



Riversdale Primary School

"A nurturing, ambitious and values led school."

Child-on-child Abuse Policy

Date: 27th September 2025

Review Date: 26th September 2026



The aim of this policy is to ensure all staff understand what child-on-child abuse is and the steps we can take to reduce the risk of it happening our school.

PURPOSE OF POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to explore some forms of child-on-child abuse. The policy also includes a planned and supportive response to the issues.

At Riversdale Primary School we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Anti-Bullying including Online Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Managing Allegations / Whistleblowing Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Online Safety Policy

WHAT IS CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE?

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- 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)
- Abuse in intimate relationships between peers (this is sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- Up skirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth-produced sexual imagery)
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals, which 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
- 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 – for example 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.

This is explained in Appendix A, paragraph 13 – 14 of [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSIE) p147.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LEGISLATION

This policy has been developed in accordance with the statutory safeguarding guidance and legislation that set out schools' responsibilities to protect children from all forms of abuse, including child-on-child (peer-on-peer) abuse. It reflects the legal duties under:

- **Children Act 1989 and 2004**, which place a duty on schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- **Education Act 2002** (Section 175/157), which requires schools and academies to decide to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education** (KCSIE, DfE 2025), which outlines schools' responsibilities to prevent, identify and respond appropriately to all forms of abuse, including those perpetrated by other children.
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children** (DfE, 2023), which sets out the inter-agency safeguarding arrangements to protect children from harm.
- **Sexual Offences Act 2003**, which clarifies offences relating to sexual violence and sexual harassment, including those committed by minors.
- **Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019**, which makes certain acts of upskirting a criminal offence.
- **Equality Act 2010**, which places a duty on schools to protect pupils from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

- **The Human Rights Act 1998**, which upholds the rights of all children to live free from abuse, harm, and degrading treatment.
- **DfE Guidance: Behaviour in Schools (2022)** and **Searching, Screening and Confiscation (2022)**, which provide advice on managing incidents and maintaining safe environments.

This policy should be read alongside the school's *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy*, and *Online Safety Policy*. Together, these ensure a coherent approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse in line with national expectations and local safeguarding partnership arrangements.

RESPONSIBILITY

Child-on-child abuse is referenced in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The sensitive nature and specific issues involved with child-on-child abuse necessitate separate policy guidance.

At Riversdale Primary School, we continue to 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 on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

Staff must consider the seriousness of the case and make a quick decision whether to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately before taking any further in-school actions.

The governing body and school leaders must ensure the child's wishes and feelings are considered when determining what action to take and what services to provide.

Systems are in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, all systems and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.'

THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD (DSL) AND THE DEPUTY DSL

The governing body ensures that an appropriate member of staff, from the senior leadership team, is appointed to the role of designated safeguarding lead.

The designated safeguarding lead takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety). This is explicit in the role holder's job description.

The designated safeguarding lead has the appropriate status and authority within the school or college to carry out the duties of the post.

The role of the designated safeguarding lead carries a significant level of responsibility, and they are given the additional time, funding, training, resources and support they need to carry out the role effectively. Their additional responsibilities include providing advice and support to other staff on child welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters, taking part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings, and/or supporting other staff to do so, and contributing to the assessment of children.

POINTS TO CONSIDER WITH REGARD TO CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE

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, 1-4-year-olds who are learning toileting skills may show an interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however, should not be overlooked.

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 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 understand 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 appropriately resolved?

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. Report all incidents and record using the school system - CPOMS.

For the young person who has been harmed

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one-to-one support via the school's learning 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; in which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people, or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on online bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of Relationships, Health and Wellbeing Education (a combination of RSE, PSHE & SMSC education) that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

If the young person 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 identify services to offer additional support.

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

It is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person 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 young person may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that the young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice, e.g. making amends with the young person 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 young person to engage in one-to-one work with a service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form

of criminal investigation ongoing, it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education elsewhere.

It may be that the behaviour that the young person 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 young person and the risks towards others are measured by all those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

The school may also choose a punishment as a consequence, such as exclusion or internal exclusion, for a period to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

After care

It is important that following the incident the young people 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 the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). For this reason, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

Child-on-Child abuse can and will occur on any site, even with the most robust policies and support processes. It is important to develop appropriate strategies to proactively prevent child-on-child abuse.

This school has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. There is a strong and positive Relationships, Health and Wellbeing curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. The school makes sure that 'support and report' signposting is available to young people.

Staff will not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. Staff will consider each issue and everyone before acting.

Young people are part of changing their circumstances and, through systems such as the school council and pupil voice, we encourage young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour'. We involve pupils in the positive ethos in school; one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

Child-on-child sexual abuse: what to do if a child makes a disclosure

Make sure you understand and follow our child protection policy and procedures for dealing with child-on-child sexual abuse. If you have any concerns about a child's welfare, act on them immediately – don't wait for a disclosure.

- ✓ Ask the child outright if they've been harmed and what the nature of the harm was
- ✓ Listen and reassure them that they will be supported and kept safe
- ✓ Reflect back, using their language
- ✓ Be mindful that some children may face additional barriers to disclosure because of their vulnerability, disability, gender, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation
- ✓ Remember that:
 - This may only be the first incident the child has reported
 - Trauma can impact memory, so the child may not be able to recall all of the details or timeline of the abuse
- ✓ Make a written record as soon as possible, stating only the facts
- ✓ Tell our designated safeguarding lead (DSL) urgently:
- ✓ Where appropriate, take action yourself:
 - If the child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, make a referral to children's social care
 - If an offence has been committed, report it to the police (even if the alleged perpetrator(s) is under 10). You can confiscate devices as evidence for the police, if the report includes an online element
 - Find out whether the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) share classes, premises or transport, and consider how to keep them a reasonable distance apart, including both before and after school

- ✗ Dismiss the incident as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'having a laugh'
- ✗ Ask leading questions
- ✗ Promise total confidentiality – explain who you will need to tell and why
- ✗ View photos or videos of a sexual nature
 - If you do so by accident or think you might need to in order to deal with the issue effectively, talk to our DSL
- ✗ Take notes while the child is talking, if at all possible
- ✗ Tell anyone about the disclosure unless they need to know in order to progress it

Key definitions

Child-on-child sexual abuse: when a child (anyone under the age of 18) commits an act of sexual violence or harassment against another child

Sexual violence: rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault (intentional sexual touching)

Sexual harassment: unwanted conduct of a sexual nature – such as sexual comments, sexual jokes or taunting, physical behaviour like interfering with clothes, or online harassment such as sexting

Upskirting: taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm

Sexual activity is an offence if:

- Person B (the victim) does not consent
- Person A (the perpetrator) does not reasonably believe that Person B consents

Someone consents if they:

- Agree by choice
- Have the freedom and capacity to choose