



## **Child-On-Child Abuse**

### **Introduction**

At Peafield Lane Academy we have a **zero-tolerance** approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse including sexual violence, sexual harassment (SVSH) and harmful sexual behaviour (HSB). We believe that child-on-child abuse is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. It will **never** be passed off as “banter,” “just having a laugh,” “a part of growing up” or “boys being boys.” We will **respond to all signs, reports, and concerns** of child-on-child abuse, including those that have happened outside of our school premises, and/or online. We recognise that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers, we take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. We recognise that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. We acknowledge that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable. We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse within our school and beyond.

In cases where child-on-child abuse is suspected or identified we will follow our Child Protection procedures, taking a contextual, trauma-informed, and strengths-based approach to support all children who have been affected by the situation including the victim and **alleged** perpetrator.

### **Policy Development**

This policy has been developed to reflect the most recent Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) Statutory Guidance (1 September 2023) and was formulated in consultation with the whole school community with input from staff and governors.

This policy is available:

- On the school website
- From the school office

This policy is reviewed and evaluated throughout the academic year. It is updated annually.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff working with children maintain an attitude of ‘**it could happen here,**’ and this is especially important when considering child-on-child abuse.

The Head teacher Chris Heathcote has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation and liaising with the Governing body, parents/carers, LA (Local Authority), and outside agencies.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all however all staff, parents/carers and pupils need to be aware of who to report to and how to report any safeguarding concerns. The Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and their Deputies in our school are:

# Peafield Lane Academy **Child-On-Child Abuse Policy**

Published: September 2023

Review Date: September 2024

Compiled by: Chris Heathcote



Chris Heathcote (Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead)- Headteacher

Corey Nightingale (Designated Deputy Safeguarding Lead)- Acting Deputy Headteacher

Lisa Green (Deputy Safeguarding lead)- Family Support Worker & Senior Teaching Assistant

Laura Childs (Deputy Safeguarding Lead)- SENDCO

The nominated Governor with responsibility for child-on-child abuse is Di Wise.

## **Definitions**

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudiced-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children, (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- 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)
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes, and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Upskirting (which is a criminal offence), 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
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse, or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element). This may also be an indicator of wider exploitation such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and/or Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and/or County Lines.

## **Recognising:**

At Peafield Lane Academy we recognise that behaviours associated with child-on-child abuse take place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on this spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

We recognise that all children grow and develop at their own pace. We will use our professional judgement and knowledge of child development when responding to child-on-child abuse.

## **Reporting and Responding:**

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At Peafield Lane Academy we want children, parents/carers, staff, and visitors to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously. We recognise that our school's initial response to a report of child-on-child abuse is incredibly important - how we respond to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims to report or come forward. As a school we will also respond to reports of alleged child-on-child abuse that have occurred online or outside of school. These reports will be treated seriously, and the school remains committed to supporting and safeguarding all parties including the victim, alleged perpetrator, and any other child(ren) who may be affected.

We will make decisions on a case-by-case basis, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) taking the leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as the Local Authority, Children's Social Care, and the Police as appropriate. We will ensure that we reference and follow other school policies and procedures as appropriate.

We have clear reporting systems for each group of our school community: the effectiveness of these reporting systems is reviewed throughout the academic year and may be expanded to meet the needs of all members of our community.

## **Children (including bystanders):**

It is important to understand that a victim may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report. We recognise that in some instances another child may report on another child's behalf. All children will know how to report concerns or incidents of child-on-child abuse.

We ask that all children report any concerning behaviour to a member of school staff – this can be any member of teaching or non-teaching staff, including a class teacher, a TA, the Head teacher, a lunchtime supervisor, or a member of the office team. We talk about trusted adults regularly in class and in assemblies to remind our children of who they can report concerns to.

The member of staff will listen to the child and make an initial note of their concerns, they will then discuss next steps with them and reassure them that they will be supported. In line with the statutory guidance provided in Keeping children safe in education 2023, we will never promise a child that we will not tell anyone about a report of any form of abuse, as this may not be in the best interests of the child. The member of staff will make a formal record of the concern/report on the school's recording system (CPOMs) and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The member of staff will directly alert the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead if the report is deemed urgent or if a child is considered at risk.

We understand that some children may find it difficult to tell a member of staff about their concerns verbally, we therefore have additional reporting mechanisms in place. Our school has a worry box in each classroom where the child can put their name/a brief note about their concerns/draw a picture of their concern – these worry boxes are introduced to the children at the start of the year and children are reminded of them regularly.

