



St Mary's C of E (VA) Primary School

Working together
in an inclusive Christian environment
to allow every pupil to shine brighter and brighter.

St Mary's is an inclusive school where we believe that all people are of equal value, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, ability or sexual identity. We recognise and respect differences.

Child on Child Abuse Policy

This policy is GDPR compliant.

Date of issue: July 2021

Last reviewed/adopted: November 2025 (Academic Standards Committee)

Next review date: Autumn 2026

Signed: _____

Date: _____

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's policies on: behaviour, suspension & permanent exclusion and child protection.

Child-on-Child abuse can inhibit a child's ability to learn effectively. The negative effects of child-on-child abuse can have an impact on a person for their entire life. At St Mary's CE Primary School we wish to promote an environment free from threat, harassment and any type of child-on-child abuse.

Our aims:

- To ensure that all members of the school community understand what child-on-child abuse is.
- To ensure that all members of the school community understand how we attempt to prevent child-on-child abuse at our school.
- To create an atmosphere and environment where children, parents and staff feel able to tell the school about child-on-child abuse if it arises, and are confident that it will be taken seriously and dealt with.
- To ensure that all members of the school community understand how we deal with incidents of child-on-child abuse

What we do where conflict arises

Everyone experiences conflict from time to time. It is a normal part of life. Learning to deal with it in a healthy way helps children master the social skills they need. When a conflict occurs, everyone has equal power. Both individuals might be upset and emotional, but neither is seeking control or attention. When people experience conflict, they often feel remorse and take responsibility for their actions. Children in conflict situations often want to solve problems so that they can start having fun again. Conflict happens occasionally and is usually not serious or emotionally damaging.

Children sometimes do or say things that are unkind - especially while they are still learning how to cope where conflict arises. We will always address unkind (physical or emotional) acts by teaching children how they can communicate without being offensive or unkind. We will also teach children who feel hurt (physically or emotionally) to learn how to communicate their feelings, giving them the tools to express their hurt, which will empower them to take ownership of their feelings and be assertive when someone hurts them - without retaliating.

We will always discourage retaliation - as it is often unkind. We will also treat behaviour that provokes another to behave a certain way and threatening behaviour as unkind.

Child-on-child abuse

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

- Bullying, causing physical and/or emotional harm (on and offline)
- Harassment, causing physical and/or emotional harm (on and offline)
- Sexual harassment and violence (on and offline)

Bullying

At St Mary's CE Primary School we define bullying as behaviour that is: unwanted conduct that is usually repetitive*; intends to hurt someone either physically or emotionally (which means the perpetrator planned to or knew that their actions would cause harm); **AND** occurs where there is an imbalance of power (which means the perpetrator has either the perception or reality of being "greater than" (either physically or socially) the person they are bullying, in some manner.

We also have a child friendly definition of bullying, which is:

Bullying is when a person is hurtful or unkind to someone else, on purpose and more than once, which it is difficult to stop. Bullying can be done by one person or by a group of people.

Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice- based and discriminatory bullying) can include:

- Physical: such as kicking, pushing, hitting, physically intimidating someone or other inappropriate / unwanted physical contact
- Attacking property: such as damaging property, stealing or hiding someone's belongings
- Verbal: such as name calling, taunting, teasing, mocking, gossiping, making offensive comments, spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours
- Written: producing offensive graffiti or other writing
- Psychological: such as deliberately excluding people from groups or ignoring them
- Cyber: the same inappropriate and harmful behaviours expressed via digital devices such as by phone, text, instant messenger, social media sites, via websites or apps
- Sexual: such as sexual violence and sexual harassment between children

* When deciding whether an incident is repetitive, we take into account the time frame between the incidents and the nature of each allegation.

Harassment

At St Mary's CE Primary School we define harassment as behaviour that is: unwanted conduct that belittles, threatens, or is otherwise unwelcome, directed at someone based on the protected characteristics of age, gender, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment; **AND** intends to hurt someone, either physically or emotionally (which means the perpetrator planned to or knew that their actions would cause harm)

Harassment can include physical, verbal or psychological actions and can happen face-to-face or via written communications (including social media/online communication).

