



20 - Child on Child Abuse Policy

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Aims.....	3
Understanding child-on-child abuse.....	3
The context.....	4
Vulnerable groups.....	4
Responding to reported incidents of harmful sexual behaviour	4
The immediate response to a report	4
Risk assessment.....	5
Actions following a reported incident	5
Next steps and further actions	6
Manage internally.....	6
Reporting to the police	6
The end of the criminal process	6
Support for Children Affected by Sexual-Assault.....	7
Responding to reported incidents of physical abuse.....	8
Online behaviour	8
Prevention.....	8
Multi-agency working.....	9
Appendix 1 – Hackett continuum model of sexual behaviours	11
Appendix 2 – Brook Sexual BehavioursTraffic Light Tool	12

Introduction

As a school we recognise that children are vulnerable to, and capable of, abusing their peers. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. This includes verbal as well as physical abuse. Child on child abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as part of “banter” or “growing up”.

We are committed to a whole school approach, to ensure the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse within our school and beyond.

In cases where child on child abuse is identified we will follow our child protection procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation.

We recognise that child on child abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

- Child sexual exploitation
- Sexting or youth produced digital imagery
- Bullying
- Radicalisation
- Abuse in intimate relationships
- Children who display sexually harmful behaviour
- Gang association and serious violence (County Lines)
- Technology can be used by for bullying and other abusive behaviour

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school such as the Behaviour Policy, Anti-bullying Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

This policy concentrates on child-on-child abuse in the context of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Aims

The policy will:

- Set out our strategies for preventing, identifying, and managing child on child abuse.
- Take a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved, acknowledging that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable and may have been abused by peers, parents/carers or adults in the community.

Understanding child-on-child abuse

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex or can be a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

The impact of this behaviour on children can be very distressing and have an impact on academic achievement and emotional health & wellbeing.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence may also occur online and offline.

The context

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

In this policy, we recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour (Harmful Sexual Behaviour HSB).

We are adopting the NSPCC definition of HSB as:

"Sexual behaviours expressed by children...that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child...or adult."

Also useful is Simon Hackett's continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours (Appendix 1) and the Brook Traffic lights (Appendix 2).

Vulnerable groups

We recognise that all children can be at risk; however, we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable than others. This can include experience of abuse within their family; living with domestic violence; young people in care; children who go missing; children with additional needs (SEND and/or disabilities); children who identify or are perceived as LGBT; and race or religion (protected characteristics).

Whilst research tells us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers and girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools, this is not confined to girls.

Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviours such as antisocial behaviour. Boys report high levels of abuse in areas where they are affected by gangs. We recognise that both boys and girls experience peer on peer abuse, but they may do so in gendered ways.

Responding to reported incidents of harmful sexual behaviour

All reports of child-on-child abuse will be considered on a case-by-case basis with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or their Deputy. They will take a leading role, using their professional judgement and will be supported by other agencies such as social care or the police as required.

The immediate response to a report

- The school will take all reports seriously and will reassure the person affected by the behaviour that they will be supported and kept safe.
- All staff will be trained to manage a report.
- Staff will not promise confidentiality, as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Social Care). Staff will however only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it.
- A written report will be made as soon after the interview as possible, recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later.
- Where the report includes an online element the school will follow advice on searching, screening and confiscation. The staff will not view or forward images unless unavoidable and only if another member of staff (preferably the DSL) is present.
- The DSL will be informed as soon as possible.

Risk assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a Deputy) will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs assessment should consider:

- The person affected by the behaviour, especially their protection and support.
- The alleged perpetrator.
- All the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them.

Risk assessments will be recorded in writing, stored in the confidential file, and be kept under review.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a Deputy) will ensure they are engaging with the MASH.

Actions following a reported incident

Following an incident where allegations have been investigated and (on the balance of probability) it shown that the incident occurred, we will consider:

- The wishes of the person affected by the behaviour in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour.
- The ages of the children involved.
- The developmental stages of the children involved.
- Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the person affected by the behaviour have a disability or learning difficulty?
- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse.
- Are there ongoing risks to the person affected by the behaviour, other children, staff, and other related issues and wider context?

Children sharing a classroom

When the case is deemed serious enough to refer this matter to external agencies (the police and social services) and whilst the school establishes the facts of the case:

- The perpetrator will be removed from any classes they share with the person affected by the behaviour.
- Consideration will be given as to how best to keep the person affected by the behaviour and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport to and from the school.

