

Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 (KCSIE) states that “Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with. The policy should reflect the different forms peer on peer abuse can take, make clear that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter” or “part of growing up”. It should be clear as to how victims of peer on peer abuse will be supported.”

We acknowledge that peer on peer abuse will occur in any school, even one with a very caring ethos. At St John’s Primary, we try to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to any child and prevent further occurrences.

Aims

Children may harm one another in a number of ways which is 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 any issues that arise.

Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children’s Act 1989 that the child’s welfare is paramount, also HM Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 which states ‘It is important to understand the resilience of the individual child when planning appropriate services and also DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 (KCSIE) which outlines the need to ensure procedures are in place to hear the voice of the child.

Abuse and harmful behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen in any school and it is necessary to consider what abuse is, what it looks like, how it can be managed, what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and also what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

At our school abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as ‘banter’ or ‘part of growing up’. We recognise that abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE, 2018). We realise the importance of considering the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions we may need to take.

Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or any other way of causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another.

Sexually harmful behaviour (using the Brook Traffic Light Tool)

Sexually harmful behaviour from children 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 to the child on the receiving end. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, sexually touching or sexual assault/abuse.

Bullying

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 the victim and the bully may have serious, lasting problems.

We define bullying as:

- deliberately hurtful (including aggression);
 - repeated often over a period of time, while recognising that even a one-off incident can leave a learner traumatized and nervous of future recurrence; and
 - difficult for victims to defend themselves against.
- (Respecting Others: Anti-Bullying Overview (Welsh Government 2011))

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.

St John's Primary school uses posters around the school to help children to understand bullying that uses the language of RUDE, MEAN, BULLYING.

Cyber bullying

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites 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 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 the immediate support children 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'. Pressurising a person into sending a nude picture of themselves 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 are not even 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 a structure such as sports team, club, gang 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 structure, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

Honour-based violence

Honour based violence is a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and / or community by breaking their honour code.

For young victims it is a form of child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.

It can be distinguished from other forms of violence, as it is often committed with some degree of approval and/or collusion from family and/or community members. Women, men and younger members of the family can all be involved in the abuse

Prejudiced Behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, either physical, 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).

Our Procedure and Action

The type of abuse will have a varying effect on the victim and initiator of the harm, so we follow simple steps to clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm. It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred before the child/ren has forgotten or been influenced.

It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and its impact on both the children and the parents when they become involved. For example; we do not use the word perpetrator, this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled. In all cases of peer on peer abuse, all staff deal with any incident, by talking to the child/ren and putting immediate support in place in a calm and consistent manner.

Staff will ensure they are not prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Stage 1 = Being made aware

We may be initially made aware by an allegation made by parents, other adults, staff, pupils, other pupils. At this stage we will then:

- *Discuss with the children concerned individually and then together (as part of our Restorative Justice Approach), at both times explaining the definitions and expected behaviours. This record will be kept in the Child Protection system.*
- *We will notify both sets of parents with an 'allegation of peer on peer abuse' letter, arranging a meeting to discuss strategies. This record will be kept in the Child Protection system.*
- *Monitor to gather any evidence – in order to make a clear decision*

If at any stage, we have a significant safeguarding concern we will notify Social Services.

Stage 2A = Decision – that it is not peer on peer abuse

- *If, after a period of observation, a decision is made that there is no peer on peer abuse then the record will be kept in the Child Protection system in order to be used in future allegations should the need arise. The children will be told that there is no peer on peer abuse and will be supported to manage their friendship in line with our pastoral procedures. Parents will be informed that there is no peer on peer abuse and that they should support the children and school in helping the children to move forwards.*
- *If it appears that there are malicious allegations of peer on peer abuse being made by a child towards another we will regard this as a form of peer on peer abuse itself. The parent of that child will be informed. The parent of the child who had the original allegation made against them will also be informed. A record will be kept in the Child Protection system.*
- *If it appears that there are malicious allegations of peer on peer abuse being made by a parent then the parent will be issued with a 'notice of ban from the school premises' for a period of time. The school will decide on the period of time. If there are further negative developments from the parent the school will report the parent to the police.*
- *Support will be provided for children involved – see below*

Stage 2B = Decision – that there is peer on peer abuse

- *If a decision is made that the behaviour is peer on peer abuse, then sanctions and support will be applied.*

