



WELLINGTON  
COLLEGE  
PREP

## Academic Year 2025 - 2026

### Document Control

**Title of Policy:** **Child-on-Child Abuse Policy**

**Policy / Procedure Owner:** Deputy Head Safeguarding

**Date Last Reviewed:** 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025

**Ratified by Governors:** 3rd October 2025

## **Child-on-Child Abuse: Wellington College Prep Policy**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's following policies:

- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Behaviour management policy
- Online safety policy
- Relationships and sex education policy
- Investigations policy
- Safeguarding risk management policy

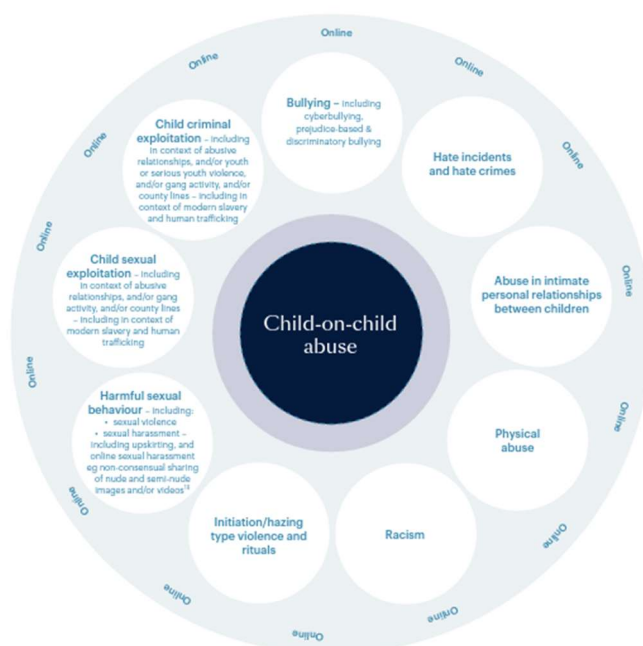
Copies of these policies can be found on the Wellington College Prep SharePoint and the Parent Portal.

The Wellington College Prep, community is based upon the School Values of kindness, courage and respect. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from any form of child-on-child abuse so that every one of our pupils can develop to their full potential. All pupils should care for and support each other, inside and outside of the school. The School also takes very seriously the prevention and early identification and appropriate management of incidents of sexual violence and sexual harassment between students. This policy covers our pupils in EYFS through to Year 8.

Given the developmental stages of children aged 2-13, our approach recognises that:

- Very young children (ages 2-5) are still developing social skills and understanding of appropriate behaviour
- Primary-aged children (ages 5-11) are learning about friendships, boundaries, and respect for others
- Pre-adolescent children (ages 11-13) may begin to show early signs of more complex social dynamics

An overview of Child-on-child abuse can be seen below<sup>1</sup>:



To protect all of our students, all members of the School community should:

- Be aware of the level and nature of risks to which our students are or may be exposed and put in place a clear and comprehensive safeguarding strategy that is tailored to our specific context, particularly recognising the unique dynamics of a boarding school setting.
- Take a contextual, whole-school approach to preventing and responding to all forms of child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence and sexual harassment, understanding that such behaviour is never acceptable, will never be tolerated, and must not be dismissed as “banter,” “part of growing up,” “having a laugh,” “boys being boys” or any similar expressions that seek to normalise or minimise inappropriate behaviour.
- Understand that inappropriate behaviours between children—particularly those of a sexual nature—may be driven by wider societal influences and that it is essential to proactively challenge and address them within the culture of the school. This includes confronting physical behaviours that may be criminal in nature, such as grabbing bottoms, breasts, and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras, or lifting up skirts, as failing to act risks normalising such behaviours.
- Recognise that sexual violence and harassment, as well as other forms of child-on-child abuse, can occur between any children, regardless of age or sex, and may also involve groups targeting individuals or other groups. Such incidents can happen both in and out of school and may occur online as well as in person.
- Acknowledge that, even if specific incidents are not being reported, it should not be assumed that they are not happening. All staff must remain alert to signs and symptoms of abuse and be proactive in reporting any concerns to the DSL or a deputy, recognising that pupils may be reluctant to disclose abuse for a range of reasons.
- Understand that boys are statistically more likely to perpetrate incidents of sexual

<sup>1</sup> Farrer & Co. (2022, September). Addressing child-on-child abuse: A resource for schools and colleges. Farrer & Co Safeguarding unit

harassment or violence, and that certain power imbalances - based on age, social dynamics, or developmental stage - may contribute to patterns of abusive behaviour.

- Regard the introduction of this guidance as a preventative measure, and not merely a framework for reacting to reported incidents. The School is committed to early identification, appropriate intervention, and cultural change, rather than relying on a reactive approach.
- Recognise the national and increasing concern about child-on-child abuse and sexual violence in educational settings and implement this policy to ensure the highest standard of safeguarding is maintained - one in which pupils are safe, listened to, and supported, and all disclosures are taken seriously.
- Encourage parents to hold the School to account. If their child feels unsafe due to the behaviour of another pupil, they should feel confident in informing the School, so that appropriate and prompt action can be taken.

This policy sets out our strategy for preventing, identifying, and appropriately managing child-on-child abuse, including allegations of sexual violence and/or harassment between students and will be reviewed annually to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which our students are or may be exposed.

Research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of others. Therefore, the School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in allegations of, or concerns about child-on-child abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused and those who are alleged to have abused another child, looking to support all of those involved whilst also considering whether any disciplinary sanctions should be imposed. This policy deliberately does not use the term 'victim' and/or 'perpetrator'.

The starting point is that the School's response to child-on-child abuse should be the same for all students regardless of age. Similarly, the School's response to incidents involving the exchange of youth-produced sexual imagery will need to differ depending on the age of the students involved (see information on sexual imagery).

Wellington College Prep has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all students. Due regard is paid to all statutory regulations and guidance as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children, as well as the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, and compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. We will also co-operate with safeguarding partnerships once designated as relevant agencies and have a behaviour policy and measures in place to prevent all forms of bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).

We will also comply with relevant requirements as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The Farrer & Co 'Addressing child-on-child abuse: a resource for schools and colleges' has also been used for reference<sup>2</sup> when writing this policy.

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<sup>2</sup> Farrer & Co. (2022, September). *Addressing child-on-child abuse: A resource for schools and colleges*. Farrer & Co Safeguarding Unit

## Definitions and Scope

This policy applies to all pupils at Wellington College Prep, whether day or boarding, from EYFS to Year 8. The policy applies regardless of whether the abuse takes place at School or elsewhere, in person or online.

### Definitions:

**Child-on-child abuse** can be defined as “any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate).”<sup>3</sup> The DfE defines child-on-child abuse as “abuse by one child of another child – regardless of the age, of the stage of development, or any differential between them.” (KCSIE, 2024)<sup>4</sup>

Child-on-child abuse can take various forms (but not limited to):

- (a) **Bullying – including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying.** The School regularly uses the Anti-bullying Alliance definition when speaking to young people: “The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online.”

