

# Alderley Edge Community Primary School

## Child on Child Abuse Policy

### Policy and Procedural Guidance

September 2023

#### Introduction - Child on Child abuse

Children can abuse other children (often referred to as Child on Child abuse, peer relationship abuse, child on child abuse and teenage relationship abuse). For the purpose of this policy it will be referred to as Child on Child Abuse in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 document.

This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying);
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as ‘teenage relationship abuse’)
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone 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 sharing of nudes and semi nudes images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- ‘Upskirting’ is where someone takes a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

Staff are clear on our procedures with regards to child on child abuse and do not take it any less serious than adult to child abuse; they are aware that it should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up”.

Staff at AECPS recognise that just because there may be no reports of Child on Child Abuse that it does not mean that it is not happening in our school. Therefore we recognise the importance of remaining vigilant for the signs and take proactive approaches to teach our children about positive relationships through our

teaching and respectful relationships these include staff conduct and our relationship and health education curriculum.

Where sexual violence or sexual harassment between children is alleged then the school follows the guidance issued by the DfE in 2018 is now contained in [Keeping Children Safe in Education Guidance 2023](#)

Where youth produced sexual images are part of the abuse then the school follows the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) Sexting guidance. [Sexting in Schools and Colleges](#)

### **1. Child on Child abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others.**

All staff should be aware of safeguarding issues from peer abuse including:

- Bullying (including cyber bullying)
- Gender based violence
- Sexual assaults and sexting.

This abuse can:

- Be motivated by perceived differences e.g. on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other differences
- Result in significant, long lasting and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to the victim; vulnerable adults are at particular risk of harm

Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs e.g.:

- Significant disruption in their own lives
- Exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering abuse
- Educational under-achievement
- Involved in crime

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the first priority of any education setting, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical. School staff, alongside their Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy, have to make their own judgements about each specific case and should this policy guidance to help.

### **2. Responsibility**

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2023 states that

*'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of Child on Child abuse and sets out how allegations of Child on Child abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with'.*

Child on Child abuse is referenced in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The sensitive nature and specific issues involved with Child on Child abuse necessitates separate policy guidance.

At Alderley Edge 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.

### 3. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to explore some forms of Child on Child abuse. The policy also includes a planned and supportive response to the issues.

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

- Prevention and Management of Bullying
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing
- Positive Behaviour Management
- Social Media
- Mobile Phones
- Online Safety
- Special Educational Needs (Additional Needs)
- Appropriate use of IT

**4. Framework and Legislation** This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document is *Working Together, 2015*, highlighting that every assessment of a child, '*must be informed by the views of the child*' and within that '*It is important to understand the resilience of the individual child when planning appropriate services.* (*Working Together, 2015:23*) This is echoed by *Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023* through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

### 5. Abuse and harmful behaviour

It is necessary to consider

- what abuse is and 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
- 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 (KCSIE, 2022). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.
- Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.

- Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action.
- Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up. (Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023)
- Staff should be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.
- Staff should be aware of the added vulnerability of children and young people who have been the victims of violent crime (for example mugging), including the risk that they may respond to this by abusing younger or weaker children.

The alleged perpetrator is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. Evidence suggests that such children may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, may have witnessed or been subjected to physical or Sexual Abuse, may have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and be in need of protection. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the alleged perpetrator must address their needs.

## 6. Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

### 6.1. Physical abuse

This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, 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.

### 6.2. Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse this must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

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 to the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may include

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- physical abuse
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse
- upskirting
- sexting
- sexual harassment
- initiation/hazing type rituals

### 6.3. Bullying (See Bullying Prevention Policy)

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.

### 6.4. Online Bullying / Cyber bullying (See Bullying Prevention Policy)

Online Bullying / Cyberbullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, e-mail, chat rooms etc.) to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

Online bullying can take many forms

- Abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites
- Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- Stealing someone's online identity
- Spreading rumours online
- Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms or games
- Developing hate sites about another person
- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Encouraging a young person to self harm
- Pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

### 6.5. Sexting - must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The term 'sexting' relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content; these are created and sent electronically. They are often 'shared' via social networking sites and instant messaging services.

The UKCCIS: Sexting in schools and colleges 2016 guidance must always be followed.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/551575/6.2439\\_KG\\_NCA\\_Sexting\\_in\\_Schools\\_WEB\\_1\\_PDF](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551575/6.2439_KG_NCA_Sexting_in_Schools_WEB_1_PDF)

## 6.6. 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 ceremony 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.

## 6.7. Prejudiced Behaviour

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 – for example 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.

## 6.8. Teenage relationship abuse

Teenage relationship abuse is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner. This abuse may be child sexual exploitation. Whilst at AECPS, we have no teenagers in our setting, this section was left in for information and in case of older siblings or past pupils who choose to disclose.

