



# Child on Child Abuse Policy:

Also see Anti Bullying information in the  
Behaviour Policy

January 2022

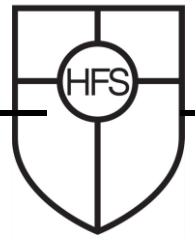
Approved by Governors  
March 2022



SLT Responsible: Mrs F Johnston

Next Review Date: January 2024

# The Holy Family



## Catholic School

At The Holy Family Catholic School, our policies and the actions arising from them are always founded in spirit and in letter in our Catholic faith, especially our mission statement and nine core virtues:

---

### Awakening Minds

Our faith, the teachings of Christ, is at our heart. We devote ourselves fully to our spiritual growth, striving for excellence in all that we do each day.



### Achieving Dreams

Our work blends inspirational teaching and confident study in a stimulating environment. We learn wholeheartedly, turning our ambitions into reality with every opportunity.



### Serving Others

Our spirit leads us to take a positive role in our community. We show love, care and respect for one another and for everyone in our world today.



## **Introduction**

The governors, senior leadership team, and all staff (which term shall apply to all volunteer staff members) at The Holy Family Catholic School (the School) are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the School.

### **In particular, we:**

- believe that in order to protect pupils, all schools should

(a) be aware of the nature and level of risk to which their students are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context; and (b) take a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse,

- regard the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure. We

(a) do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to child-on-child abuse in response to alleged incidents of it; and

(b) believe that in order to tackle child-on-child abuse proactively, it is necessary to focus on all four of the following areas: (i) systems and structures; (ii) prevention; (iii) identification; and (iv) response/intervention,

- recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and child-on-child abuse in the school setting, and

- encourage parents to hold us to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of child, they should inform the School so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

## **Language**

For the purposes of this policy the language used will refer to alleged victims and alleged perpetrators this is to ensure that pupils are not given 'labels' about their behaviour unfairly and without any full and thorough conclusive investigation. The language used to pupils and parents in the reporting of any incidents that may have occurred could impact on any future rehabilitation of pupils and young people following any investigations that may occur. The use of words such as victim and perpetrator can be both inflammatory and distressing for pupils and their parents.

---

### **This policy:**

- is the school's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute child-on-child abuse. It relates to, and should be read alongside, the school's safeguarding and child protection policy and any other relevant policies including, but not limited to, bullying (including cyber-bullying), youth involved sexual imagery, online safety, IT use, data protection and retention of records, pupils missing in education, student behaviour and discipline, exclusions, and weapons.
- sets out our strategy for improving prevention, and identifying and appropriately managing child-on-child abuse. It is our intention to involve students, staff and parents, in ongoing review of this policy and procedures every two years.
- applies to all [governors, the senior leadership team, and staff]. It is reviewed annually, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which students are or may be exposed. A number of staff and students are involved in each annual review which involves, and is informed by, an assessment of the impact and effectiveness of this policy over the previous year, recognises that abuse is abuse, and should never be passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', or 'part of growing up',
- is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021)
- does not use the term 'victim' and/or 'perpetrator'. This is because our School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in concerns or allegations about child-on-child abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused, and those who are alleged to have abused other children, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter. Research has shown that many pupils who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by other children, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of another child,
- should, if relevant, according to the concern(s) or allegation(s) raised, be read in conjunction with our Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Policy and the DfE's advice on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges (DfE's Advice) (Sept 2021),<sup>33</sup> and any other advice and guidance referred to within it, as appropriate, and
- should be read in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it. This can be found at [SaferBradford.com](http://SaferBradford.com)

All staff, governors and volunteers, have signed to say that they have read, understood and agreed to work within this policy framework and parents have access to this policy. This policy will be updated every two years.

### **Purpose and Aim**

'Research has shown that many pupils who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by other children, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of other children (Farrer and Co, 2020)

Pupils and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as child-on-child abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child-on-child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues. At The

---

Holy Family Catholic School we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety/Acceptable Use Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Retention of Records Policy
- Behaviour Policy – inclusive of positive handling, searching and confiscating

### **Framework and Legislation**

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Pupil's Act 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount also supported by subsequent publications of the act. An additional key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together 2018, highlighting that every assessment of a child, should 'reflect the unique characteristics of the child within their family and community context' (Working Together, 2018:28). This is clearly echoed by Keeping Pupils Safe in Education 2020 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child and to be mindful of the contexts pupils live in.

