour, etc. Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. Cyberbullying is the use of electronic media and instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites to harass, threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. Bullying can become criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 or the Communications Act 2003, Section 127.

**Sexting:** Sending/ receiving sexually explicit text, images or video. This includes sending nude or semi-nude selfies. Pressurising a child into sending nude pictures is a form of sexual abuse. Having possession of, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 is an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

### **Upskirting**

The Voyeurism (Offences) Act, which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019. The School recognises 'Upskirting' is where someone takes a picture under a person's clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.

**Initiation/Hazing:** a form of initiation ceremony used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a sports team etc. There are a number of 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.

**Prejudiced Behaviour:** 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).