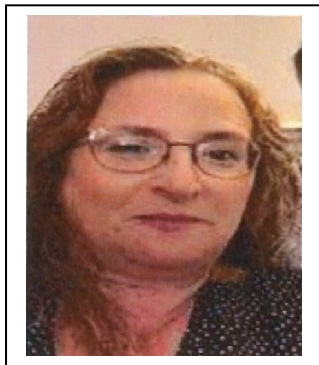# Dunbroch School Safeguarding Policy - (3) Child on Child Abuse Student on Student Abuse
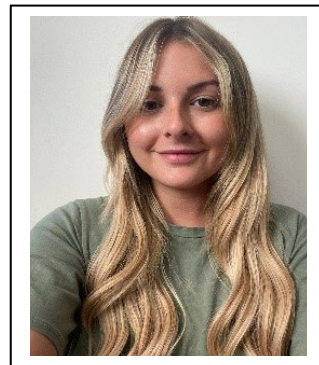
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Introduction

This policy is written in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2024 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. It's aim is to give school / college staff a better understanding of Child on Child Abuse, signs to identify harm and how to respond.

We also provide education to individuals over the age of 18 years. With that in mind, this policy has also been written in line with the Care Act 2014, Education Act 2002 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Abuse that takes place between over 18s is referred to as Student on Student Abuse. Those over the age of 18 are referred to as Students.

Our Schools / colleges have a **zero-tolerance to abuse** it is not 'banter' 'having a laugh' 'part of growing up 'or 'boys will be boys'.

Even if no cases are reported, such abuse may be taking place and is not being reported. Staff remain vigilant and maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'.

All our schools/colleges work with others and promote a multiagency approach to ensure that students/pupils have the right intervention at the right time.

Wider Policies support this Policy. All are numbered and sit alongside to create the school safeguarding policy.

1. Child Protection Policy
2. The Role of the DSL Policy
3. Child on Child/Student on Student Abuse Policy
4. Filtering and Monitoring Policy
5. Managing Low Level Concerns Policy
6. Absent from Education Policy
7. Schools Safer Recruitment Policy
8. Managing Contextual Risks to Children
9. Adult Safeguarding Policy (for over 18s)

Aims of this policy

The aims of this policy ensures staff understand:

- What Child on Child / Student on Student Abuse is
- The signs of a child/student who may be suffering
- Different categories of bullying
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children/students
- Physical abuse
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals
- How to respond to child on child / student on student abuse
- How allegations of child on child /student on student abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with
- Process on supporting victims, perpetrators and any other individuals affected

What is Child on Child /Student on Student Abuse?

Formally known as Peer-on-Peer Abuse, the Department of Education renamed this abuse to recognise lack of power balance in the wording. The word 'peer' means equal to. This led people to believe that this abuse existed between 2 people and did not consider the power imbalance between the perpetrator and victim. Factors such as ages, vulnerabilities, learning needs, family background are now considered. This means that within child on child /student on student abuse, both the victim and perpetrator's vulnerabilities should be considered.

The Department of Education (DfE) state:

"All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online."

Child-on child abuse is the term chosen by the DfE and, by definition, it applies to abuse by one child of another child – regardless of the age, of stage of development, or any age differential between them.

The work of Professor Carlene Firmin on Contextual Safeguarding focuses on peer-on-peer abuse, which she defines as a narrower category of abuse between peers – ie abuse between children of the same or similar age, or stage of development, and during adolescence".

In that sense, peer-on-peer abuse is a sub-set of child-on-child abuse which staff are aware of. However, for the purposes of this resource, only the term child-on child abuse is used, as adopted by the DfE.

For those over 18 years, child on child abuse is referred to as student on student abuse.

Signs that a child / student may be suffering

Common signs of abuse maintain the core list of indicators of child on child abuse. Below is a list, which is not comprehensive but are common signs that a child / student may be a victim of abuse.

- absence from school or disengagement from school activities
- physical injuries
- mental or emotional health issues
- becoming withdrawn – lack of self esteem
- lack of sleep
- alcohol or substance misuse
- changes in behaviour
- inappropriate behaviour for age
- harmful towards others

Staff are aware that females are more likely to be victims and males more likely to be perpetrators. Staff understand all abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Bullying

There are many different ways a child/student can be harmed by another child/student. Staff are vigilant around areas such as cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying.

Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted.

Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice based on an individual's actual or perceived identity; it can be based on characteristics unique to a child or student's identity or circumstance.'

Discriminatory bullying is making or showing an unjust or prejudicial distinction between different categories of people such as:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Race
- Sex
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

Staff follow the Child Protection / Adult Safeguarding policy when they suspect a child/student is being bullied. Staff may have concerns about bodily marks or bruising or what an individual may disclose abuse. In each instance the process for managing concerns is clear in the policies.

Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children

Children and students, particularly in their teens will be exploring relationships and experience sexual feelings they may not understand. Relationships may be between 2 individuals who are different genders, the same gender, different ages or different schools.

The victim may struggle to come forward as they may not be aware that what happened to them was wrong. The victim may also not be able to communicate the trauma they have faced or their vulnerabilities may impact their understanding of what has happened.

Likewise, the perpetrator may not understand their actions have caused harm. The perpetrator may also not fully understand their feelings or how to manage these. The perpetrator may themselves have vulnerabilities or a family history of domestic abuse and not understand the trauma they have caused.

Staff understand or seek to understand the underlying factors beneath an individual's disclosure of abuse and know how to respond.

Staff follow the Child Protection/Adult Safeguarding policy when an individual makes a disclosure and always reports the matter to the DSL without delay.

Physical abuse

Children and students can also physically abuse one another. Training and resources predominantly tend to encourage staff to think of this in a domestic environment but staff also consider things such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, punching or causing physical harm in a school environment.

All individuals irrespective of age or gender can be a victim or perpetrator of this. Staff are vigilant to such incidents and follow the School/College Behaviour Management Policy.

Incidents are reported to the DSL without delay. The DSL then considers any apparent patterns of incidents and whether a number of low-level incidents show a pattern where a child may be vulnerable to bullying or abuse.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Harmful sexual behaviour includes a variety of sexual behaviours, which can range from the inappropriate use of sexual language to public masturbation, to the grooming and sexual exploitation of children and other vulnerable individuals.

These behaviours can include:

- Sexual violence and harassment
- Youth produced sexual imagery (Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos)
- Upskirting (taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission)
- Touching sexual body parts in public
- Removing clothing and public exposure
- Masturbating in public
- Touching sexual body parts of others (children and/or adults)
- Simulation of sexual activity during play
- Forcing other children to engage in sexual play
- Secretly arranging to meet online acquaintances.
- Sexually explicit talk with younger children
- Forcing other children (including those more vulnerable or younger) to engage in sexual activity
- Non-consensual sexual activity (such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves or engage with someone in a 3rd party)
- Sexual activity with someone in authority and in a position of trust
- Sexual activity with family members
- Involvement in sexual exploitation and/or trafficking
- Sexual contact with animals
- Receipt of gifts or money in exchange for sex

Staff consider the needs of individuals who access our schools. Staff consider how our children develop physically and sexually in line with societal norms but also consider the difference in their social and emotional understanding. For example, research suggests that children with autism undergo normal physical development at puberty but the emotional

changes and increasing sexual urges which accompany adolescence may be delayed or prolonged.

Staff recognise that individuals accessing our schools are most likely undergoing the same psychological sexual maturation as their peers, however, their emotional and social understanding may impact their behaviour.

If a child/student discloses or staff suspect an individual is displaying harmful sexual behaviour, staff notify the DSL immediately.

The DSL considers:

- Has a crime been committed? Is police intervention required?
- Whether this is a safeguarding concern, does this need to be escalated to their local social services dept?
- Have parents/carers been informed where appropriate?
- Has there been a pattern of this behaviour previously (either at school/college, home or in the community)
- Is there any known concerns linked to the family home that the DSL is aware of?
- Is anyone (including the individual) at risk of immediate harm and require an immediate intervention?
- Have known risks been assessed and is a recurrence likely?
- What measures can be put in place to reduce the risk in future?

Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

Hazing or initiation ceremonies refers to the practice of rituals, challenges, and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group. Hazing is seen in many different types of social groups, including gangs, sports teams and school groups.