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

We define sexual harassment as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which: violates a person's dignity, makes them feel intimidated, degrades or humiliates them and/or creates a hostile or offensive environment. This includes, but is not limited to: sexual comments, remarks, jokes – it can occur both on and offline.

We define sexual violence as any kind of unwanted sexual act or activity. This includes, but is not limited to: rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (which may include an online element which facilitates, threatens or encourages sexual violence).

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children (or a group of children) of any age and any sex and can include:

- Children taking other children to 'secret' places or hideaways or playing 'special' games with them (for example, doctor and patient, removing clothing).
- Insistence on hugging or kissing a child when the child does not want to.
- Frequently using aggressive or sexual language about adults or children.
- Sharing sexual material.
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery).
- Sharing sexual images of themselves without the recipient being clear that they would like to see them.
- Viewing sexual images of children online.
- Making sexually abusive telephone calls.
- Exposing their genitals to younger/other children (taking the child's age into consideration)
- Befriending a younger child in order to engage in sexual activity and asking them not to tell.
- Touching what children have been taught are someone else's "private parts."
- 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.
- Taking pictures 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 type violence and rituals (activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group).

- Grooming for sexual or criminal exploitation.

At our school, we will not tolerate any form of child-on-child abuse. Neither will we dismiss child-on-child abuse as “children being children.”

Signs and Symptoms of child-on-child abuse

All staff should be aware of the indicators which may signal a child is the victim of child-on-child abuse. These may include, that the child:

- Is unwilling to attend school
- Seems frightened of coming to school alone (if they usually do)
- Changes their usual routine
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, lacking in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Wets the bed
- Runs away
- Cries themselves to sleep or has nightmares
- Feels ill in the morning
- Begins to do less well in school work
- Comes home with torn clothes or books or other possessions missing
- Asks for money or steals money
- Has money continually lost
- Has unexplained injuries
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Loses appetite
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above

These signs and behaviours could be indicative of other problems, but child-on-child abuse should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Prevention

At St Mary's CE Primary School we take the following steps to attempt to prevent child-on-child abuse at our school:

We promote a set of Christian values: Respect, Courage, Love, Forgiveness, Kindness and Joy.

- We use this set of values to teach children how they can lead rewarding lives and reach their potential whilst being considerate of others. Children learn about our values during collective worship and class teaching.
- We highlight kind behaviour by giving clear, verbal acknowledgments to children we see acting in a kind way (further details of this are given in our Relationship and Positive Behaviour policy).
- We teach children about how to stay safe online.
- We teach our children about positive relationships and bullying through our PSHE scheme.

Procedures

It is important that children tell us when they have been hurt (physically or emotionally, including if they feel bullied or harassed), so that we may act upon the situation quickly to avoid it escalating. Our children are encouraged to talk to "trusted adults." We check that our children understand the meaning of "trusted adults" and that they can identify the trusted adults in their lives - both in and out of school. We also ensure that our children are aware of and know how to contact: the police, Childline and the NSPCC. Each year, children are supported to complete a "trusted adults" activity, where they identify – on each finger of the template of a hand - a person, or organisation, they can talk to.

Parents are encouraged to report situations - which their child has not reported themselves – where: unkindness (including allegations of bullying and harassment) has occurred, they identify that their child has been hurt (emotionally or physically), and they think their child would benefit from some support (see below). This should be reported to their child's class teacher.