## **Parents/carers**

We understand that parents and carers may well struggle to cope with making or receiving a report that their child has been the victim of or is an alleged perpetrator of child-on-child abuse.

## Peafield Lane Academy **Child-On-Child Abuse Policy**

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In line with the statutory guidance provided in Keeping children safe in education 2023 (Part 5) , we will seek advice and support from other services as decided on a case-by-case basis. All decisions and actions taken by the school will consider the needs of the individual children involved, and the wider school community.

We ask that if parents/carers have concerns about their child experiencing or allegedly perpetrating child-on-child abuse, that they contact the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy (in person/via telephone call/via email) to explain their concerns. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will take an initial note of the concerns but may ask to schedule a meeting to allow for more time to discuss the concerns in detail. Following the report and/or the meeting, the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will make a formal record of the report on the school's recording system (CPOMs) and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will seek advice from Statutory Services if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

We ask that parents/carers to come directly to the school with their concerns rather than discussing them with other members of the school community in person or online.

Our school remains committed to supporting pupils and their families in all instances of child-on-child abuse. We will endeavour to ensure that all parties are kept informed of progress and any developments, but we will also need to show due regard to GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and ongoing investigations by statutory services. This may mean, at times, that we are not able to provide or share information or updates.

If a parent/carer is not satisfied with our school's actions, we ask that they follow our school's complaint policy and procedures. This is available online from our school website and on request from the school office.

### **Staff**

Our staff work closely with our children and therefore may notice a change in a child's behaviour or attitude that might indicate that something is wrong before receiving a report from a child or a member of the school community. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare or are concerned that a child is displaying behaviours that may show they have been the victim of or that they are perpetrating child-on-child abuse, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.

We ask that staff report their concerns to a Designated Safeguarding Lead/directly to the Head teacher. The member of staff receiving the report will take an initial note of the concerns and will then make a formal record of the report on the school's recording system (CPOMs) and other relevant staff members will be alerted. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will seek advice from Statutory Services if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

### **Visitors**

We ensure that all visitors to our school are aware of our Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures and which staff member they should report any concerns to (the member of staff may differ depending on the purpose of the visit e.g., supply teacher, governor, external agency etc.).

We ask that if a visitor to our school has any concerns about child-on-child abuse that they have witnessed, or have been told about, that they report their concerns at the earliest opportunity in person to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead/the Head teacher/a member of the Senior Leadership Team. We ask that visitors report their concerns in person by the end of the school day. For example, it would not be appropriate to wait

# Peafield Lane Academy **Child-On-Child Abuse Policy**

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until the following day or leave a written note with concerns. The member of staff receiving the report will take an initial note of the concerns and will then make a formal record of the concerns on the school's recording system (CPOMs) and other relevant staff members will be alerted. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will seek advice from Statutory Services if the report is deemed urgent or if a child is considered at risk.

## **Recording and evaluating:**

We will ensure a written report is made as soon after the disclosure as possible, recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated. We will ensure the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) will be informed as soon as possible, if they were not involved in the initial report. We will ensure that details of decisions made and reasons for decisions are recorded as well as any outcomes. All records will be kept on CPOMs and tagged using the 'child-on-child' category.

We will ensure that any 'safety plans' are recorded electronically and stored on CPOMs, where they will be kept under review.

## **Strategies for Prevention:**

Our school Peafield Lane Academy actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

- **Staff training-** e.g. annual safeguarding, induction training, weekly staff meetings and briefings.
  - Contextual safeguarding
  - Identification and classification of specific behaviours – SVSH, HSB etc
  - Making it clear there is a **zero-tolerance approach** to child-on-child abuse (especially in relation to SVSH) that it is **never** acceptable and will not be tolerated. Ensuring it is **never** passed off as "banter," "just having a laugh," "a part of growing up" or "boys being boys."
  - Recognising, acknowledging, and understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported
  - Challenging physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts, and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts
  - Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside of the classroom)
  - Ensuring that the Governing body / proprietors / management committee are aware of their statutory safeguarding responsibilities (effective child protection policy – child-on-child abuse policy)
  - Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the safeguarding lead/team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify those children who may need additional support
- **Information for children** (pupils/students) -e.g. whole school and class assemblies, PSHE lessons, discussions with school staff.
  - Creating an ethos and culture in which all children feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgemental environment, and have them listened to
  - All children are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience any form of child-on-child abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it

