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Governor approved	25 May 2022	Key person/people	HT/DHTs/DSL
Model Policy	Y	Model localised	
Pupil leadership team review		<del>Y</del> / <del>N</del> /	N/A

## **MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST OTHER PUPILS BY PEERS - SAFEGUARDING**

### **THIS POLICY SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANNEX 6 OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) says that ‘governing bodies should ensure that there are procedures in place to handle allegations against other children’. The guidance also states the importance of minimising the risks of peer-on-peer abuse. In most instances, the conduct of pupils towards each other will be covered by the school’s behaviour policy. Some allegations may be of such a serious nature that they may raise safeguarding concerns. These allegations are most likely to include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Incidences which are considered a safeguarding concern will be dealt with in line with our safeguarding procedures.

#### **The safeguarding implications of sexual activity between young people<sup>1</sup>**

The intervention of child protection agencies in situations involving sexual activity between children can require difficult professional judgments. Some situations are statutorily clear – for example, a child under the age of 13 cannot consent to sexual activity. But it will not necessarily be appropriate to initiate safeguarding procedures where sexual activity involving children and young people below the age of legal consent (16 years) comes to notice. In our society generally the age at which children become sexually active has steadily dropped. It is important to distinguish between consensual sexual activity between children of a similar age (where at least one is below the age of consent), and sexual activity involving a power imbalance, or some form of coercion or exploitation. It may also be difficult to be sure that what has or has been alleged to have taken place definitely does have a sexual component.

As usual, important decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, on the basis of an assessment of the children’s best interests. Referral under safeguarding arrangements may be necessary, guided by an assessment of the extent to which a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Key specific considerations will include:

- The age, maturity and understanding of the children;
- Any disability or special needs of the children;
- Their social and family circumstance;
- Any evidence in the behaviour or presentation of the children that might suggest they have been harmed;
- Any evidence of pressure to engage in sexual activity;
- Any indication of sexual exploitation.

There are also contextual factors. Gender, sexuality, race and levels of sexual knowledge can all be used to exert power. A sexual predator may sometimes be a woman or girl and the victim a boy.

### **Policy:-**

We believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the school and other children.

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers and this will be dealt with under our child protection policy and in line with KCSiE (2020)

We are clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.

We will minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse by: -

### **Prevention:**

- ❖ Taking a whole school approach to safeguarding and child protection
- ❖ Providing training to staff
- ❖ Providing a clear set of values and standards, underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, and by a planned programme of evidence-based content delivered through the curriculum
- ❖ Engaging with specialist support and interventions.

### **Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment:**

- Children making a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment will be taken seriously, kept safe and be well supported.
- If the report includes an online element, staff will be mindful of the Searching, Screening and Confiscation: advice for schools (DfE 2018) guidance.
- Staff taking the report will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as practicably possible but at least within 24 hours.
- Staff taking a report will never promise confidentiality.
- Parents or carers will normally be informed (unless this would put the child at greater risk).
- If a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral will be made to Children's Social Care (01329 225379).

### **Risk Assessment:**

Following a report, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will make an immediate risk and needs assessment on a case-by-case basis.

The Risk assessment will consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support.
- The alleged perpetrator, their support needs and any discipline action.

- All other children at the school.
- The victim and the alleged perpetrator sharing classes and space at school.

The risk assessment will be recorded and kept under review.

Where there has been other professional intervention and/or other specialist risk assessments, these professional assessments will be used to inform the school's approach to supporting and protecting pupils.

**Action: The Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider: -**

- The wishes of the victim.
- The nature of the incident including whether a crime has been committed and the harm caused.
- Ages of the children/young people involved.
- Developmental stages of the children/young people.
- Any power imbalance between the children/young people.
- Any previous incidents.
- On-going risks.
- Other related issues or wider context.

**Options: The Designated Safeguarding Lead will manage the report with the following options: -**

- Manage internally
- Refer to Early Help
- Refer to Children's Social Care
- Report to the police (generally in parallel with a referral to Social Care)

**Ongoing Response:**

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will manage each report on a case-by-case basis and will keep the risk assessment under review.
- Where there is a criminal investigation into a rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, the alleged perpetrator should be removed from any classes they share with the victim during that investigation.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider how best to keep the victim and perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport where appropriate.
- Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, the school will take suitable action. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other pupils or students).
- Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, the school will, if it has not already, consider any suitable sanctions in light of their behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion. Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school, the principle of keeping the victim and perpetrator in separate classes where possible would be maintained and continued

consideration would be given to the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school premises and transport. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.

- The victim, alleged perpetrator and other witnesses (children and adults) will receive appropriate support and safeguards on a case-by-case basis.
- The school will take any disciplinary action against the alleged perpetrator in line with behaviour and discipline in schools.
- The school recognises that taking disciplinary action and providing appropriate support are not mutually exclusive actions and will occur at the same time if necessary.

### **Physical Abuse**

While a clear focus of peer on peer abuse is linked to sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be abusive.

These are equally not tolerated and, if it is believed that a crime has been committed, will be reported to the police.

The principles from the anti-bullying policy will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any police investigation will need to take priority.