When an unkind act/bullying/harassment is reported to us, staff will act as follows:

- We will let the victim see that the matter is being taken seriously. We will listen to the child.
- We will tell them that there will be an investigation into the incident which will involve talking to those concerned.
- We will make it absolutely clear to the perpetrator(s) that the behaviour must stop. We will teach them why their behaviour was unacceptable so that it is clear why they cannot continue to act in the same way.
- We will arrange for a restorative conversation to take place. As part of this children will explore their feelings and the impact of their actions. The perpetrator(s) will be required to reflect on their behaviour, apologise to the victim and verbally assure the victim that their behaviour will stop.
- We will encourage the victim to treat the apology as sincere and give the perpetrator a chance to show that their behaviour will stop. We will make sure that all relevant staff know what has happened by alerting them using the CPOMS system. Behaviour will also be logged on Arbor.

- Where conflict arises (see above), we will not usually contact the parents of the children involved.
- Where there has been verbal unkindness that is intended to make a child feel bad about themselves, we will contact the parents of the child that was hurt and the parents of the perpetrator and log the incident on Arbor.
- Where a victim has been physically hurt, we will inform the parents of the child that was hurt and notify the parents of the perpetrator and log the incident on Arbor. Ideally this will happen on the same day that the incident occurred.
- Where we were informed by the victim's parents, we will inform them of the action taken to support their child - either by telephone, or when the children are collected at the end of the day
- We will ask the victim and/or their parents to keep us informed if the behaviour has not stopped.

When We Do Not See the Changes We Expect to See

Where we have followed the above procedures (teaching children how to behave and giving children chances to change when we see behaviour that is not in keeping with our behaviour policy) and we do not see the changes we expect to see, we will put in place further support, as follows:

Stage 1:

- The child's class teacher will notify the parents/carers of the perpetrator of the hurtful behaviour. A meeting will be set up, attended by: the child's teacher, the child's parents/carers and the child. Targets will be set, identifying: what we can do, what the child needs to do, and how parents can support at home. The targets will be recorded, a review date will be agreed and, on that date, there will be a further meeting when the targets will be reviewed (the attached proforma will be used to record the targets).
- A record of the meeting will be logged on CPOMS. Staff working with the child, the phase lead and the headteacher will be notified via CPOMS.
- Where it is considered that sufficient progress has been made by the child towards their targets, the child's teacher, the child's parents/carers and the child will meet at the review stage and discuss what further support the child needs and discuss new targets. The targets will be recorded, a review date will be agreed and, on that date, there will be a further meeting when the targets will be reviewed (the attached proforma will be used to record the targets).
- A record of the meeting will be logged on CPOMS.
- This process will continue for as long as it is felt necessary in order to support the child.

Stage 2:

- Where it is considered that sufficient progress has not been made by the child towards their target(s), the child's teacher will invite the Phase Lead to the review meeting. The Phase Lead will consider what further action is necessary to support the child. Targets and support will be recorded, a review date will be agreed and, on that date, there will be a further meeting when the targets will be reviewed (the attached proforma will be used to record the targets).
- A record of the meeting will again be logged. Staff working with the child, the Deputy Head and the Headteacher will be notified via email or in person.

- Where progress has been made, the position reverts back to meetings with the child's teacher to discuss further support.

Stage 3

- Where sufficient progress has not been made, the headteacher will be invited to the review meeting to decide what further support/action is required. Targets and support will be recorded, a review date will be agreed and, on that date, there will be a further meeting when the targets will be reviewed (the attached proforma will be used to record the targets).
- A record of the meeting will be logged. Staff working with the child will be notified.

It may be necessary, at any stage, to seek guidance from specialised educational agencies to formalise strategies to support a child. These may include:

- Herts County Council Behaviour Support Team (Therapeutic Thinking central supervision)
- An educational psychologist
- A member of the child and adult mental health team (CAMHS)
- Dacorum Educational Support Centre (DESC)
- Counselling – through qualified professional counselling services (for example, DESC or The Hospice of St Francis)

Stage 4

At the review meeting, where the headteacher is not satisfied that the child has made sufficient progress with their targets, a letter - recording the occurrences of unacceptable behaviour - will be written and kept on the child's file (see model letter below). Furthermore, suspension and/or permanent exclusion may be considered in line with our Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy.