### **Preventative Strategies**

#### **Recognition**

We believe that it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of child-on-child abuse rather than only manage the issues in a reactive way.

Firstly, and most is for us to recognise that child on child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms in place. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff. This involves staff analysing any incidents for trends, patterns and identifying any areas around the setting that may appear to be 'less safe'. Staff should also have access to regular CPD and training to ensure a consistent approach to managing child-on-child issues.

#### **A Safe Environment to Share Concerns Alongside a Positive Curriculum**

It is important that our school has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. At The Holy Family Catholic School this is strengthened through a strong and positive PHSE/RSHE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives pupils an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another.

To enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure the whole workforce and governing body feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is necessary for whole staff training and CPD to support staff to talk to young people in a way that continues to create an open and honest

---

environment without prejudice. It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a young person seeking no further help or advice. Staff must also feel enabled to discuss issues about online access and support and reinforce appropriate behaviours online including understanding why age limits are in place on social media platforms, encouraging pupils to share online concerns, talking about issues that have happened in an open forum and working closely with parents. (Farrer and co, 2019)

### **Involve Parents/Carers**

Parents need to be informed and included in policy forming, lesson plans and through open and frank conversations, training/courses about what child-on-child abuse is and how the school and setting will be tackling it. This can help to alleviate any concerns and worries and create a joined-up approach. HFCS will need to ensure open two way communication is available through a variety of platforms so that both parents and staff are working together to deal with any issues.

### **Framework and Legislation**

#### **Signposting**

It is important that signposting is available to young people in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or another child. Resource boards with support services on a wide range of issues so young people can seek their own solutions should they wish to be located around school and in pastoral areas. Support is also available through our Mental Health Champions and Thrive. Other external services or support programmes at times may be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of child-on-child abuse.

#### **Forums for Pupils to Make Changes/Have Their Voice Heard**

Following the relaxation of Covid protocols, we look forward to redeveloping our Student Leadership Group. We regularly collect Student Voice in a variety of forums.

#### **Partnership Working**

At HFCS we understand the importance of multi-agency working. By accessing advice, support and guidance, effective decisions can be made in collaboration to improve outcomes for pupils who may be at risk of harm. Seeking advice and guidance can act as a preventative measure so that the right course of action is taken at the earliest opportunity. The school will actively refer concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse where necessary to front door services, children's social care and the police where appropriate. This is 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 (Farrer and Co. 2020).

At HFCS we believe that tackling bullying (and abuse by another child) will create an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. That culture extends beyond the classroom to the corridors, the dining hall, the outdoor space, and beyond the school gates including travel to and from school. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole

---

school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest through our Virtues. (Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017).

### **What is Child on Child Abuse?**

For these purposes, child-on-child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between pupils and within pupils relationships (both intimate and non-intimate) friendship and wider peer associations.

Child on child abuse can take various forms, including: serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or gender-based violence.

Pupils 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 set out above and capture the full context of pupils experiences. This can be done by adopting a contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that our response to incidents of child-on-child abuse takes into account any potential complexity (Farrer and Co. 2020).

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

This means adopting a whole school community contextual safeguarding approach by ensuring all staff: understand how a child's wider context may have impact on them; contribute to creating a strong safeguarding culture in school by following policies that address child-on-child abuse and harmful attitudes; promote healthy relationships and attitudes to gender/sexuality; support the school by identifying 'less safe' areas in school; access training on bias and stereotyped assumptions; be alert to changes in pupils behaviour and seek appropriate responses to concerns shared. (Farrer and Co, 2020)

Research suggests that child-on-child abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse affecting pupils in the UK (Farrer and Co, 2020). Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE 2021). Research suggests 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. Barriers to disclosure will also be different. HFCS will explore the gender dynamics of child-on-child abuse within their settings and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender imbalanced environments (Farrer and Co. 2020).