The initiation rites can range from relatively benign pranks, to protracted patterns of behaviour that rise to the level of abuse or criminal misconduct. Hazing may include physical or psychological abuse. It may also include nudity or sexual assault. Staff are alert to such behaviour and act in line with the Child Protection/Adult Safeguarding and Behaviour Management policies.

How to respond to child on child / student on student abuse

Staff ensure there are systems in place for individuals to confidentially report abuse. Students/pupils can speak to staff and know that their concerns will be shared with the right people and escalated to the DSL.

We create a healthy, safe environment based on equality and informed choice allowing children and students to know their rights and responsibilities, what to do if they are unhappy with something and what it means to give true consent.

Staff and students treat each other with respect and understand how their actions affect others.

Staff and students feel able to openly discuss issues that could motivate child on child abuse.

Our school/college has a zero-tolerance whole-school approach i.e. harmful behaviours will not be passed off as 'banter', 'just growing up', etc.   Issues that might later provoke conflict are addressed early. Reporting systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible and have the confidence of children and students. Staff also recognise that even if there are no reported cases of child on child abuse/student on students abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported.

We understand our local community and the context in which children and students are growing up in.

We ensure children/students know the risks – we talk about child on child/student on student abuse in an age-appropriate way. Our school creates opportunities for children/students to weigh up risks and recognises that sometimes this means they will take risks we as adults and professionals disagree with. Our role influences children/students to make healthy long-term choices and keeps them safe from harm in the short-term.

Staff understand the impact of child on child/student on student abuse on mental health as well as the additional needs/vulnerabilities of individuals with special educational needs or disabilities; those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender; and/or those who have other perceived differences and recognise this may impact their capacity to be open about any abuse they are suffering.

Check children/young people have safe relationships – in their family, with their peers and with your staff. We have created an environment where it is OK to talk, even about the most difficult things.

We spot the signs and know what to do – we use the checklists above along with our safeguarding procedures and are confident to raise child on child/student on student abuse as a possibility.

Allegations of child on child/student on student abuse

All concerns and allegations are passed to the DSL immediately. All staff ensure that any allegations of abuse are recorded.

The DSL makes sure all allegations are investigated and dealt with in line with the school Child Protection Policy or Adult Safeguarding Policy for over 18s.

Abuse that involves or is believed to involve sexual assault and violence always results in a multi-agency response. We are aware of local police and social services arrangements regarding allegations.

Process on supporting victims, perpetrators and any other individuals affected

As well as supporting and protecting the victim, school staff and external professionals we consider whether the perpetrator is a victim of abuse and whether they may also be in danger of being subjected to abuse post allegation.

Peer pressure can be huge for children/students and there will be times when the abuse, in whatever form it takes, looks consensual. This is another reason why a multi-agency approach is undertaken, potentially involving both social care and the police, in order to ensure investigations are properly carried out.

In situations where the individuals are in the same class or even school/college, risk assessments are put into place to safeguard both parties and consider how best to keep the them apart whilst travelling to and from school.

If the allegation involves rape and/ or assault by penetration, the perpetrator is removed from any shared classes. In line with guidance, any separation arrangements continue for as long as is necessary to make sure children are safe.

Consideration to where the alleged abuse took place is also given and includes ways that risk can be made safe/mitigated. The DSL considers this not only for their grounds and buildings but also if the abuse took place in a public space upon which a multi-agency approach is relied on.

Ongoing Education and Awareness

Our school/college is committed to on-going education and awareness surrounding child on child/student on student abuse. This is evidenced by our provision of annual safeguarding training for all staff, associated topics and themes which run through the curriculum, activities which promote positive relationships and interactions alongside participation in events such as Anti-Bullying Week.

Review History

A review will be undertaken annually as a minimum.

However, subject to a significant safeguarding concern this policy and all other attached policies will be reviewed and monitored as part of a lessons learned review.

Reviewed – December 2024 by Laura Dickie, Head of Policy Children's Services with input from Hill House School, Pottersbury Lodge School, Spring Hill School and Lufton College.

Next Review – December 2025

Written by:

This policy was written by Matt Nicholls – Head of Policy Children's Services and has been reviewed by Christina Leath – Group Safeguarding Director. This policy has also been reviewed by the DSL of the School and agreed by the head of the Governance Board.