These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator.

Next steps and further actions

Manage internally

1. In some cases of sexual harassment (for example one-off incidents) we may decide that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising the Behaviour or Anti-Bullying Policies and by providing pastoral support. This decision will be made based on the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All decisions and discussions around making these decisions will be recorded and stored in the pupil's confidential files.
2. In line with point 1 above, we may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.
3. Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to the MASH following locally agreed protocols.

Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or a Deputy, will be working alongside, and co-operating with, the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure that the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the person affected by the behaviour and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator, and any other children that require support.

Reporting to the police

Any report to the police will generally be made through the MASH. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or their Deputy) will follow local process for referrals.

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault is made, the starting point is that this will be passed on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.

Where a report has been made to the police the school will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They will also discuss the best way to protect the person affected by the behaviour and their anonymity.

Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the relevant agencies to support all children involved (especially potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought.

Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator, we will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions that the school take do not jeopardise the police investigation.

The end of the criminal process

If a child is convicted, or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the school will update its risk assessment & ensure relevant protections are in place for all children. We will consider any suitable action in light of our Behaviour Policy. If the perpetrator remains in school, we will be very clear as to our expectations regarding the perpetrator now that they have been convicted or cautioned. This could

include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions we think are reasonable and proportionate with regard to the perpetrator's timetable.

Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other pupils or students in the school. We will ensure all children involved are protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online).

Where cases are classified as "no further action" (NFA) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, we will continue to offer support to the person affected by the behaviour and the alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the person affected by the behaviour. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. We will continue to support all parties in this instance.

Support for Children Affected by Sexual-Assault

Support for people who have experienced sexual assault is available from a variety of agencies.

We will support the person who has experienced sexual assault to remain in school, but if they are unable to do so, we will enable them to continue their education elsewhere. This decision will be made only at the request of the child and their family.

If they are moved, we will ensure the new school is aware of the ongoing support they may need. The DSL will support this move.

Where there is a criminal investigation, the alleged perpetrator will be removed from any shared classes with the people affected by the behaviour, and we will also consider how best to keep them a reasonable distance apart on the school premises or on school transport. This is in the best interest of the children concerned and should not be perceived to be a judgement of guilt before any legal proceedings. We will work closely with the police at all times.

Where a criminal investigation into rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, we may take suitable action, if we have not already done so. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the people affected by the behaviour (and potentially other pupils or students).

Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, we may consider any suitable sanctions in light of the behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion.

Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school, the principle would be to continue keeping the people affected by the behaviour and perpetrator in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school premises. The nature of the conviction or caution, and the wishes of the people affected by the behaviour will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.

Reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment will, in some cases, not lead to a report to the police (for a variety of reasons). In some cases, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault or sexual harassment are reported to the police and the case is not progressed or are reported to the police and ultimately result in a not guilty verdict. None of this means the offence did not happen or that the people affected by the behaviour lied. The process will have affected both people affected by the behaviour and alleged perpetrator.

Appropriate support will be provided to both parties as required, and consideration given to potential contact as required on a case-by-case basis.

All of the above should be considered with the needs and wishes of the person affected by the behaviour at the heart of the process (supported by parents and carers as required). Any arrangements should be kept under review.

Responding to reported incidents of physical abuse

While a clear focus of child-on-child abuse is around sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be abusive.

These are equally not tolerated, and if it is believed that a crime has been committed, will be reported to the police.

The principles from the Anti-Bullying and Behaviour Policies will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any police investigation will need to take priority.

When dealing with other alleged behaviour, which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on aspects of Hackett's continuum (Appendix 1) to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, whether it:

- is socially acceptable
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time
- is socially acceptable within the peer group
- is problematic and concerning
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning
- involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour
- involves a misuse of power

Online behaviour

Many forms of child on child abuse have an element of online behaviour, including behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting.

Policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour can be found in the Child Protection Policy.

Prevention

As a school we actively seek to raise awareness of, and prevent all forms of child on child abuse by:

- Educating all Governors, staff, volunteers, and parents/carers about this issue. This will include training all Governors, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence, and effect of child on child abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes:
 - Contextual Safeguarding.
 - The identification and classification of specific behaviours.
 - 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 peer-on-peer abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing.