It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

### **Pupils with Special Educational Needs**

---

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration
- being more prone to peer group isolation than other pupils
- the potential for pupils with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers

To address these additional challenges, HFCS will ensure that suitably trained staff will be available to pupils with SEN and disabilities particularly when investigating any form of child-on-child abuse. (KCSIE, 2021)

## **Types of Abuse**

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

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

### **Sexually Harmful Behaviour/Sexual Abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault etc.)**

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is intended towards.

### **Sexually harmful behaviour may include**

- inappropriate sexual language
  - inappropriate role play
  - sexual touching
  - sexual assault/abuse. Staff should be aware of the importance of:
    - making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
    - not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
-



- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them
- Upskirting: where someone takes a picture under a person's clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without permission and/or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.

More detail is available in our Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Policy.

## **Bullying**

“Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online” (Anti-Bullying Alliance definition)

- An Imbalance of Power: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.
- Online Bullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, email, chat rooms etc.) to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. Online bullying can take many forms
  - Abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
  - Posting abusive comments on social media sites
  - Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
  - Stealing someone's online identity
  - Spreading rumours online
  - Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms or games
  - Developing hate sites about another person
  - Prank calls or messages □ Group bullying or exclusion online
  - Anonymous messaging
  - Encouraging a young person to self-harm
  - Pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

## **Sexual Violence**

What is consent? Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose

## **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment means ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline. In referencing sexual harassment, it is in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment (KCSIE 2021).

**Sexual harassment can include:**

---

- Sexual comments, such as; telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names
- Sexual 'jokes' or taunting
- 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) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
- Online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:

Non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos o Sexualised online bullying

Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media

Sexual exploitation; coercion and threats, upskirting

### **Upskirting**

'Upskirting' typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is now a criminal offence. (KCSIE, 2021)

### **Bullying (inclusive of all types)**

The new definition of bullying is, 'a person who habitually seeks to harm or intimidate those who they perceive as vulnerable'. (Taken from the Oxford, Cambridge and Collins dictionary, updated 2018)

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between pupils, or perceived differences.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. (Preventing and Tackling Bullying July 2017)

## Online bullying

Online bullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Snapchat and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

It is important to state that online bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 under section 1 which states that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing sexual images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have **no choice** but to involve the police to investigate these situations as our power to intervene is very limited.

## Sexting (Youth Involved Imagery)

'Youth Involved' includes pupils sharing images that they, or another child, have created themselves and 'imagery' covers both still photos and moving videos (and this is what is meant by reference to imagery throughout the policy). A judgement of whether something is 'decent' is both a value judgement and dependent on context. The term 'sexual' is clearer than 'indecent'. (Farrer and Co, 2020)

Sexting, as it is more commonly known, is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending what may be referred to as 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can occur in any relationship, to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference.

However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Sharing nude or indecent imagery must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will follow the UKCIS: Sexting in schools and colleges guidance (Dec 2020)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/551575/6.2439\\_KG\\_NCA\\_Sexting\\_in\\_Schools\\_WEB\\_1\\_.PDF](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551575/6.2439_KG_NCA_Sexting_in_Schools_WEB_1_.PDF) 5guradin

## Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team, groups/gangs etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies.

---

The idea behind this practice is that it welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment. They may also involve breaking the law.

### **Prejudiced Behaviour**

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular, prejudices to do with disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

### **Teenage relationship abuse**

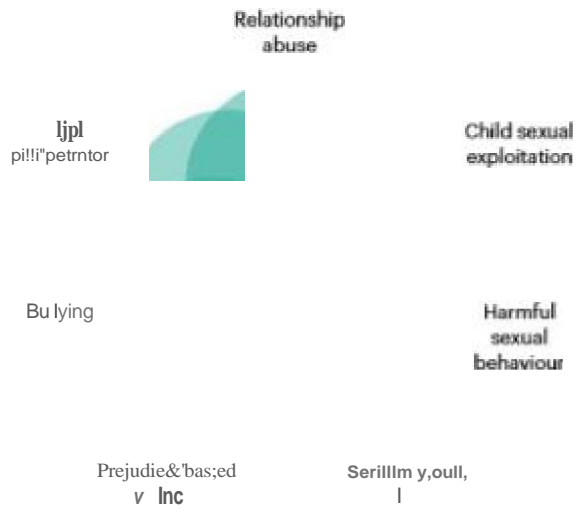
Teenage relationship abuse is defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner.