For younger children (2-7), this might include:

- Repeated exclusion from play
- Name-calling or unkind words
- Taking or damaging belongings

For older children (8-13), this might include:

- Deliberate social exclusion
- Spreading rumours or unkind stories
- Online bullying (where children have access to technology)

- (b) **Hate incidents and hate crimes** – which may also include an online element.
- (c) **Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as ‘teenage relationship abuse’)** – which may also include an online element. Physical abuse – such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse).
- (d) **Racism** – occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their skin colour, nationality, ethnicity, or cultural group. Racist behaviour can include verbal abuse, physical attacks, exclusion from activities or opportunities and microaggressions, which can be conscious and unconscious. It can occur in person or online.

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<sup>3</sup> Firmin, C. 2017. Abuse Between Young People: A Contextual Account

<sup>4</sup> Farrer & Co. (2022, September). *Addressing child-on-child abuse: A resource for schools and colleges*. Farrer & Co Safeguarding Unit

- (e) **Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB)** - this is defined 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” (Hackett, 2014). Hackett’s continuum model (Appendix A) provides a useful guide in classifying sexual behaviour<sup>5</sup>.

HSB can occur online and/or face to face and can also occur simultaneously between the two. Many types of HSB can constitute a criminal offence and others may, if they are non-consensual, also breach other laws such as breach of privacy, data protection legislation, Malicious Communications Act 1988, or constitute stalking or harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Types of HSB include, for example:

- i. **Sexual violence** – such as rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault (which may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence) and 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);
- ii. **Sexual harassment** - which is ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school/college – can include (but is not limited to):
  - sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, calling someone sexualised names, intrusive questions about a person’s sex life, and spreading sexual rumours;
  - sexual “jokes” or taunting;
  - suggestive looks, staring or leering;
  - sexual gestures;
  - physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone’s clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence – it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim);
  - displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature, Online sexual harassment - this may be stand-alone or part of a wider pattern of sexual violence and/or harassment. It may include:
    - non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);
    - sharing of unwanted explicit content;
    - sexualised online bullying;
    - unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media, sexual exploitation, coercion and threats, and
    - coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they are not comfortable with online. Upskirting – which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm and is a criminal offence. Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals – this could include activities involving harassment,

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<sup>5</sup> Harmful sexual behaviour framework: an evidence-informed operational framework for children and young people displaying harmful sexual behaviours (nspcc.org.uk).

abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element.

**Note:** Normal childhood curiosity about bodies and development is expected and should be distinguished from concerning behaviour through professional assessment.

- (f) **Child exploitation** – forms of abuse that occur when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. It is usually considered to fall into two categories:
- **Child sexual exploitation (CSE)** – including in the context of abusive relationships, and/or gang activity, and/or county lines – including in the context of modern slavery and human trafficking; and/or
  - **Child criminal exploitation (CCE)** – including in the context of abusive relationships, and/or youth or serious youth violence, and/or gang activity, and/or county lines – including in the context of modern slavery and human trafficking.
  - CSE and CCE can affect children, of any gender, and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation. CSE and CCE do not always involve physical contact; CSE and CCE can also occur through the use of technology.

Abuse may take place face to face or online. Online child-on-child abuse is any form of child-on-child abuse where an element might be facilitated by digital technology, for example, consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (sometimes called ‘sexting’), online abuse, coercion and exploitation, child-on-child grooming, threatening and hate speech delivered via online means, the distribution of sexualised content (which might be youth-produced, commercial pornography or pseudo sexual images), and harassment.

## **Vulnerability and Risk Factors**

Any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to the strength of peer influence during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. However, as individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to being abused by or abusing their peers, the School considers all relevant factors when dealing with instances of child-on-child abuse. This means that, when investigating an incident, supporting those involved and considering any appropriate sanctions as well as when considering whether incidents are being reported and reviewing this policy and its outcomes, the School will recognise and consider:

- (a) that certain children may face additional barriers to reporting an incident because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation;
- (b) that pupils with SEND or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges and may be more prone to child-on-child group abuse;
- (c) that children who are questioning or exploring their sexuality may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their peers;

- (d) that child-on-child abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up;
- (e) intersectionality, that is the recognition that people's experiences are shaped by their multi-layered identities. A person's interactions with the world are shaped by their sex, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, disability, class, socio-economic status and abilities, and these aspects of a person's identity interrelate. Someone may experience racism, sexism and ageism collectively or individually at different times and in different environments. For example, a teenage Black boy may experience discrimination based on the fact that he is both Black and male. The effect of his experiences may influence whether he is comfortable accessing support if he is a victim of child-on-child abuse;
- (f) as part of (b) above, adultification. This is a form of racial prejudice in which children from minoritised groups are treated as more mature than they actually are by a reasonable social standard of development. This may lead to failure to recognise victims of child-on-child abuse and to respond appropriately to the experiences of children from minoritized ethnic groups. Whilst adultification can impact all children in certain ways it is important that there is an acknowledgement that it specifically affects Black children. Their behaviour may also attract a harsher disciplinary response than the same behaviour in white peers of the same age. To address this risk, behaviour policies should be applied consistently and behaviour sanctions regularly reviewed for evidence of discrimination against children from minoritized ethnic groups.
- (g) that those who have already been subject to abuse are more vulnerable to further abuse. For example, an image of a child could be shared, following which they could become more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to how others now perceive them, regardless of any characteristics which may be inherent in them and/or their family;
- (h) that peer group dynamics can also play an important role in determining a child's vulnerability to such abuse. For example, children who are more likely to follow others and/or who are socially isolated from their peers may be more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse.

To ensure that this is considered appropriately in connection with each incident of child-on-child abuse, prior to starting an investigation into an alleged incident, the relevant staff will check iSAMS for relevant information and, where appropriate, seek advice from the pastoral and/or safeguarding teams.

The School recognises that the types of child-on-child abuse rarely take place in isolation and often indicate wider safeguarding concerns. For example, a teenage girl may be in a sexually exploitative relationship with a teenage boy who is himself being physically abused by a family member or by older boys. Equally, sexual bullying in schools and other settings can result in the sexual exploitation of children by their peers. Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives and spaces in which they spend their time. Any response to child-on-child abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of child-on-child abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's experiences.