- Educating children about the nature and prevalence of child on child abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum.
- Pupils will be told 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. This will be done in an age-appropriate manner.
- Pupils will be regularly informed about the school's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child on child abuse.
- Engaging parents on this issue by:
 - Talking about it with parents, both in groups and one to one.
 - Asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the school address those risks.
 - Encouraging parents to hold the school to account on this issue.
- Ensuring that all child on child abuse issues are fed back to the school's safeguarding lead so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who may be in need of additional support. This is done by way of regular staff meetings at which all concerns about pupils (including child on child abuse issues) are discussed
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom)
- Working with Governors, all staff and volunteers, pupils and parents/carers to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the school community
- Creating conditions in which our pupils can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships
- Creating a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to
- Responding to cases of child on child abuse promptly and appropriately

Multi-agency working

The school actively engages with its local partners in relation to peer-on-peer abuse, and works closely with Nottinghamshire LSCB, Nottinghamshire MASH, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies, 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. They help the school:

- To develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in its local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist.
- To ensure that our pupils are able to access the range of services and support they need quickly.
- To support and help inform our local community's response to child-on-child abuse.
- To increase our awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in our local area, to enable us to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by our pupils.



The school actively refers concerns/allegations of peer-on-peer abuse where necessary to the MASH, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies.

Appendix 1 – Hackett continuum model of sexual behaviours

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
Developmentally expected Socially acceptable Consensual, mutual, reciprocal Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Problematic and concerning behaviours • Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected • No overt elements of victimisation • Consent issues may be unclear • May lack reciprocity or equal power • May include levels of compulsivity	• Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim • May include elements of expressive violence	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator • Sadism

[Understanding sexualised behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)



Appendix 2 – Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool

Behaviours: age 0 to 5

All green, amber and red behaviours require some form of attention and response. It is the level of intervention that will vary.

What is a green behaviour? Green behaviours reflect safe and healthy sexual development. They are displayed between children or young people of similar age or developmental ability. They are reflective of natural curiosity, experimentation, consensual activities and positive choices What can you do? Green behaviours provide opportunities to give positive feedback and additional information. Green behaviours • holding or playing with own genitals • attempting to touch or curiosity about other children's genitals • attempting to touch or curiosity about breasts, bottoms or genitals of adults • games e.g. mummies and daddies, • doctors and nurses • enjoying nakedness • interest in body parts and what they do • curiosity about the differences between boys and girls What is an amber behaviour? Amber behaviours have the potential to be outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be of potential concern due to age, or developmental differences. A potential concern due to activity type, frequency, duration or context in which they occur. What can you do? Amber behaviours signal the need to take notice and gather information to assess the appropriate action.	Amber behaviours • preoccupation with adult sexual behaviour • pulling other children's pants down/skirts up/trousers down against their will • talking about sex using adult slang • preoccupation with touching the genitals of other people • following others into toilets or changing rooms to look at them or touch them • talking about sexual activities seen on TV/online What is a red behaviour? Red behaviours are outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening and involving significant age, developmental, or power differences. They may pose a concern due to the activity type, frequency, duration, or the context in which they occur What can you do? Red behaviours indicate a need for immediate intervention and action. Red behaviours • persistently touching the genitals of other children • persistent attempts to touch the genitals of adults • simulation of sexual activity in play • sexual behaviour between young children involving penetration with objects • forcing other children to engage in sexual play
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Behaviours: age 5 to 9 and 9 to 13

All green, amber and red behaviours require some form of attention and response. It is the level of intervention that will vary.

What is a green behaviour?

Green behaviours reflect safe and healthy sexual development. They are displayed between children or young people of similar age or developmental ability and reflective of natural curiosity, experimentation, consensual activities and positive choices

What can you do?

Green behaviours provide opportunities to give positive feedback and additional information.

Green behaviours 5-9

- feeling and touching own genitals
- curiosity about other children's genitals
- curiosity about sex and relationships, e.g. differences between boys and girls, how sex happens, where babies come from, same-sex relationships
- sense of privacy about bodies
- telling stories or asking questions using swear and slang words for parts of the body

Green behaviours 9-13

- solitary masturbation
- use of sexual language including swear and slang words
- having girl/boyfriends who are of the same, opposite or any gender
- interest in popular culture, e.g. fashion, music, media, online games, chatting online
- need for privacy
- consensual kissing, hugging, holding hands with peers

What is an amber behaviour?