Note: review dates can be brought forward if, for example, there is a further occurrence of unacceptable behaviour between meetings. Escalation to the headteacher should be considered in the event of concerns around child's lack of engagement with targets, or if behaviour is becoming less, rather than more, acceptable.

How We Support the Victim

Not all children will experience the same feelings in response to being on the receiving end of unkindness. We will never suggest or tell a child how they should feel and we will not judge them for the way they feel. We will always listen to them tell us how they feel and we will respond appropriately to what they tell us.

Where it is considered that the child would benefit from support, we may:

Work with the child to help build resilience.

Talk to them about ensuring that they do not retaliate (which may lead to the child behaving unkindly themselves, for which they will be held accountable in the same way as the original perpetrator). It is important that children understand that adults at school will support them and that they are safe at school.

Talk to them about how we may ask the perpetrator to keep their distance from them and ask them to respect this by ensuring they put space between themselves and the perpetrator.

Where the allegation relates to sexual violence or sexual harassment, the headteacher or member of the SLT will:

Follow the detailed Government advice on what to do if a child is sexually harassed or experiences sexual violence, as set out in Part 5 of [Keeping children safe in education](#)

Involving Other Agencies

Child-on-child abuse that involves sexual assault and violence must always result in a multi-agency response. As well as supporting and protecting the victim, the headteacher or member of the SLT will consider whether the perpetrator could be a victim of abuse too, understanding that children who develop harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced abuse and neglect themselves.

The headteacher or member of the SLT will make sure that the children affected are getting the help they need. A typical response will involve:

- children's social care
- the police
- any specialist services that support children who demonstrate harmful sexual behaviour
- the family
- any other professionals who know or have had contact with the child

The headteacher or member of the SLT will consider carefully how to separate the victim(s) and perpetrator(s) while their concerns are being investigated. In situations of alleged rape and assault by penetration, the statutory guidance is clear that the alleged perpetrator should always be removed from spaces they share with the victim.

We will continue to provide support to the victim and alleged perpetrator for as long as necessary. Therefore, any separation arrangements must also be continued for as long as is necessary to make sure children are safe.

The Importance of Context

The headteacher or member of the SLT will also need to think about risks to other children. If there's an incident in a school, has this put other children at risk? Have other children witnessed the incident? Could any siblings of the perpetrator be at risk? There may well be a need for a range of assessments and interventions for different children.

The headteacher or member of the SLT will also consider the potential vulnerabilities of the victims and any risks to them, including their potential abuse by others. They will have extra consideration for pupils who have additional vulnerabilities due to protected characteristics.

The headteacher or member of the SLT will also think about any potentially unsafe spaces on the premises. Where did the incidents happen? What can staff do to make that environment safer?

Parents

Parents, carers and families have an important role to play in helping the school deal with child-on-child abuse. They should:

- demonstrate positive support for this policy, as well as the school's behaviour policy and suspension & permanent exclusion policy.
- model appropriate behaviour at all times within the school grounds.
- report any concerns regarding pupils involved in child-on-child abuse.
- support work undertaken by the school to promote equalities, celebrate difference and challenge discrimination.

Child-on-child abuse Outside the School's Premises

The school is not directly responsible for occurrences of unkind behaviour or child-on-child abuse off the premises. However, where a pupil, a parent or carer, or a member of staff reports that such has occurred offsite, the matter will be investigated and the children involved will be given strategies to avoid or handle the situation. Parents will be informed (if they are not already aware) of the occurrence.

Appendix 1

Date of meeting:

Attendees:

Review date:

Targets:	What child can do:	What we can do at school:	What parents/carers can do at home:
Targets met (at review date)? Yes/No			
Next steps			



What is bullying?

Bullying is when a person is hurtful or unkind to someone else, on purpose and more than once, which it is difficult to stop. Bullying can be done by one person or by a group of people. Bullying can be towards one person or a group of people.

Always tell an adult or friends if you are being bullied or if someone else is being bullied.