## Identification of child-on-child abuse

Wellington College Prep expects all of its staff to be vigilant in respect of the dynamics of peer groups in the school, and to be alert to the wellbeing of students and to signs of abuse. They should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. Staff know to be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ. Staff are trained to be aware that signs that a child may be suffering from child-on-child abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse and can include – for example:

- (a) being afraid of particular places and/or situations and/or making excuses to avoid particular people
- (b) being afraid/reluctant to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- (c) running away or regularly going missing from home, care or education
- (d) experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing
- (e) becoming nervous, anxious, distressed, clingy or depressed
- (f) becoming isolated from peers/usual social networks, losing confidence and becoming withdrawn
- (g) self-harming or having thoughts about suicide
- (h) having problems eating (including developing eating disorders) and/or sleeping (including suffering from nightmares)
- (i) regularly wetting the bed or soiling their clothes
- (j) belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- (k) asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a bully)
- (l) unexplained gifts, money or new possessions (eg clothes and/or mobile phone)
- (m) unexplained physical injuries and other signs of physical abuse
- (n) changes in appearance – e.g. weight loss
- (o) changes in performance and/or behaviour at school
- (p) knowing about or being involved in 'adult issues' which are inappropriate for their age or stage of development, for example, alcohol, drugs and/or sexual behaviour
- (q) involvement in abusive relationships
- (r) involvement in gangs or gang fights
- (s) having angry outbursts, or behaving aggressively or abusively (including displaying harmful sexual behaviour) towards others

The School recognises that abuse affects children very differently, that the above list is by no means exhaustive, and the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse. The behaviour that children present with will depend on their particular circumstances. Concerns may also of course be raised by parents, peers, and others.

Rather than checking behaviour against a list, all staff at Wellington College Prep are trained to be alert to behaviour that might cause concerns, to use their professional curiosity and think about what the behaviour might signify, to encourage children to share with them any underlying reasons for their behaviour (by asking open questions at the right time to prompt discussion) and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents so that the cause(s) of their behaviour can be investigated. Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for their age, staff are expected to consider whether an underlying concern is contributing to their behaviour (for example, whether the child is being harmed or abused by their peers) and, if so,

what the concern is and how the child can be supported going forwards. The power dynamic that can exist between children is also very important when identifying and responding to their behaviour: in all cases of child-on-child abuse a power imbalance will exist within the relationship. This inequality will not necessarily be the result of an age gap between the child responsible for the abuse and the child being abused. It may, for example, be the result of their relative social or economic status. Equally, while children who abuse may have power over those who they are abusing, they may be simultaneously powerless to others.

The School will investigate any reported incident to determine if it constitutes child-on-child abuse and whether any sanctions are appropriate. In determining this, the staff involved in the matter will rely on their extensive experience.

The School recognises that all behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Therefore, the School will investigate any alleged incident of child-on-child abuse to understand where it falls on the spectrum in order to be able to respond appropriately in supporting those involved and, where appropriate, imposing sanctions. To do this, staff involved will rely on their extensive experience and may also refer to the Hackett continuum model (Appendix A).

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 to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, whether it:

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

It should be borne in mind that behaviour which is not abusive at first may potentially become abusive quickly or overtime. Intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour which may be displayed by a child is vital and could potentially prevent their behaviour from progressing on a continuum to become problematic, abusive and/or violent - and ultimately requiring (greater/more formal) engagement with specialist external and/or statutory agencies. For example, a physical fight between two students may not constitute child-on-child abuse where the fight is a one-off incident, but may be abusive where the child's/children's behaviour subsequently deteriorates into a pattern of bullying behaviour and requires a safeguarding response from a multi-agency partnership – including a statutory assessment of whether this has led, for example, to a risk of significant harm to a child.

The importance of intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour does not just apply on an individual student basis but could also apply across the student body. Behaviour generally considered inappropriate may in fact indicate emerging concerning behaviour to which the School may need to adopt a whole-school approach in order to prevent escalation. For example, where multiple boys are making inappropriate comments about girls, one-off sanctions are unlikely to be effective and wider actions should be considered, such as arranging for an external person to deliver a year group intervention exercise or a form group discussion with a tutor or Head of Year.

If there are wider safeguarding concerns relating to the child/children in question, a referral to statutory agencies may be necessary. Where the behaviour which is the subject of the concern(s)/allegation(s) is considered or suspected by the DSL to constitute child-on-child abuse, the School will follow the procedures set out below.

Staff should always use their professional judgment and discuss any concerns with the DSL as soon as possible.

## **Reporting and Disclosure**

It is essential that all concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our School environment. Any response should:

- (a) as detailed above, include a thorough investigation of the concerns/allegations and the wider context in which they may have occurred (as appropriate);
- (b) follow a Contextual Safeguarding approach<sup>6</sup>;
- (c) treat all children involved as being at potential risk— while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. The School will ensure a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it as well as considering any appropriate sanctions for the latter.
- (d) take into account the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, if there is a concern that might place an individual already vulnerable at greater risk of harm, or where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/children and their parents and obtain consent to any referral before it is made, although it is important to be clear that consent is not required if it is thought the child protection threshold has been met. Should the child not wish for their parents to be informed, their wishes will be taken seriously and

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<sup>6</sup> Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to safeguarding children that recognises their experiences of significant harm in extra-familial contexts, and seeks to include these contexts within prevention, identification, assessment and intervention safeguarding activities. It recognises that as children enter adolescence, they spend increasing amounts of time outside of the home in public environments (including on the internet) within which they may experience abuse. Additionally, it considers interventions to change the systems or social conditions of the environments in which abuse has occurred. For example, rather than move a child from a school, professionals could work with the school leadership and student body to challenge harmful school cultures, thus improving the pre-existing school environment.

discussed within the safeguarding team and external advice sought. The School will manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so.

The School recognises that incidents of alleged sexual violence and/or harassment are likely to be complex, requiring swift and sensitive handling. The DSL, DDSL (Rebecca Mills), Director of Safeguarding and Safeguarding Manager have undertaken Sexual Misconduct Liaison Officer training in order to help them handle such allegations.

If a child speaks to a member of staff about child-on-child abuse that they have witnessed or are a part of, the member of staff should listen to the child and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement. The member of staff will seek to control the situation, to reassure and support the pupils involved without promising absolute confidentiality and will report the incident to the Senior Deputy Head and inform the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible. The incident will be logged on MyConcern. The DSL will inform other relevant members of staff, for example the students' Head of Year and any subsequent investigation will be carried out under the Investigations Policy.

The DSL will discuss the concerns or allegations with the member of staff who has reported them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the School is doing all that it can in respect of the safety of the child/all children affected. DSLs should always use their professional judgement to determine whether it is appropriate for alleged behaviour to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required. In some cases appropriate action might simply be to have conversations with staff and pupils involved, investigate internally and ask staff to monitor the situation. In this case all actions would be recorded on My Concern so that we are able to track any repeat concerning behaviours. In borderline cases the DSL may wish to consult with children's social care and/or any other external agencies on a no-names basis to determine the most appropriate response. Where the DSL considers or suspects that the behaviour in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum (as opposed to inappropriate or problematic), the DSL should contact Bracknell Forest MASH team immediately, and in any event within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of it. The DSL will discuss the allegations/concerns with Bracknell Forest MASH team and agree on a course of action, which may include:

- (a) Manage internally with help from external specialists where appropriate and possible
- (b) Undertake/contribute to an inter-agency early help assessment, with targeted early help services provided to address the assessed needs of a child/children and their family. These services may, for example, include CAMHS, a specialist harmful sexual behaviour team, and/or youth offending services
- (c) Refer child/children to Children's Social Care, clearly setting out risks. It will then be for Children's Social Care to determine whether it meets their threshold for either a section 17 or 47 statutory assessment
- (d) Report alleged criminal behaviour to the Police and refer to "when to call the police guidance" from the NSPCC

Alleged criminal behaviour will ordinarily be reported to the Police. However, there are some circumstances where it may not be appropriate to report such behaviour to the Police. For example, where the exchange of youth-produced sexual imagery does not involve any

aggravating factors. All concerns/allegations will be assessed on a case by case basis, and in light of the wider context.