Amber behaviours have the potential to be outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be of potential concern due to age, or developmental differences. A potential concern due to activity type, frequency, duration, or context in which they occur.

What can you do?

Amber behaviours signal the need to take notice and gather information to assess the appropriate action.

Amber behaviours 5-9

- questions about sexual activity which persist or are repeated frequently, despite an answer having been given
- sexual bullying face to face or through texts or online messaging
- engaging in mutual masturbation
- persistent sexual images and ideas in talk, play and art
- use of adult slang language to discuss sex

Amber behaviours 9-13

- uncharacteristic and risk-related behaviour, e.g. sudden and/or pro-vocative changes in dress, withdrawal from friends, mixing with new or older people, having more or less money than usual, going missing
- verbal, physical or cyber/virtual sexual bullying involving sexual aggression
- LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) targeted bullying
- exhibitionism, e.g. flashing or mooning
- giving out contact details online
- viewing pornographic material
- worrying about being pregnant or having STIs

What is a red behaviour?

Red behaviours are outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening and involving significant age, developmental or power differences. They may pose a concern due to the activity type, frequency, duration or the context in which they occur

What can you do?

Red behaviours indicate a need for immediate intervention and action.

Red behaviours 5-9

- frequent masturbation in front of others
- sexual behaviour engaging significantly younger or less able children
- forcing other children to take part in sexual activities
- simulation of oral or penetrative sex
- sourcing pornographic material online

Red behaviours 9-13

- exposing genitals or masturbating in public
- distributing naked or sexually provocative images of self or others
- sexually explicit talk with younger children
- sexual harassment
- arranging to meet with an online acquaintance in secret
- genital injury to self or others
- forcing other children of same age, younger or less able to take part in sexual activities
- sexual activity e.g. oral sex or intercourse
- presence of sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- evidence of pregnancy



Behaviours: age 13 to 17

All green, amber and red behaviours require some form of attention and response. It is the level of intervention that will vary.

What is a green behaviour?

Green behaviours reflect safe and healthy sexual development. They are displayed between children or young people of similar age or developmental ability. They are reflective of natural curiosity, experimentation, consensual activities, and positive choices

What can you do?

Green behaviours provide opportunities to give positive feedback and additional information.

Green behaviours

- solitary masturbation
- sexually explicit conversations with peers
- obscenities and jokes within the current cultural norm
- interest in erotica/pornography
- use of internet/e-media to chat online
- having sexual or non-sexual relationships
- sexual activity including hugging, kissing, holding hands
- consenting oral and/or penetrative sex with others of the same or opposite gender who are of similar age and developmental ability
- choosing not to be sexually active

What is an amber behaviour?

Amber behaviours have the potential to be outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be of potential concern due to age, or developmental differences. A potential concern due to activity type, frequency, duration or context in which they occur.

What can you do?

Amber behaviours signal the need to take notice and gather information to assess the appropriate action.

Amber behaviours

- accessing exploitative or violent pornography
- uncharacteristic and risk-related behaviour, e.g. sudden and/or provocative changes in dress,
- withdrawal from friends, mixing with new or older people, having more or less money than usual, going missing
- concern about body image
- taking and sending naked or sexually provocative images of self or others

- single occurrence of peeping, ex-posing, mooning or obscene gestures
- giving out contact details online
- joining adult- only social networking sites and giving false personal information
- arranging a face-to-face meeting with an online contact alone

What is a red behaviour?

Red behaviours are outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening and involving significant age, developmental, or power differences. They may pose a concern due to the activity type, frequency, duration, or the context in which they occur

What can you do?

Red behaviours indicate a need for immediate intervention and action.

Red behaviours

- exposing genitals or masturbating in public
- preoccupation with sex, which interferes with daily function
- sexual degradation/humiliation of self or others
- attempting/forcing others to expose genitals
- sexually aggressive/exploitative behaviour
- sexually explicit talk with younger children
- sexual harassment
- non-consensual sexual activity
- use of/acceptance of power and control in sexual relationships
- genital injury to self or others
- sexual contact with others where there is a big difference in age or ability
- sexual activity with someone in authority and in a position of trust
- sexual activity with family members
- involvement in sexual exploitation and/or trafficking
- sexual contact with animals
- receipt of gifts or money in exchange for sex.