## 6.9 Upskirting

Typically involving taking a picture underneath someone's clothing without them knowing with the intention of seeing their genitals or buttocks for sexual gratification or cause victim humiliation, alarm or distress

## 7. Expected staff action

**Staff should consider the seriousness of the case, and make a quick decision whether to inform Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately before taking any further in-school actions. The DSL should always be informed of Child on Child abuse.**

## 8. Serious Violence

Staff must be aware of indicators that may show a child is at risk from or involved in serious violent crime. These may include:

- Absence from school
- A change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups
- A significant decline in performance
- Signs of self-harm or deterioration in well being
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Burner phones

Advice for staff is available from The Home Office - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-schools-and-colleges-on-gangs-and-youth-violence>

## 9. Recognising Child on Child abuse:

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:

- Chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved
- Difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability
- All alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident
- Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
- What was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery
- The effect on the victim
- Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret
- The child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred
- Whether this was a one-off incident, or longer in duration

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. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

### 9.1. Taking Action:

- Always take complaints seriously
- Gain a statement of facts from the child/children
- Assess needs of victim and perpetrator
- Consider referral to Police or Social Care
- Contribute to multi-agency assessments
- Convene a risk management meeting
- Record all incidents and all action taken

## 9.2. Gather the Facts

Speak to all the young people involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use **consistent language** and **open questions** for each account. Ask the young people to tell you what happened. Use open questions 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?) and TED (Tell, Explain, Describe).

Do not interrogate or ask leading questions.

## 9.3. Talking to the Child(ren) – USE TED (Tell, Explain, Describe)

Where staff have conversations with a child who discloses abuse they follow the basic principles:

- listen rather than directly question, remain calm
- never stop a child who is recalling significant events
- never ask a child if they are being abused
- make a record of discussion to include time, place, persons present and what was said (child language – do not substitute words) – see appendices for Record of Concern form
- advise you will have to pass the information on
- avoid coaching/prompting
- never take photographs of any injury
- never undress a child to physically examine them
- allow time and provide a safe haven / quiet area for future support meetings
- At no time promise confidentiality to a child or adult.

Staff are aware that they should not question the child; other than to respond with TED - **Tell** me what you mean by that, **Explain** what you mean by that, **Describe** that. Staff will observe and listen, but do not probe/ask any leading questions.

## 9.4. Consider the Intent

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?

## 9.5. Decide on your next course of action

If you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately; they will follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

## 9.6. Informing parents/carers

The best way to inform parents/carers is face to face. Although this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents/carers whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

If the pupil 13+ and does not want to share with parents? Use the 'Gillick' test and the 'Fraser' guidelines.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines/>



In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then the school should encourage the young person to share the information with their parent/carer (they may be scared to tell parents/carers that they are being harmed in any way).

#### **Points to consider:**

##### **What is the age of the children involved?**

How old are the young people involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked.

##### **Where did the incident or incidents take place?**

Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?

##### **What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?**

Can each of the young people give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one young person different from another and why?

##### **What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?**

Do the young people know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the young person's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the young person have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

##### **Repetition**

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

## **11. Next Steps**

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

### **11.1. For the young person who has been harmed**

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends; in which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents

are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people, or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PHSE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

### **11.2. For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour**

It is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary.

Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that the young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education elsewhere.

It may be that the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to

others, in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

The school may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion/seclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

### **11.3. After care**

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). For this reason, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

## 12. Preventative Strategies

Child on Child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most robust policies and support processes. It is important to develop appropriate strategies to proactively prevent Child on Child abuse.

Alderley Edge Community Primary School has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. There is a strong and positive PHSE/SMSC curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. The school makes sure that 'support and report' signposting is available to young people.

Staff will not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. Staff will consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action.

Young people are part of changing their circumstances and, through school council and pupil voice for example, we encourage young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour'. We involve pupils in the positive ethos in school; one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

## 13. References

- 12.1. DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>
- 12.2. DfE: Statutory guidance: Keeping children safe in education 2023  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
- 12.3. DfE: Teaching Online Safety in Schools 2019  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools>
- 12.4. UKCCIS: Sexting in schools and colleges 2016  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/551575/6.2439\\_KG\\_NCA\\_Sexting\\_in\\_Schools\\_WEB\\_1\\_PDF](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551575/6.2439_KG_NCA_Sexting_in_Schools_WEB_1_PDF)

## 14. Whistleblowing

If a member of staff has significant concerns regarding the behaviour or approach of a member of staff they should refer to the schools Whistleblowing Policy for guidance. Complaints about staff members should be made to the Head Teacher (or if about the Head Teacher then to the Chair of Governors)

Staff feeling uncomfortable regarding this process could seek advice from the NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 5000 or via [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)