It is recognised that incidents of child-on-child abuse may also be reported through other means including: the Well-being hub team, matrons, students or parents. In all cases, the DSL should be contacted as soon as possible.

**Staff must:**

- Recognise that, if a victim has made a disclosure to them, then the child has placed them in a position of trust. They must be supportive and respectful of the child.
- Reassure the victim that they are being taken seriously, will be supported and kept safe.
- Avoid giving the impression that a victim is causing a problem by reporting an incident
- Receive the victim's story whilst remaining calm and reassuring.
- React to what is disclosed with belief and tell the victim that they have done the right thing in making a disclosure.
- Listen carefully without passing judgement, but being clear about boundaries and next steps
- Indicate to the victim what action they will take and make it clear that they will have to inform others (no promise of confidentiality)
- Make an accurate record of what has been said and avoid giving opinions. Consideration will need to be given as to the best way to do this, although best practice is to wait until the end of the disclosure before writing up a thorough summary.
- Remember that the priority is always to protect the child
- Explain that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them
- Understand that victims may not disclose the whole picture immediately. They may be more comfortable providing information on a piecemeal basis and it is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged.

**Staff must not:**

- Contact the parents directly
- Make the victim feel that they are creating a problem by reporting.
- Underplay the issue.
- View or forward illegal images of a child. If there is an online element, then this advice is essential. ("Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people". Updated March 2024)
- Speak to the perpetrator about whom the allegations have been made

- Ask leading questions or adopt an interrogation approach
- Promise to keep secrets/confidentiality (as it is very likely that a concern will need to be shared further)
- Share the report or details of the report to anyone other than the DSL
- Ask the child outright if an act of sexual violence or harassment has been committed (although staff can ask children if they have been harmed and what the nature of that harm was).

Staff must never promise confidentiality and the School will only share information with agencies who are required for the support of the children involved and to further any investigation. If the victim asks for information not to be shared, the DSL must balance their wishes with the duty to protect other children. In particular, the DSL must understand that:

- a) Parents or carers are informed unless sharing this information would put the victim at greater risk
- b) If a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, then the general safeguarding principle of making a referral to CSC should apply
- c) Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are crimes and the starting point should be that they should be referred to the police

If the DSL does decide to make a referral against the victim's wishes, the reasons for doing so must be explained sensitively and appropriately, specialist support should be offered.

Specific actions taken immediately following a disclosure of sexual violence and/or harassment can be seen in Appendix D.

## **Risk management**

Where there is an incident of child-on-child abuse, first and foremost, the School will be guided by the Police and Children's Social Care, if they are involved. The School will carry out a robust risk and needs assessment in respect of each child affected by the abuse, this includes both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator, according to the School Safeguarding risk management policy. Any risk assessments and safety plans drawn up will:

- (a) Assess and address the nature and level of risks that are posed and/or faced by the child
- (b) Engage the child's parents and draw upon local services and agencies to ensure the School is doing all we can in respect of the child's long-term needs.<sup>7</sup>
- (c) Consider whether any targeted interventions are needed to address the underlying attitudes or behaviour of any child

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<sup>7</sup> unless the child has expressly indicated that they do not want their parents informed and this has been discussed by the safeguarding team and an external advisor.

- (d) Be reviewed at regular intervals in light of the child's on-going needs to ensure that real progress is being made which benefits the child.

If, at any stage, the child's needs escalate, the DSL should contact the relevant Children's Social Care or MASH team to determine the appropriate course of action.

### **Support for students**

The School understands that it has a duty to safeguard and support both the student who has been harmed and the student who has harmed when an accusation of child-on-child abuse has been made.

### **Safeguarding and supporting the student who has been harmed**

The following safeguarding principles will underpin all support given:

- a) The School will think carefully about the language used, for example a child may not wish to be described as a "victim";
- b) The case will be managed in a manner that avoids any form of victim blaming (see Appendix C)
- c) Due consideration will be given to developmental stage of the student, the nature of the allegations and the risk of further abuse;
- d) The School will be aware that a power imbalance is likely to have been created between the alleged student who has caused harm to the other student;
- e) As well as protecting all students involved, the needs and wishes of the harmed student should be at the centre of any response and they should feel in as much control of the process as reasonably possible;
- f) The priority should be to make the student's daily experience as normal as possible and to ensure that the School is a safe space for them;
- g) As all incidents will be different, proportionality of response will be considered, and support given on a case-by-case basis;
- h) It may be that the harmed student(s) do(es) not disclose the whole situation immediately, so on-going dialogue and support is vital;
- i) Young people who are likely to have suffered some trauma and may struggle in normal school environments;
- j) The student may require support for a long time;
- k) The School will protect the student from bullying or harassment because of what has happened in the past;

- l) If a victim is unable to remain in the School and it is their wish to move elsewhere, the School will fully support them in this decision and the DSL will make any new institution fully aware of any ongoing support needs as well as passing on their safeguarding file.

Although this list is not exhaustive, the School may therefore employ the following strategies to safeguard and support any victim(s) of child-on-child abuse:

- Allow the student who has been harmed to choose a designated trusted adult (such as a tutor or Head of Year) with whom they can regularly meet to talk about their needs;
- Allow the student who has been harmed to withdraw from lessons and/or other activities if they are finding it difficult to maintain full involvement with School life;
- Give the student who has been harmed a protected safe space to which they can withdraw if needed;
- Offer the student who has been harmed ongoing support from the School counsellor/play therapist and where appropriate for our older pupils (Year 7 & 8) the Wellington College counselling service;
- Provide the student who has been harmed with the details of external agencies, for example, a Sexual Assault Referral Centre, who may be able to offer additional support (KCSIE 2025 will be used as reference for the external support for child-on-child abuse cases);
- Make clear to the student who has been harmed that they should report any incidents of unpleasant behaviour to their tutor or Head of Year and the Senior Deputy Head giving full details of what happened;
- Encourage informal reconciliation conversations in the Well Being Hub (if deemed appropriate) or expert mediation to restore trust between the student who has been harmed and student who has caused harm;
- Involve the student who has been harmed in drawing up a personal welfare plan (WRAP), if appropriate, detailing specific strategies and channels of support;
- Consider ways to minimise possible contact between the student who has been harmed(s) and perpetrator during the school day by constructing risk assessments and safety plans in accordance with the Risk Management Policy. It should be noted that this can be extremely difficult in a school of our size.

