



# **Child on Child Abuse Policy**

**ADDENDUM to the Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy**

**Written: Spring Term 2026**

Review by: HT/LTS committee

**Next date of review: Spring Term 2029**

**Review every 3 years**

# Hazelwood Schools – Child on Child Abuse Policy

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 states that *‘Governing Bodies and Proprietors should ensure they facilitate a whole school approach to safeguarding. This means involving everyone in the school, and ensuring safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of the process and policy development. Ultimately, all systems, processes and policies should operate with the **best interests** of the child at their heart’.* Furthermore, *‘Where there is a safeguarding concern, Governing Bodies, Proprietors and school leaders should ensure the child’s wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. The school safeguarding policies and procedures should be transparent, clear and easy to understand for staff, pupils, students, parents and carers. Systems should be in place, and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children to confidently report, any form of abuse or neglect, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and knowing they can safely express their views and give feedback.’*  
KCSIE 2022, Annex B 94-96

## Introduction

Hazelwood Schools recognises that children are vulnerable to, and capable of, abusing their peers. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. This includes verbal as well as physical abuse. Child on child abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as part of ‘banter’ or ‘growing up’.

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 recognised 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 Safeguarding Children and Child Protection procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation.

## Definitions

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not 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)
- Cyber Abuse (including non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images (youth-produced sexual imagery), sending threatening messages, creating fake accounts or trolling, online grooming and harassment)
- 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); coercion such as forcing another child to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes, and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
- Exploitation such as manipulating or coercing a child into committing crimes or engage in sexual activity for items, money or affection. 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.
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm.

- 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.

### **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 Headteacher has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation and liaising with the Governing body, parent/carers, LA and outside agencies.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all however all staff, parent/carers and pupils need to be aware of who to report to and how to report any safeguarding concerns. The names of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Safeguarding Team, as well as the nominated Governor with responsibility for child on child abuse, can be found on the school website: [Safeguarding Information](#)

### **Recognition**

At Hazelwood Schools we have appropriate strategies in place in order to prevent the issue of child-on-child abuse rather than responding reactively.

We recognise that child-on-child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms and that even if incidents are not being reported it does not mean that they are not happening. 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 children 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 site that may appear to be 'less safe'. Staff will also have access to regular CPD and training to ensure a consistent approach to managing child-on-child issues. All staff should also be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

(KCSIE, 2022)

### **School Culture and Ethos**

At Hazelwood Schools, we do not tolerate abuse, harm or bullying between children and this is clearly expressed in our school's ethos and values and will be shared with all school partners including children, parents and carers. It will be made clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and it will not be tolerated and never passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', 'a part of growing up' or 'boys being boys', as failure to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it. Therefore, in school, we recognise, acknowledge and understand the scale of harassment and abuse. This means that all staff will challenge any form of behaviour both on or off line, from language and comments to physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them. All staff will also ensure that any information is shared directly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Safeguarding Team) and recorded factually and accurately as soon as possible so that any action required to prevent further incidents occurs immediately.

As an inclusive school, we do not tolerate abuse of any kind, on any child, by any child. We will work with our children to ensure that they understand differences and respect that everyone is different and unique. For children with special education needs, we will work with the relevant stakeholders (parents, teachers, outside agencies) to ensure that they are able to recognise the signs of child on child abuse and report it.

Therefore, a whole school approach is needed as part of preventative education.

### **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. Staff therefore need to be alert to these tell tales signs. 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 Headteacher, a lunchtime supervisor, or a member of the office team. We talk about our 5 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 2025, 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- Safeguard. The member of staff will directly alert the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, or member of the team, if the report is deemed urgent or if a child is considered at risk.

We will support all children to be able to articulate their feelings and be able to report instances of child on child abuse. We know that some children will find this harder than others, for a variety of reasons, and we will support them as best we can through different approaches as best suits the differing needs of our children.

### **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.

In line with the statutory guidance provided in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 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/Safeguarding Team to explain their concerns. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Team 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/Team 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/Team 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 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. Staff should remain alert to tell tales signs. 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.

Children may only indicate their concern once, and so staff should remain mindful of this, and that children may be embarrassed about making a report. Children can be reticent and fear the possibility of repercussions if they report a concern, so it is important that staff handle situations with sensitivity.

Staff should remain acutely alert to, and intervene, in any instances of low-level child-on-child abuse. The school recognises that if lower-level behaviour goes unchecked this can potentially lead to the normalising of unacceptable behaviours which children then do not report. Staff educate children about and look out for such instances for example the use of sexualised language, body shaming and comments about appearance, inappropriate touching, and the unwanted invasion of personal space.

We expect staff to report their concerns to a Designated Safeguarding Lead/Team by recording their concern on our school's recording system - CPOMs. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Team 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.

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 Headteacher. 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 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-Safeguard. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Team 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. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Team will be informed as soon as the report is recorded on CPOMs. We will ensure that details of decisions made and reasons for decisions are recorded as well as any outcomes. We will ensure that any 'safety plans' are recorded and kept under review. These will be kept in the child's safeguarding file on CPOMs.

### **Strategies for Prevention**

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

- **Staff training** – including teaching and support staff, supply staff, governors or management committees, volunteers, and visitors. including:
  - Contextual safeguarding
  - Identification and classification of specific behaviours – SVSH (sexual violence and sexual harassment), HSB (Harmful sexual behaviour) etc
  - Making it clear we do not tolerate 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 inappropriate low-level behaviours such as sexualised language, body shaming, inappropriate touching, and the unwanted invasion of personal space.
  - 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)
  - Responsibilities of the Governing body, they must be 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** – this information is shared in a developmentally age-appropriate way across school. With specific focus in PSED/PSHE/RSHE, computing. And includes:
    - 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
    - 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 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** - engagement with parents/carers includes:
    - 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.
- **RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education)** – RSHE policy and curriculum development includes:
    - 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 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 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**

Breaches to this policy will be dealt with as determined by the Headteacher and Governing Body. The principle being to proportionately respond to any offences with the application of sanctions and/or support and guidance as appropriate to the case. We aim for children to learn from any incidents that arise and to eradicate repetition and repair the damage caused.

### **Complaints**

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

### **Links with other policies**

All of the policies below can be found on our school website: <https://hazelwoodschoools.org.uk/>

Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy

Behaviour Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Online Safety Policy

Equality Information Policy and Equality Objectives

PSHE Policy

Relationship, Sex and Health Education Policy

Complaints Procedure