### **Measuring the Behaviour**

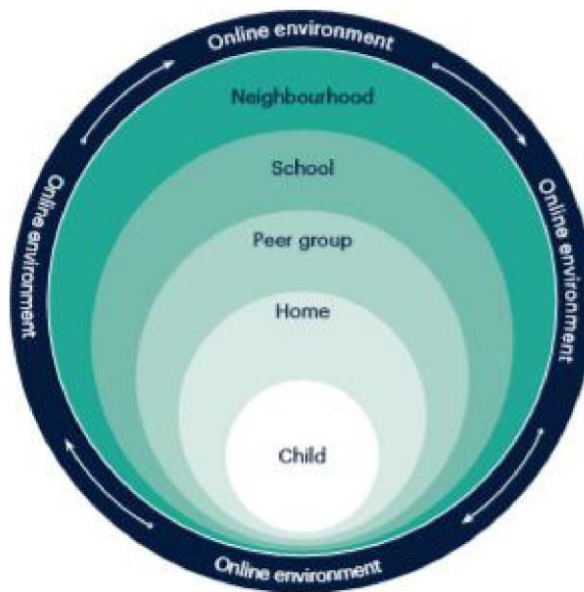
Simon Hackett's continuum of behaviour (taken from Farrer and Co. 2017) can be a useful guide to measure the behaviour that has occurred and consider the circumstances around the incident(s). The continuum looks at whether it:

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

Illo s OCCOLJH 0  
 pMr O (pQOf .m.1;



ante.dual circle-of  
 adole.'Gent VL.dnerab lity



Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmentally expected</li> <li>• Socially acceptable</li> <li>• Consensual, mutual, reciprocal</li> <li>• Shared decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour</li> <li>• Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group</li> <li>• Context for behaviour may be inappropriate</li> <li>• Generally consensual and reciprocal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problematic and concerning behaviour</li> <li>• Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected</li> <li>• No overt elements of victimisation</li> <li>• Consent issues may be unclear</li> <li>• May lack reciprocity or equal power</li> <li>• May include levels of compulsivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victimising intent or outcome</li> <li>• Includes misuse of power</li> <li>• Coercion and force to ensure compliance</li> <li>• Intrusive</li> <li>• Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given</li> <li>• May include elements of expressive violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically violent sexual abuse</li> <li>• Highly intrusive</li> <li>• Instrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour</li> <li>• Sadism</li> </ul>

Behaviour which is not abusive at first may potentially become abusive quickly or over time. 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.

### **Expected Action Taken By All Staff**

All staff should be alert to the well-being of pupils and young people and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which pupils will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ (Farrer and Co. 2020).

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the young people involved, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm.

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get a true, accurate account of the facts around what has happened, so that nothing is forgotten. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the pupils and the parents when they become involved. For example; do not use the word perpetrator, this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

In all cases of child-on-child abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Staff will be mindful of contextual safeguarding and that wider safeguarding concerns may influence the child's account of the event(s). Alongside this peer pressure and the impact of sharing information about the incident(s) may also influence a child's account.

### **Gather the Facts**

In cases specifically relating to Sexual violence and sexual harassment, in line with Keeping Pupils safe in Education 2021, part 5, two members of staff (preferably one being the Designated Safeguarding Lead) should be present to manage the report, where possible.

The most appropriate member of staff with the best relationship with the child should be the person alongside the child who wishes to disclose wherever possible. However, staff should always be aware that pupils may choose to disclose to any member of staff that they feel most comfortable with and therefore all staff need basic training in managing disclosures. In any circumstance the member of staff must make clear to the child that they cannot maintain confidentiality if what is being shared has put or will put the child or another person at risk of harm.

In all circumstances, staff will need to speak to all the young people involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account. Staff will ask the young people to tell them what happened. Staff will only interrupt the young person from this to gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?) A full and clear record of exactly what the young person has said in their own language should be made (and no individual interpretation of the facts made which could impact on the disclosure) and stored following the schools own recording protocols (CPOMS).