### **Safeguarding and supporting the student who has caused harm**

Where incidents of child-on-child abuse are alleged to have taken place, the following safeguarding principles should underpin all support given:

- a) The School will think carefully about the language used, especially if the student denies the accusation(s) made against them;

- b) The School has a duty to provide an education to the alleged student, especially if the student denies the accusation(s) made against them;
- c) The School also has a duty to provide the alleged student with safeguarding and pastoral support, as appropriate;
- d) Committing an act of sexual harassment or sexual violence may be a sign that a child has been abused themselves or a sign of wider, contextual issues which require addressing;
- e) All alleged students are entitled to and should be provided with support which will enable them to understand and overcome the reasons behind their behaviour, thus protecting other children by limiting the likelihood of such behaviour in the future;
- f) Due consideration should be given to the age and developmental stage of the alleged student as well as the nature of the accusations;
- g) It is likely that any student will experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to accusations made against them and this will be considered in the student's safety plan;
- h) As all incidents will be different, proportionality of response will be considered, and support given on a case-by-case basis;
- i) If an alleged student moves to another school, the DSL will make any new institution fully aware of any ongoing support needs and potential risks to others, as well as passing on their safeguarding file.

Although this list is not exhaustive, the School may therefore employ the following strategies to safeguard and support any student who has caused harm to another *alongside* any disciplinary measures. These strategies may include:

- Considering ways to minimise possible contact between victim(s) and perpetrator during the school day through risk assessments and safety plans.
- Encourage expert mediation to restore trust between the students involved;
- Offer alleged students ongoing support from the School counsellor/play therapist or member of the Well Being team;

### **Disciplinary action**

All disciplinary action for cases of child-on-child abuse will be dealt with according to the Investigations policy and Behaviour Management policy. This process is overseen by the Senior Deputy Head.

Before deciding on appropriate disciplinary action, the School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the child-on-child abuse and the causes of it. The School will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed moves or exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognising that even if this is ultimately

deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this policy may still be required. Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the School is fulfilling our duty to do all that we can in respect of the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the School.

Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of child-on-child abuse, and the School will always consider the wider actions that may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards.

## **Recording**

All child-on-child abuse incidents will be recorded on MyConcern. This enables regular reporting and review by the safeguarding team as well as presenting figures to the Governing Body when required. A separate log of disciplinary action arising from child-on-child abuse is kept by the Senior Deputy Head and a separate log of sexual violence and harassment is kept by the DSL. Ongoing educational work and support for students concerned will also be recorded in MyConcern.

## **Review, Evaluation, and Accountability**

Following any significant case of child-on-child abuse, and particularly those which have involved external agencies, the DSL will convene a lessons learned meeting where all individuals involved will be asked to contribute on any aspects of the case which went well and any areas which could be improved. This will be noted on the students MyConcern file on the “lessons learned” tab.

Each term, the safeguarding team peer audit safeguarding chronologies in accordance with the Safeguarding File Auditing Policy. This practice is undertaken for several key reasons:

- To help ensure accuracy and completeness;
- Peer review promotes consistency in record-keeping, making sure that all safeguarding chronologies meet the same high standards and follow agreed protocols;
- It provides an opportunity for professional development, as staff can learn from each other’s approaches and interpretations, strengthening overall safeguarding practice;
- To help with the identification of patterns or concerns that may not be obvious to one individual, supporting early intervention and better outcomes for students in the School;
- To demonstrate a culture of accountability and transparency, which is crucial for safeguarding;
- To reduce the risk of bias or subjectivity, as more than one perspective is considered in recording and interpreting safeguarding information.

The School is also audited annually by the Director of Safeguarding who will check several cases of child-on-child abuse to ensure that decision making, and record keeping is accurate, timely, consistent, evidenced correctly and that actions have been taken in accordance with School

policies and statutory guidance. The School is committed to undertaking a proactive, thorough approach in its approach to all child-on-child abuse cases.

### **Multi-agency working**

The School actively engages with its local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse, and works closely with, for example, Bracknell Forest Local Authority and MASH team, Children's Social Care, Thames Valley Police 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.

The School actively refers concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse where necessary to the relevant agencies listed above. It considers this to be particularly important because child-on-child abuse can be a complex issue, and even more so, where wider safeguarding concerns exist. It is often not appropriate for one single agency (where the incident cannot be managed internally) to try to address the issue alone – it requires effective partnership working.

### **Prevention and Education**

In line with our Safeguarding Policy, the concept of prevention lies at the heart of Wellington College Prep's approach to safeguarding and pupil welfare. We strive to achieve this through fostering a positive school atmosphere, vigilant and careful teaching, robust pastoral care, the promotion of our core School values—Kindness, Courage and Respect—and by providing effective support and strong adult role models for our pupils. As with all safeguarding matters, staff maintain the attitude that 'it could happen here', ensuring ongoing vigilance.

Wellington College Prep adopts a whole-school approach to safeguarding, which includes formal classroom opportunities for pupil learning via our LFL curriculum. This is supplemented by regular input from external agencies and speakers, who deliver assemblies, talks, and workshops to further educate our pupils. For more details about the ways we teach about healthy relationships, sex, and consent, both inside and outside lessons. Students are reminded of what to do if they witness or experience abuse, the impact it can have, and the vulnerabilities that may lead to such behaviours. They are regularly informed about the School's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse.

The School is committed to raising awareness of and preventing all forms of child-on-child abuse. This is achieved by educating all Governors, staff, volunteers, students, and parents about the nature, prevalence, and effects of such abuse, as well as how to prevent, identify, and respond to it. All staff, including Governors and the Senior Leadership Team, receive regular training on these issues.

Parents are engaged through Year Ahead talks and Saturday morning pastoral talks and are encouraged to hold the School accountable on these issues. All concerns relating to child-on-child abuse should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Deputy Head (Pastoral), who monitor trends and ensure appropriate support is provided. Both the DSL and Deputy Head Pastoral liaise closely with the Senior Deputy Head on all matters concerning child-on-child abuse. The School works actively to challenge attitudes that underlie abuse, promote positive values, and foster a culture of tolerance and respect among all members of the

community. We aim to create an environment where students feel safe to share concerns in a non-judgmental setting and are confident, they will be listened to and supported

The School Rules, as detailed in the Behaviour Management policy, reinforce these principles by encouraging respect, good manners, and consideration for others; protecting pupils from harm; supporting academic, personal, and social development; facilitating effective communication among pupils, parents, and staff; and promoting the exercise of common sense at all times. As such, incidents of child-on-child abuse are considered serious breaches of our core values and the principles on which life at Wellington College Prep is based.

To further support pupils, the School provides access to an independent listener, displays advice and helplines, and delivers leadership training to prefects on supporting younger students. In respect of cyber-bullying, pupils are expected to adhere to the Acceptable Use Policy, and the IT Department monitors usage to ensure safety and privacy. In accordance with the Mobile Phone policy only boarders are allowed access to a mobile phone at stipulated times in the evening. When not in use, mobile phones are stored in secure lockers in the boarders' common room.