Stage 3 = Sanctions & Support

A) Sanctions and support for a child who is abusing another

- *Communication with Social Services if it is at a level of significant concern as this is often an indication of a wider SAFEGUARDING CONCERN for this child themselves*
- *It may be that Social Services decide that a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is written with regular Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings involving parents, social services, the school Designated Safeguarding Lead (D/DSL). This would identify any additional support this child may require such as:*
 - *Home-school systems*
 - *Restorative Justice*
 - *Counselling*
 - *Social Services visits*
- *Issuing of ‘Confirmation of Peer on Peer Abuse’ notification to both sets of parents with the school sanction identified. This record will be kept in the Child Protection system. Sanctions applied are at the discretion of the Headteacher, and may include any of the following in any combination:*
 - *Internal exclusion for a period of time*
 - *External exclusion*
 - *Segregation from the other child as required in lessons, dependent on the situation, for a suitable period of time*
 - *Segregation from the other child at playtimes. This is likely to be that the child will have their own playtime, not at the same time as the other children in the school, for a fixed period of time. This period of time will be determined by the school*
 - *Withdrawal from any lunchtime or after school club privileges and withdrawal from any pupil councils, for a fixed period of time. This period of time will be determined by the school*
 - *Counselling from staff or from an external provider for a period of time*
 - *Social stories group work for a fixed period of time*
 - *Behaviour Chart applied requiring playtime / lunchtime / end of school check-ins with a member of the Senior Leadership Team*
- *It may be that the school will need to produce a Risk Assessment against any further incidences. This will be kept on the Child Protection system.*

B) Support for the child who has been abused

- *Records kept on the Child Protection system*
- *Support may include some of the strategies below:*
 - *Counselling from an ELSA or SENCO or HT or from an external provider for a period of time*
 - *Help and advice on assertiveness so as to help them develop healthy relationships*

- *Wellbeing checker applied so that their wellbeing can have regular check-ins so as to see how they are managing*
- *Additional Class PSHE sessions*
- *Additional Key Stage or School Collective Worship sessions*
- *Advice for parents as to how to support*

C) *Ongoing monitoring of the situation will continue*

Information we consider

- What is the age of the child/ren involved? How old are the children involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved?
- Where did the incident or incidents take place? Was the incident in an open, visible place? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?
- Were the explanations by all children the same? Does each child give the same explanation of the incident and what is the effect on the child/ren involved? Is the incident regular and repeated? Is the version of one young person different from another? If so, why?
- Does each child understand the significance of what occurred? Does the child understand what they are doing? i.e. do they have knowledge of body parts, privacy and inappropriate touches? Is the child's explanation related to something they may have heard, seen or been learning about? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the child understand the impact of their behaviour on the other person? In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut and if necessary we will seek advice from Children's Services Social Care.
- Repetition: has the behaviour been repeated to an individual or series of individuals on more than one occasion?

After care

It is important that the child/ren continue to feel supported. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage. It is important to ensure that the child does not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping. We ensure regular reviews with the child/ren are carried out.

Preventative Strategies

The strategies we use to prevent peer on peer abuse are:

- We manage the risks and share information with all staff as appropriate to Child Protection regulations
- We have an open environment in which children feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them
- We follow a strong and positive PHSE/SMSC curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and bullying and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than look for opportunities to be harmful to one another.
- Our core values and behaviour expectations (the St John's WAYS) provides clear expectations for positive behaviour towards one another
- Our Behaviour Policy and Behaviour Sanctions Flow Chart make it clear to pupils and parents the expectations, rewards and sanctions

- Our Collective Worship programme identifies our values and expectations
- We hold annual Anti-Bullying weeks, Health weeks (that educate about healthy relationships) as part of our ongoing education of children to protect them from such behaviours
- All children sign an Anti-Bullying Charter which is then regularly referenced throughout the year
- Our Bullying Poster makes it clear to children what is Bullying behaviour
- Staff training ensures all staff are vigilant and recognise the signs and symptoms and recognise that Peer on Peer Abuse should be seen as a Safeguarding Concern
- The whole staff team are confident to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. Staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' and consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action
- We signpost around the school the support that is available at all times – such as Emotions Charts, talking to an adult if you have a worry, ELSA, Counselling
- Parents are kept regularly informed
- Our school council is a pro-active pupil voice and raises issues and concerns which are followed up by action

References

- Keeping Children Safe in Education - September 2018
- HM Working Together to Safeguard Children – March 2015
- DfE Preventing and tackling bullying - October 2014
- DfE School Support for Children and Young People who are being Bullied – March 2014
- DfE Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff – November 2014
- Children's Act 1989
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Communications Act 2003

Linked Policies

- Child Protection
- Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying
- Internet Safety