

# Stanton Community Primary School



*Nurture, Enjoy, Aspire, Achieve*

## Peer on Peer Abuse Policy and Procedure

### Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2018 states that 'All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that their child protection policy includes:

- procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse;
- how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with;
- clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other child affected by peer on peer abuse will be supported;
- a clear statement that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up";
  - recognition of the gendered nature of peer on peer abuse (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators), but that all peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously; and
  - the different forms peer on peer abuse can take, such as sexual violence and sexual harassment, physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm, sexting and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals.' (Page 23).

The document also states it is most important to ensure opportunities of seeking the voice of the child are heard, 'Governing bodies and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should 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.'

While it is recommended that Peer on Peer abuse is an integral part of the School Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse we have completed this separate policy.

At Stanton Community 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 impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

### **Purpose and Aim**

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as peer on peer abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of peer on peer abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

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

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- E-safety Policy

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount.

### **Definition**

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings 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'. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence. It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required. There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as bullying, sexual experimentation etc. This is a matter of professional judgment.

If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse: bullying, fighting and harassment between children are not generally seen as child protection issues. However, it may be appropriate to regard a young person's behaviour as abusive if:

- There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned; or
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or

- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged young person. If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

### **Prevention**

As a school we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:-

- Providing a developmentally appropriate PSHE, SMSC and British Values curriculum which develops pupils understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe;
- Having a robust e-safety programme which develops pupils knowledge, understanding and skills, to ensure personal safety and self-protection when using the internet and social networking;
- Having robust monitoring and filtering systems in place to ensure pupils are safe and act appropriately when using information technology in school;
- Having systems in place for any pupil to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued;
- Delivering targeted work on assertiveness and keeping safe to those pupils identified as being at risk;
  - Developing robust risk assessments and providing targeted work for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils.

### **Allegations against other pupils which are safeguarding issues**

Occasionally, allegations may be made against pupils by other young people in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include:

- Physical abuse;
- Emotional abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Bullying ;
- Cyber bullying;
- Sexting.

It should be considered as a safeguarding allegation against a pupil if some of the following features are present.

The allegation:-

- Is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger pupil or a more vulnerable pupil;
- Is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence;
- Raises risk factors for other pupils in the school;

- Indicates that other pupils may have been affected by this student;
- Indicates that young people outside the school may be affected by this student.

Examples of safeguarding issues against a pupil could include:

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

**Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual 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. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

**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 young people 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:** Young people 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.

### **Cyber bullying**

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram 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 under section 1 which states that 'Electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim, would be deemed to be criminal'. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that 'Electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour'. If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18, then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

### **Sexting**

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, young people need to be aware that they could be breaking the law as stated, as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003

### **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 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 /Gender based violence**

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).

### **Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Peer on Peer Abuse**

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern.

If there is a safeguarding concern the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be informed.

- A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances;
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead should contact Integrated Access and Referral Team for advice if required. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a referral where appropriate;
  - If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police may become involved;
  - Parents, of both the pupil/s being complained about and the alleged victim/s, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral;
  - The Designated Safeguarding Lead will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in the secure safeguarding records;
  - If the allegation highlights a potential risk to the safety, it may be appropriate to exclude the pupil being complained about for a period of time according to the school's behaviour policy and procedures;
  - In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan;
  - The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.

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