### **Consider the intent (begin to Risk Assess)**

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

### **Decide on Your Next Course of Action**

If from the information that is gathered, we believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm we must make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also). This action would, in most circumstances be undertaken by the Designated Safeguarding Lead but in the event of their absence the referral can be made by another member of the Safeguarding Team. If this is the case, once social care has been contacted and made a decision on what will happen next then the school will be informed of their next steps. If social care and the police intend to pursue this further they may ask the school to interview the young people in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to also.

It may also be that social care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case school may choose to challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, you agree with the decision, you may then be left to inform parents.

### **Informing parents**

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care the school has agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then the school need to inform the parents as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents. Parents would not be informed if by doing so the child was put at further risk of significant harm.

---

If a young person is deemed to be 'Gillick Competent' following the 'Fraser' guidelines and does not wish you to share the information with parents, then the school must consider this especially for example if the young person is pregnant and this is why they are being bullied (unless this has occurred through significant harm in which case a criminal/social care case is likely or the young person is under the age of 13).

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then the school should encourage the young person to share the information with their parent or even with them (they may be scared to tell parents that they are being harmed in any way). Where school can evidence they are acting in the best interests of the young person they would not be criticised, however this would be the case if they actively breached the rights and choices of the young person.

The school will always endeavour to inform parents in face to face as the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

### **Points to consider:**

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

How old are the young people involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved?

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

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

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

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

#### **What is each of the pupils own understanding of what occurred?**

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

In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If school is concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, they will seek advice from Childrens Services Social Care.

---



## **Repetition**

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

## **Outcomes**

The outcome of the investigation will follow Bradford local threshold guidance. Therefore, either a referral will have been made to either the police/social care for a full investigation (Tier 4). It may have resulted in Childrens Services undertaking a further assessment (Tier 3) or as a school we may have identified additional services/intervention that are non-statutory and in which case completed an early help assessment (Tier 2). It may be that on investigation, a decision has been made to handle the incident(s) internally and in which case the school may implement a risk assessment plan (Tier 1).

In any of the above outcomes the school has a duty of care to manage the education needs of both pupils/young people in which case a risk assessment plan may be needed irrespective of the outcome.

## **Next Steps**

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

### **For the young person who has been harmed (alleged victim)**

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends. In which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

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

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

### **For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour (alleged perpetrator)**

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

---

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

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

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

### **After care**

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

### **Safety Planning**

Safety planning is a positive way of supporting a pupil who may benefit from a planned approach; this may be either the alleged victim or the alleged perpetrator. Safety plans support the pupil by considering the behaviours that may be risky and plan ways to manage triggers and to seek support from adults and peers. They are inclusive of parents and staff and are a planned intervention to support young people in feeling secure in the school/setting, helping young people identify behaviours that may leave them feeling anxious or at risk and have strategies that they can apply to keep themselves feeling safe. The language of safety planning is more positive than risk assessment and can give security to the pupil that a joined up approach is being followed by all in school. The Holy Family Catholic School has safety planning templates available for key staff.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Finally, and in some circumstances, the school may need to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any pupils involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including

(a) to ensure that the child/pupils take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;

---

(b) to demonstrate to the child/pupils and others that child-on-child abuse can never be tolerated; and (c) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other pupils.

However, these considerations must be balanced against the pupils own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action The Holy Family Catholic School will always consider its duty to safeguard all pupils from harm; the underlying reasons for a pupil's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the pupil may pose to other pupils; 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 safety and wellbeing of the other pupils in the School. Engaging in Fair Access Panel Processes to assist with decision-making associated to managed moves and exclusions can also be beneficial (Farrer and Co. 2020).

### **Review of Circumstances**

Following any incident of harm, it is necessary for The Holy Family Catholic School to consider if anything could have been done differently or what identified changes within the school need to occur. This proactive approach ensures that the school is in continually reviewing its policies and systems in effectively keeping pupils safe.

