



Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

Date of last review:	September 2026	Date of next review:	September 2027
Author:	A Tickner	Owner:	
Type of policy:	Child on Child Abuse Policy	Approval:	Governance Committee

At St Edward's Catholic Primary School, our Child-on-Child Abuse Policy reflects our strong belief that all children have entitlement to a broad and balanced education and experiences in a caring and safe environment, which reflects the values and beliefs of our school.

All members of staff recognise that children can abuse other children; this is known as child-on-child abuse and may take place online, face-to-face, physically, verbally or through a combination of channels.

Staff will maintain an attitude of "it could happen here". Even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, staff will remain alert to the possibility that it may be taking place and not being reported.

We adopt a zero-tolerance approach to child-on-child abuse. We believe that abuse is abuse and it will never be tolerated or dismissed as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys"; this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, misogyny/misandry, and can create an unsafe environment for children and a culture that normalises abuse, which can prevent children from coming forward to report it.

We recognise that child-on-child abuse can take many forms, including but not 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 which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm, including where there is an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse.
- serious physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon.
- sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault, including where there is 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 making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (previously known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery), including where generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Upskirting (which is a criminal offence), 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, 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.

We recognise that harmful sexual behaviour exists on a continuum, from developmentally inappropriate or problematic sexual behaviour through to abusive behaviour and sexual violence.

Concerns will be considered in context, taking account of the age and stage of development of the children involved, any power imbalance, coercion, threats, exploitation, the nature of the behaviour, the impact on those affected, and any wider safeguarding risks.

All staff have a role to play in challenging inappropriate, harmful or abusive behaviours between children. Staff will be alert to factors which may increase risk or affect how children experience or report abuse, including age, developmental stage, sex, ability, SEND, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, power imbalance, peer group dynamics and wider contextual factors. Staff will be aware of the possibility that children may minimise, normalise or not recognise harmful behaviours, and that some behaviours may be facilitated, threatened, encouraged or shared online.

We recognise that for some (but not all) forms of child-on-child abuse, girls are more likely to be victims and boys are more likely to be perpetrators. However, all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable, will be taken seriously and will be responded to in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

We recognise that the law is in place to protect children rather than unnecessarily criminalise them. Where relevant, this

will be explained to pupils in an age and developmentally appropriate way which avoids alarming or distressing them, while making clear that harmful, abusive or non-consensual behaviour is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

We want children to feel confident to report abuse, knowing that their concerns will be treated seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. The Headteacher/Lead DSL will ensure reporting systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible. Children who report child-on-child abuse will be reassured that they are not creating a problem and will not be made to feel ashamed for sharing a concern.

We recognise that child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for all children involved. We will consider the safety, welfare and support needs of the child who has experienced harm, any other affected children, and the child alleged to have caused harm.

Any concerns or allegations relating to child-on-child abuse, whether on-site, off-site or online, will be recorded and reported to the DSL in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.

- The DSL will consider the concern in line with relevant policies and procedures, including behaviour, anti-bullying and child protection procedures.
- The DSL will consider the behaviour in context, including the child's age and stage of development, any SEND or communication needs, trauma or abuse history, power imbalance, coercion, intent, frequency, escalation and the impact on others.
- Concerns will be responded to, and where appropriate investigated under relevant procedures, while recognising the need to engage with multi-agency processes where safeguarding or child protection concerns are identified.
- Where concerns involve harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment or sexual violence, DSLs will respond in line with Part five of [KCSIE](#).
- Responses will always be child-centred, proportionate and based on the circumstances of the case.

When a concern of child-on-child abuse is reported, a DSL will consider whether an immediate risk and needs assessment is required. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may include:

- the wishes and feelings of the child who has been harmed
- the nature of the concern or alleged incident
- whether a crime may have been committed
- whether harmful sexual behaviour may have been displayed
- the ages and developmental stages of the children involved
- any power imbalance, coercion, intimidation or exploitation
- whether the concern appears to be a one-off incident or part of a pattern of behaviour
- any vulnerability, SEND or additional needs affecting the children involved
- any online elements or wider contextual factors
- any ongoing risks to the child who has been harmed, other children, staff or the wider school community
- whether the concern links to other safeguarding issues, such as child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, serious violence or abuse within intimate personal relationships between children.

The risk and needs assessment, where completed, will be recorded and kept under review. Actions will be taken to protect and support all children involved and to address any wider safeguarding risks within the school environment.

We will take appropriate safeguarding, pastoral and/or behaviour-related action in response to child-on-child abuse. However, where the concern indicates that a child may require Family Help, statutory support or protection, a DSL will make a Request for Support via the [Kent Children's Services Portal](#), in line with the [Kent Support Levels Guidance](#) and KSCMP procedures.

The school will normally inform parents/carers of the children involved in child-on-child abuse, unless doing so would place a child at risk of harm, place another person at risk, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, or undermine a police or statutory safeguarding response.

- Information shared with parents/carers will be relevant to their own child and shared in line with safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection requirements. The school will not share confidential information about other

children, including any safeguarding action, support or sanctions, unless there is a lawful and appropriate basis to do so.

Child-on-child abuse is preventable. Timely, evidence-based support can be key to preventing children from going on to commit abuse or violence. We will work to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse by creating a safe culture, promoting respectful relationships, providing appropriate curriculum opportunities, ensuring children know how to report concerns, and responding consistently to harmful behaviour.

- Specific approaches used at St Edward's Catholic Primary School include the implementation of a robust anti-bullying policy, providing an age appropriate PSHE and RSE curriculum, providing a range of enrichment activities like World Friendship Ambassadors and also, a range of reporting mechanisms, for example, worry boxes, speaking to members of adults wearing a red or white lanyard.

Children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported according to their needs.

- The children at St Edward's Catholic Primary School are supported through pastoral support, trusted adult support, emotional support, reasonable adjustments in their school day, working closely with parents/carers, curriculum responses, behaviour support, referrals to external agencies and arrangements to reduce contact or manage risk where appropriate.

Prevention

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

- Providing developmentally appropriate RHE/RE lessons which develop pupils understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe including assemblies and workshops delivered by NSPCC and the 'Pants Rule'
- Roll out the World Friendship Ambassador programme that teaches children to be champions at showing kindness, equity and belonging to their peers.
- Having robust online safety lessons which develops pupil 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 places 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
- Keeping up to date with the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance.

Allegations against other pupils which are safeguarding issues

Occasionally, allegations, that are of a safeguarding nature, may be made against pupils by other young people in the school. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, bullying, cyber bullying and 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 pupil
- Indicates that young people outside the school may be affected by this pupil

Procedures for dealing with allegations of child-on-child abuse

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another pupil, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern. If there is a safeguarding concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or DDSL should be informed. The DSL will follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy. All members of staff will regularly monitor pupils' behaviour and any changes in behaviour, appearance, use of/change in language which is inappropriate and their well-being. Records will be kept and monitored by the class teacher and regularly discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Headteacher.