For parents, the School's policies are readily accessible via the school website, and open communication with tutors and Head of Year is encouraged. Parents are urged to contact the School with any concerns regarding their child's welfare, and all concerns are treated seriously and confidentially. Feedback from parents is welcomed to continually improve our preventative measures and overall approach.

Through these comprehensive measures, Wellington College Prep aims to ensure that all members of the community are clear about the standards of behaviour expected and that every pupil feels safe, respected, and supported during their time at the School.

*Jessica Goves (DSL) September 2023*

*Reviewed by Jessica Goves (DSL), September 2024*

***Reviewed by Jessica Goves (DSL), September 2025***

[This policy was drawn together in order to combine the Child-on-child abuse Policy, the Anti-bullying Policy and Sexual Misconduct policy]

## Appendix A: Hacketts Continuum of Harmful Sexual Behaviours



Source: <https://safeguardingchildren.co.uk/beaware-professionals/hsb/>

## **Appendix B: Immediate action following an allegation of sexual violence and harassment.**

When the member of staff to whom the disclosure has been made has passed on their report to the DSL, they should now withdraw from the process but remain vigilant.

When reviewing any report of alleged sexual violence or sexual harassment, the DSL should act in the best interests of the student who has been harmed whilst also understanding their broader duty to protect other children. In particular, the School accepts that it is important to take the wishes of the victim and how they want to proceed into consideration. To this end, as far as is possible, the victim should be given control over the support they will receive and how the investigation will proceed. The School will work closely with the local police and social care teams in order to understand what local processes are in place and what support can be accessed when sexual violence or sexual harassment has occurred.

Other considerations for the DSL will include:

- a) the nature of the alleged incident(s), including: whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether HSB has been displayed
- b) the ages of the children involved;
- c) the developmental stages of the children involved;
- d) any power imbalance between the children. For example, is an alleged student significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the student who has been harmed have a disability or learning difficulty?;
- e) if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature);
- f) that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers;
- g) are there ongoing risks to the student who has been harmed, other children, adult students or school or college staff (paying attention to possible intra-familial risks e.g. siblings)?; and
- h) other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation

All allegations of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence will be different and must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. In all incidents, however, the DSL will need to decide at which point to inform the alleged student that an accusation has been made against them. For incidents where referrals to children's social care and the police are made, the DSL will be guided by advice from those agencies when deciding upon next steps and with due regard to the statutory guidance in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (updated February 2024). In all cases of alleged sexual violence and harassment, an 'initial steps' meeting will be convened in order to brief relevant staff. The staff likely to be involved in this meeting are the DSL, Headteacher, Senior Deputy Head, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and respective HoYs.

In some cases of alleged sexual violence - for example, where it has been decided that the allegation has met the threshold for a Section 47 enquiry - it may not be appropriate for the School to investigate or to inform immediately the parents of the alleged student. In such cases, the DSL will be guided by advice from children's social care and the police. This does not, however, stop the School from taking immediate steps to safeguard the children involved, where required.

The DSL is likely to consider four possible scenarios for the response to any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment:

### **Managing Internally**

This option will most likely be followed for incidents of sexual harassment which are one-off, do not require statutory intervention, and where early intervention would not be appropriate.

Although this list is not exhaustive, examples of incidents which would be managed internally might include: sexual jokes or taunting; lewd comments; sexual remarks about appearance or clothes; the use of sexualised names; unwanted sexual comments or messages on-line; interfering with someone's clothes; or unwanted physical contact.

It should be noted that some of these behaviours may cross-over into sexual violence depending on the severity of the behaviour. The School must also take into consideration the experience of the victim when deciding whether the line between sexual harassment and sexual violence has been crossed.

In such cases, the response should include a thorough investigation of the allegation and the wider context in which it may have occurred. This investigation should be conducted in line with the School's Policy on Investigations. Underpinning this investigation is the principle that sexual violence and harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All discussions, interviews, decisions, and reasons behind decisions will be recorded.

### **Disciplinary action**

The School will consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved – any such action should address the behaviour, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it.

Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate:

- a)** to ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for their actions and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;
- b)** to demonstrate to the child/children and others that sexual harassment will never be tolerated;
- c)** to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

Disciplinary interventions alone, however, will rarely solve issues of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence, and the School will always consider wider actions which may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards. This will include employing specialist and pastoral support as appropriate, such as the School Play therapist/counsellor, Heads of Year and external support agencies, as well as restorative approaches such as mediation.

### **Early Help**

This option is similar to managing internally, but will be adopted if the DSL decides, following the initial investigation, that all or some of the children involved in the incident may benefit from targeted early help services. Such an approach may be of particular benefit to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour to prevent it from escalating into more serious and potentially violent behaviour.

In such cases, the DSL will work in collaboration with Children's Social Care/MASH team to discuss the incident and concerns surrounding it, as well as agreeing on a course of action, which may also include some form of disciplinary action as detailed above.

Disciplinary interventions may be employed but these alone will rarely solve issues of sexual harassment, and the School will always consider wider actions which may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards. This will include employing specialist and pastoral support as appropriate, such as the School Play therapist/counsellor, Heads of Year and external support agencies, as well as restorative approaches such as mediation.

All discussions, interviews, decisions, and reasons behind decisions will be recorded.

### **Referral to Children's Social Care/ MASH team**

If the DSL believes that a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, an immediate referral will be made to the CSC or MASH team in the Local Authority that the child/ren resides (home address), to discuss the allegation and agree a course of action. At this stage, the DSL will normally inform parents or carers unless there is a compelling reason not to do so (e.g. this will put a child at additional risk).

It is possible that a section 17 and/or section 47 statutory assessment will be required, and it is the DSL's duty to cooperate and collaborate with the lead social worker to ensure that the best package of coordinated support is implemented for the child(ren) involved.

The DSL must not wait for the outcome of any children's social care investigation before taking steps to safeguard and protect the children involved, although care must be taken to ensure that the DSL does not act in a manner which might jeopardise any statutory investigation. These considerations should be immediate.

CSC or MASH team may decide that the incident must be reported to the police, in which case the steps detailed under section D must be followed. If children's social care decides that the threshold for a statutory investigation has not been met, then the DSL can refer again if they do not feel comfortable with this decision.

If it is agreed that a statutory investigation is not required, then the School will undertake its own investigation, led by the Senior Deputy Head. Underpinning this investigation is the principle that sexual violence and harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All discussions, interviews, decisions and reasons behind decisions will be recorded.

Disciplinary interventions may be employed but these alone will rarely solve issues of sexual harassment and/or violence, and the School will always consider wider actions which may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards. This will include employing specialist and pastoral support as appropriate, such as the School Play therapist/counsellor, Heads of Year and external support agencies, as well as restorative approaches such as mediation.

### **Reporting to the Police**

In general, all reports to the police will be carried out alongside a referral to Children's Social Care/MASH team and will usually take place where there are grounds to believe that rape, assault by penetration, and/or sexual assault have taken place.