## Peafield Lane Academy **Child-On-Child Abuse Policy**

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- They are regularly informed about the school's approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse, including the school's zero-tolerance approach towards all forms of child-on-child abuse, the process for reporting their concerns of child-on-child abuse and where to go for further help, support, and advice
- Educating all children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via a well embedded RHE/RSHE curriculum, PSHE curriculum or wider curriculum
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside of the classroom)
- **Information for parents/carers-** e.g. newsletters, school website, parent consultations, workshops and parents evenings.
  - Talking to parents, both in groups and one-to-one
  - Providing opportunities for parents to be involved in the review of school policies and lesson plans; and
  - Encouraging parents to hold the school to account on this issue
  - Asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the school address those risks
  - Challenging the attitudes that underlie child-on-child abuse – in school and/or the wider community
  - Ensuring parents /carers are aware of the ethos and culture of the school or college
- **RHE (Relationships and Health Education) / RSHE curriculum**
  - The school have a clear set of values and standards, upheld, and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life, which is supported by a planned programme of evidence based RSHE curriculum
  - Our RHE/RSHE/PSHE programme is fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and/or other vulnerabilities)
  - We will, through our RHE/RSHE/PSHE programme promote:
    - Healthy and respectful relationships
    - Boundaries and consent
    - Equality and raise awareness of stereotyping and prejudice
    - Body confidence and self-esteem
    - How to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour
    - The concepts of, and laws relating to – sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, teenage relationship abuse (intimate personal relationships between children), and how to access support, and
    - What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable

### **Breaches / Complaints:**

Breaches to this policy will be dealt with in the same way that breaches of other school policies are dealt with, as determined by the Head teacher and Governing Body.

If a parent/carers is not satisfied with our school's actions, we ask that they follow our school's complaint policy and procedures. This is available online from our school website, and on request from the school office.

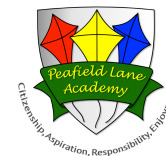
### **Links with other policies:**

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You may find it helpful to read this child-on-child abuse policy alongside the other following school policies:

Policy	How it may link
Safeguarding Policy	Includes information about child protection procedures and contextualised safeguarding
Behaviour & Relationships Policy	Includes details about the school's behaviour system including potential sanctions for pupils
Anti-Bullying Policy	Includes information about bullying behaviours and vulnerable groups
Online Safety & E-Safety Policy (inc. Acceptable Use Policies)	Includes information about children's online behaviour and details about online bullying/cyberbullying
Equalities Policy	Includes information about our school's approach to tackling prejudice and celebrating differences. Links to prejudice-related language and crime and the protected characteristics
RSHE / PSHE Policy	Includes information about our school's RSHE programme and how we teach about healthy relationships, friendships, and bullying
Complaints Policy	Includes information about how to make a complaint if you are not satisfied with the school's response

**Further information and support can be found through the following links:**

- Part 5: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment (pages 105-135) of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) [Keeping children safe in education 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101331/Keeping-Children-Safe-in-Education-2023.pdf)
- Definitions - [Keeping children safe in education 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101331/Keeping-Children-Safe-in-Education-2023.pdf)
- Simon Hackett (2010) Continuum model of sexual behaviours -
  - [Sexual development and behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sexual-development-and-behaviour-in-children/)
  - [NSPCC Learning Understanding sexualised behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/understanding-sexualised-behaviour-in-children/)

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy is reviewed and evaluated throughout the academic year. It is updated annually.

Date approved by the Governing Body: November 2023

Date to be reviewed: September 2024



## Appendix 1

# TRAFFIC LIGHTS – sexual behaviours from birth to eighteen

red

- behaviour which is excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening
- significant age, developmental and/or power difference between the children involved
- of concern because of the nature of the activities and the manner in which they occur
- indicate a need for immediate intervention and action

### Birth to 5 years

- simulation of explicit foreplay or sexual behaviour in play
- persistent masturbation
- persistent touching of the genitals of other children
- persistent attempts to touch the genitals of adults
- sexual behaviour between young children involving penetration with objects
- forcing other children to engage in sexual play

### 5 to 9 years

- persistent masturbation, particularly in front of others
- sexual behaviour engaging significantly younger or less able children
- sneaking into the rooms of sleeping younger children to touch or engage in sexual play
- simulation of sexual acts that are sophisticated for their age, eg oral sex
- persistent sexual themes in talk, play, art etc