### **This policy has been heavily supported by the key document:**

Farrer and Co: Peer on Peer Abuse Toolkit. 2020

<https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/news-articles/downloads/peer-on-peer-abusetoolkit-14.pdf>

### **This policy should be read in conjunction with:**

The Holy Family Catholic School Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy 2021

The Holy Family Catholic School Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Policy

DFE: Keeping Pupils Safe in Education. September 2021

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-pupils-safe-in-education--2>

DFE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies. July 2017

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/623895/Preventing\\_and\\_tackling\\_bullying\\_advice.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf)

---

DFE: Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Pupils in Schools and Colleges.  
September 2021

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges>

Working Together to Safeguard Pupils, 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-pupils--2>

UKCCIS: Sexting in Schools and Colleges

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/647389/Overview\\_of\\_Sexting\\_Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/647389/Overview_of_Sexting_Guidance.pdf)

Local Safeguarding Partnership arrangements

---

## Appendix 1

### DfE guidelines (2017)

**Bullying** is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgements about each specific case.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online. Low level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating. Since September 2014 a greater focus on how well school leaders tackle low-level disruption was included in Ofsted inspections.

**Cyber-bullying** - The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyberbullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

The Education Act 2011 amended the power in the Education Act 1996 to provide that when an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, has been seized by a member of staff who has been formally authorised by the headteacher, that staff member can examine data or files, and delete these, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone. If an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules has been seized and the member of staff has reasonable ground to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, they must give the device to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable. Material on the device that is suspected to be evidence relevant to an offence, or that is a pornographic image of a child or an extreme pornographic image, should not be deleted prior to giving the device to the police.<sup>1</sup> If a staff member finds material that they do not suspect contains evidence in relation to an offence, they can decide whether it is appropriate to delete or retain the material as evidence of a breach of school discipline.

**Bullying outside school premises** -Teachers have the power to discipline pupils for misbehaving outside the school premises "to such an extent as is reasonable". This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre. Where bullying outside

---

school is reported to school staff, it should be investigated and acted on. The Headteacher should also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or antisocial behaviour coordinator in their local authority of the action taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed. In all cases of misbehaviour or bullying the teacher can only discipline the pupil on school premises or elsewhere when the pupil is under the lawful control of the staff member.

**If an incident of bullying outside the school premises is reported to the school, it is important that it is investigated and appropriate action is taken. This will send a strong signal to pupils that bullying will not be tolerated and perpetrators will be held to account.**

**Criminal law** -Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986. If school staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

---

## **Appendix 2 – The Equality Act 2010**

A key provision in The Equality Act 2010 is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which came into force on 5 April 2011 and covers age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Maintained schools and Academies are required to comply with the PSED. In addition Part 6 of the Act makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil in relation to admissions, the way it provides education for pupils, provision of pupil access to any benefit, facility or service, or by excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment. In England and Wales Part 6 of the Act applies to maintained schools and Academies and to other independent schools.

In addition to the duties in relation to pupils with disabilities under the Equality Act, schools also have duties under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 to ensure that pupils with special educational needs engage in the activities of the school together with children who do not have special educational needs.

## Appendix 3

### CONTACT LINES AND HELPFUL AGENCIES

#### Specialist Organisations:

Anti-Bullying Alliance	<a href="http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk">www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk</a>
The Diana Award (Anti-bullying ambassadors programme)	Kidscape 0207 7303 300
Childline (Confidential free phone line for Children in trouble or danger)	0800 1111
Victim Support	0808 1689111
NSPCC	0800 800 5000

#### Cyber-bullying and Online safety:

Childnet International  
Digizen  
Internet Matters  
Think U Know  
The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS)

#### LGBT:

Bernardos  
EACH  
Metro Charity  
Proud Trust  
Schools Out  
Stonewall

#### SEND:

Mencap  
Changing Faces  
Cyberbullying and children and young people with SEN and disabilities  
Information, Advice and support Service Network

#### Mental Health

MindEd  
PSHE Association – guidance and lesson plans

#### Race, religion and nationality

Anne Frank Trust  
Educate against Hate  
Show racism the red card  
Kick it out  
Tell MAMA  
Anti-Muslim Katred working group  
Sexual Harassment and Sexual Bullying  
Ending violence against women and girls: a guide for schools  
Disrespect No Body  
Anti-bullying Alliance



**School staff:**

**Cyberbullying: advice for Headteachers and school staff DFE November 2014**