In such circumstances, where a crime has potentially been committed, it is almost certain that the police will assume responsibility for investigating the alleged incident, and it is the duty of the DSL to collaborate with the police to ensure that the investigation is carried out as sensitively and as effectively as possible.

The DSL must not wait for the outcome of any police investigation before taking steps to safeguard and protect the children involved, although care must be taken to ensure that the DSL does not act in a manner which might jeopardise any police investigation. These considerations should be immediate, and we will not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a police investigation before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and other children and adult students in the school.

When an allegation has been reported to the police, the School should consult the police to agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, especially the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. A discussion should also take place about the best way to protect the anonymity of those involved.

As the police investigation continues, the DSL will continue to engage with the Police and specialist agencies and pastoral staff to support the victim(s) and alleged perpetrator as best as possible. This will include employing specialist and pastoral support as appropriate, such as the School Play therapist/counsellor, Heads of Year and external support agencies, as well as restorative approaches such as mediation.

This guide is useful in determining whether the Police should be informed. All discussions, interviews, decisions, and reasons behind decisions will be recorded.

## **Appendix C: VICTIM BLAMING**

### **What is victim blaming?**

Victim blaming is any language or action that implies (whether intentionally or unintentionally) that an individual is partially or wholly responsible for abuse that has happened to them. It is harmful and can wrongfully place responsibility, shame or blame onto a victim, making them feel that they are complicit or responsible for the harm that they have experienced. People of all ages can display victim blaming attitudes and it can happen when considering both online and offline incidents.

### **Why is victim blaming harmful?**

One of the greatest barriers to a child or young person seeking help and reporting child-on-child abuse is feeling that they are to blame for what is happening to them. When a professional working with the child or young person speaks or behaves in such a way that this reinforces this feeling of self-blame, the impact of the abuse that the individual has already experienced may be greater.

When victim blaming occurs, there is a risk of diminishing the individual's experiences leading to a lack of, or an inappropriate, safeguarding response. This can have a devastating impact for the young person or child and make it less likely that they – or their peers - will disclose abuse in the future.

### **How does victim blaming present?**

Victim blaming may be direct or indirect. Direct victim blaming happens when a child or young person is explicitly held responsible for what has happened to them. Indirect victim blaming is harder to identify but happens when a person is trying to 'help' following an incident. However, the 'help' that is given reinforces the idea that the child or young person has done something wrong or is responsible for what happened to them.

Some examples:

#### **Direct victim blaming:**

**EYFS/Year 1:** A 5-year-old tells their teacher that another child keeps taking their toys and pushing them during playtime. The teacher responds by saying "Well, you shouldn't bring your favourite toys to school if you don't want them taken."

**Year 6:** A student confides in their parent that they're receiving mean messages through a class group chat. The parent responds "This is why I told you not to join that chat group - you brought this on yourself."

#### **Indirect victim blaming:**

**Year 2:** After a child reports being hit by another student, the teacher focuses entirely on teaching the victim "better ways to avoid conflict" rather than addressing the aggressor's behaviour.

**Year 7:** A student reports cyberbullying to their Head of Year, who responds by giving them a lengthy lecture about "digital footprints" and "being more careful online" rather than addressing the perpetrators.

### **Challenging victim blaming**

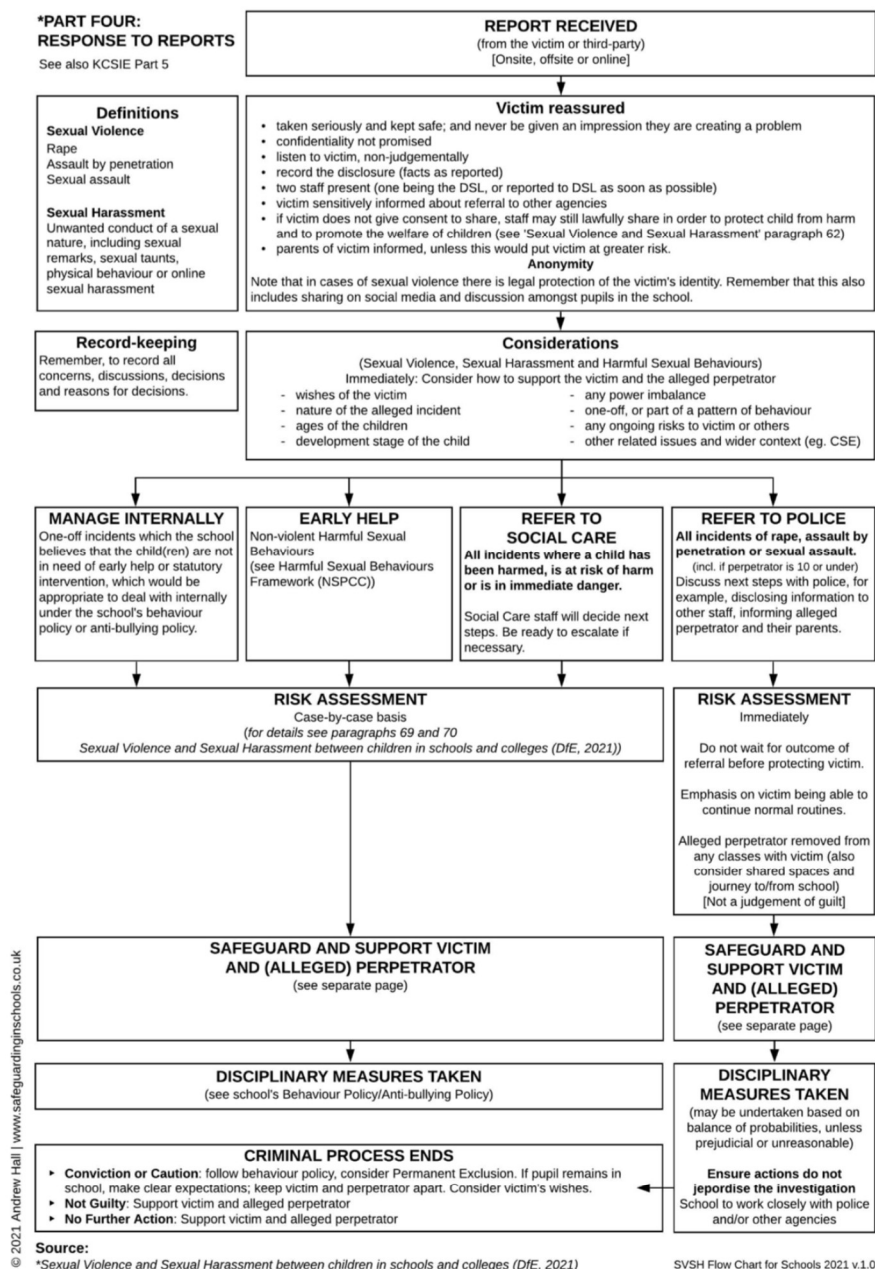
This should be done in a constructive and supportive way. The following steps will enable everyone who may be involved in an incident of child-on-child abuse to understand the impact of their words and actions.