### 9 to 12 years

- persistent masturbation, particularly in front of others
- sexual activity, eg oral sex or intercourse
- arranging a face to face meeting with an online acquaintance
- sending nude or sexually provocative images of self or others electronically
- coercion of others, including same age, younger or less able children, into sexual activity
- presence of Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)

### 13 to 18 years

- compulsive masturbation (especially chronic or public)
- degradation/humiliation of self or others with sexual themes, eg threats, phone, email, touch
- attempt/force others to expose genitals
- preoccupation with sexually aggressive pornography
- sexually explicit talk with younger children
- sexual harassment, forced sexual contact
- sexual contact with others of significant age and/or developmental difference
- sending nude or sexually provocative images of self or others electronically
- joining adults only online dating service
- sexual contact with animals
- genital injury to others/self

orange

- outside 'normal' sexual behaviour in terms of persistence, frequency or inequality in age or developmental abilities
- outside normal in either type or persistence of activities
- of concern due to frequency and duration of the behaviour
- behaviour which is 'unusual' or different for a particular child or children
- signal the need to take notice and gather information to assess the appropriate action

### Birth to 5 years

- preoccupation with adult sexual type behaviour
- pulling other children's pants down/skirts up against their will
- explicit sexual conversation using sophisticated or adult language
- preoccupation with touching another's genitals (often in preference to other child focussed activities)
- chronic peeping
- following others into toilets to look at them or touch them

### 5 to 9 years

- questions about sexual activity which persist or are repeated frequently, despite an answer being given
- writing sexually threatening notes
- engaging in mutual masturbation
- use of adult language to discuss sex, eg "Do you think I look sexy?" or "Look at my dolls – they're screwing."

### 9 to 12 years

- uncharacteristic behaviour, eg sudden provocative changes in dress, mixing with new or older friends
- consistent bullying involving sexual aggression
- pseudo maturity, including inappropriate knowledge and discussion of sexuality
- giving out identifying details to online acquaintances
- preoccupation with chatting online
- pregnancy/STIs

### 13 to 18 years

- sexual preoccupation/anxiety which interferes with daily function
- preoccupation with pornography
- giving out identifying details to online acquaintances
- preoccupation with chatting online
- giving false gender, age, sexuality details online in adult chat room
- arranging a face to face meeting with an online acquaintance
- sexually aggressive themes/obscurities
- sexual graffiti (chronic/impacting on others)
- violation of others' personal spaces
- single occurrence of peeping, exposing, non-consenting sexual touch with known peers; pulling skirts up/pants down; moaning and obscene gestures
- unsafe sexual behaviour, including unprotected sex, sexual activity while intoxicated, multiple partners and frequent changes of partner
- oral sex and/or intercourse (age and developmental ability to give consent must be considered)

green

- 'normal' sexual development which is spontaneous, curious, light hearted, mutual and easily distracted
- play or activities among equals in terms of age, size and ability levels
- behaviour reflects information gathering, balanced with curiosity about other parts of life
- provide opportunities to give the child or adolescent positive feedback and information

### Birth to 5 years

- thumb sucking, body stroking and holding of genitals
- wanting to touch other children's genitals
- asking about or wanting to touch the breasts, bottoms or genitals of familiar adults, eg when in the bath
- games – 'doctor/nurse', 'show me yours and I'll show you mine'
- enjoyment of being nude
- interest in body parts and functions

### 5 to 9 years

- masturbation to self soothe
- increased curiosity in adult sexuality, eg questions about babies, gender differences
- increased curiosity about other children's genitals, eg playing mutual games to see or touch genitals
- telling stories or asking questions, using swear words, 'toilet' words or names for private body parts
- increased sense of privacy about bodies

### 9 to 12 years

- use of sexual language
- having girl/boyfriends
- exhibitionism, eg flashing or mooning amongst same age peers
- increased need for privacy
- consensual kissing with known peers
- use of internet to chat online

### 13 to 18 years

- sexually explicit conversations with peers
- obscurities and jokes within the cultural norm
- flirting
- interest in erotica
- use of internet to chat online
- solitary masturbation
- interest and/or participation in a one-on-one relationship (with or without sexual activity)
- sexual activity including hugging, kissing, holding hands, foreplay, mutual masturbation
- consenting oral sex and/or intercourse with a partner of similar age and developmental ability (age and developmental ability to give consent must be considered)

Traffic lights adapted from the Child at Risk Assessment Unit. (2000). *Age Appropriate Sexual Play and Behaviour in Children*. Canberra: Australian Capital Territory Government Community Care. 5-11  
Source: Family Planning Queensland.