- Remember the alleged victim lacks control in abusive situations – focus on the tactics or methods that the alleged perpetrator used to deceive or used to control the victim.
- Focus on the behaviour of the perpetrator who abused the child or young person, not the behaviour of the victim; this puts the responsibility onto the person who has harmed the victim.
- Make time for learning and reflection. After every incident reflect on whether any victim blaming behaviours were identified and how to prevent them in future cases.

Further reading on victim blaming in an online situation can be found in 'Challenging victim blaming language and behaviours when dealing with the online experiences of children and young people' (UK Council for Internet Safety) [here](#).

## Appendix D : Response to sexual violence and harassment in schools (DfE 2021)

### Safeguarding Handbook for Schools



Filename: Safeguarding Handbook for Schools September 2021 v.12.0.docx

## **Appendix E: Child-on-child harm: Support for parents**

This document has been put together by the Safeguarding team in order to support parents who have a child involved in the School disciplinary process which has concerned an incident of child-on-child harm: either as a parent of a child who has had harm caused to them or a parent of a child who has allegedly caused harm to another.

We recognise that this can be an enormously difficult time and understanding what may happen and what support might be available to you could be helpful.

An overview of the process

Following an incident of alleged child-on-child harm the School Investigations policy will be followed alongside the Behaviour Management Policy. It may be necessary for this process to be delayed if external agencies have been informed. The School has little discretion in how it deals with these matters if certain thresholds appear to have been met. The School will have no control over the timelines once a referral has been made, something that we appreciate is a frustration for all concerned.

The Safeguarding Team may need to inform the police if a crime has allegedly been committed. This could include cases involving assault, cyber-crime, drugs, harassment, theft and incidents involving weapons.

If a sexual offence has allegedly been committed, Bracknell Forest Local Authority protocols will be followed alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education (Part 5). Under this guidance we have a duty to report certain offences to the police and Children's Social Care.

Whilst circumstances will largely dictate whether a matter has to be reported to the Police, to the extent it is able to, the School will balance the needs of the students involved and the needs of other students and the wider school community. Advice from the Safeguarding Team at Bracknell Forest may be sought on a no-names basis if it is not entirely clear whether the police should be involved and further guidance is required.

The NPCC document 'When to Call the Police: Guidance for Schools and Colleges' may also be consulted and can be seen [here](#).

If the police are informed, they should make a referral to Children's Social Care as they have a duty to report any contact they have with a child aged 18 and under, or who is in full-time education. This is to ensure that all those involved are being offered the support that they are entitled to. Multi-agency working also helps to ensure best practice; professionals will support one another and always put the needs of the child (whether the child has allegedly caused harm or has had harm caused to them) at the centre of any decision making and will also advocate on behalf of the child. In circumstances where the School is concerned that the Police referral to Children's Social Care may not have been made in a timely manner, the School may also refer to Children's Social Care.

If the police are not informed, the safeguarding team may inform Children's Social Care if they feel a child is at risk and may need interventions which are not able to be provided by the School. Again, this referral will be made in a supportive way for the young person to ensure that all relevant avenues of support are in place to help them. This referral will be made by the DSL and with the consent of the parents.

If the incident has occurred on School site, a referral is made to Bracknell Forest Children's Social Care. Additional referrals will then be made to the authorities where the young person lives. Should an incident occur elsewhere (for example a student's home) and in a different local authority, referrals will be made to authorities in this area as well.

### Key personnel

There will be several key people involved in the investigations process. Below is a helpful overview of their role in the process.

|                 | Position                                                                                                                                                | Role                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jessica Goves   | Deputy Head Safeguarding (DSL)                                                                                                                          | External referrals and liaison with external agencies<br><br>Management of risk within the School (Risk assessments etc)<br><br>Provide information to the Headteacher       |
| Dee Guest       | Deputy Head Pastoral                                                                                                                                    | To help support pupils, parents and staff throughout the process with general oversight of the whole process<br><br>Signposting any relevant external support if appropriate |
| Well Being Team | Could include:<br><br>Rosie Perry - Head of Well Being<br><br>Lynne Franklin - Head of Well Being Hub<br><br>Georgie Morris – Play therapist/counsellor | To provide emotional support to students involved and provide play therapy/counselling                                                                                       |
| Rebecca Ross    | Senior Deputy Head                                                                                                                                      | Disciplinary Investigation and initial communication with parents. Updating the Headteacher about the progress of a case and providing information to the Headteacher        |
| HoY             | Head of Year                                                                                                                                            | Liaison with parents (direct point of contact)                                                                                                                               |

|             |             |                                                                                                                       |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             |             | Support for the young person                                                                                          |
| Tutor       | Tutor       | Support young person by providing work (if off school)<br><br>Keeping in touch<br><br>Emotional wellbeing and support |
| Ed Venables | Headteacher | Decision maker for major sanctions                                                                                    |

Key College policies (available online and on the parent portal):

- Behaviour Management policy
- Child-on-Child Abuse policy (including anti-bullying & sexual misconduct)
- Safeguarding & Child Protection policy
- Investigations policy: can be provided by emailing Karen Dyer:  
[kdyer@wellingtoncollegeprep.org.uk](mailto:kdyer@wellingtoncollegeprep.org.uk)

#### **External sources of support:**

This support document covers the spectrum of harm and applies to all parties. We recognise that both young people and parents may want to seek external support, and we are able to advise on this and signpost, accordingly, depending on the unique needs of the individuals concerned.

Child-on-child sexual harms: <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/research-resources/practice-resources/supporting-parents-and-carers/>

The police and local authority will also provide relevant help and support to parents in order to guide them and also signpost to sources of assistance and guidance.

#### **Appendix F: EYFS: Feeling safe and happy at school**

We want to make sure that children in the EYFS feel looked after, happy, and safe at school.

We can help children tell us if something bad is happening by teaching them:

What peer on peer abuse is

What to do if they feel they are being abused, or if someone else is being abused.

Make sure they know the grown-ups they can speak to if worried.

### 1 Use Kind Words

Choose kind words to say as kind words make people happy. Don't say things that might upset people.



### 2 Use Kind Words

Only touch people in kind ways. We don't push, hit, punch, or kick other people as this might upset them.



### 3 Use Good Listening

Listen to your friends and show that you care about what they are saying.



### 4 Treat People Equally

We treat everyone the same way because everyone is different. It doesn't make a difference if someone has different opinions. Everyone is equal.



### 5 Keep Private Parts Private

Your underwear covers up your private parts and no one should ask to see them or touch them. Sometimes a doctor, nurse or family member might have to. But first they should explain why and ask you if it's okay first.



### 6 Tell an Adult When Something Upsets You

If someone does something that upsets you or makes you feel sad, worried, or frightened, you should tell an adult you trust straight away. **Tell a grown-up**, such as a teacher or one of the staff at school.

