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Bryanston Knighton House

PEER-ON-PEER ABUSE POLICY

1. THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Introduction

The Governors, the Senior Leadership Team and all staff are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of peer-on-peer abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the School.

In particular, we:

- believe that in order to protect children, we should (a) be aware of the level and nature of risk to which their pupils 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 contextual whole- school approach to a zero tolerance approach to peer-on-peer abuse;
- regard the purpose of this policy, (i.e. having a separate peer-on-peer abuse in addition to its reference within the safeguarding policy), as a preventative measure. The School does not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to peer-on-peer abuse in response to alleged incidents of it;
- recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to ensure that our pupils are safe; and
- encourage parents to communicate with the School, if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers, so that the School can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

This policy:

- sets out our strategy for preventing, identifying and appropriately managing peer-on-peer abuse. It is the product of consultation which has hitherto involved some senior pupils and some staff. In producing this policy, we have briefed the Governors, briefed Hsms, briefed Prefects and Deputy Prefects and in addition, the staff have been alerted to the recent update in KCSiE (2021);
- applies to all Governors, staff and volunteers. It is reviewed annually, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it addresses the risks to which pupils are or may be exposed. A number of staff and pupils will be 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 “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys”. This can lead to a culture of unacceptable



behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it;

- is the School's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute peer-on-peer abuse. It relates to, and should be read alongside, the Bryanston School safeguarding policy and child protection procedures, anti-bullying policy, cyberbullying policy, youth involved sexual imagery policy, digital communications policy, children missing in education policy and behaviour policy;
- does not use the term 'victim' or 'perpetrator'. This is because the School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in allegations of or concerns about peer-on-peer abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused and those who are alleged to have abused their peers, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter. Research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of peer-on-peer abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers;
- uses the terms 'child' and 'children', which is defined for the purposes of this policy as a person aged under 18. We have nonetheless chosen not to restrict our approach to peer-on-peer abuse under this policy to children but instead to adopt a wider interpretation of our safeguarding responsibilities so that they apply to all pupils, regardless of age. Although the starting point is that the School's response to peer-on-peer abuse should be the same for all pupils, regardless of age, there may be some additional considerations in relation to a pupil aged 18 or over in terms of how local agencies and/or partners safeguarding duties are limited, in the case of children's social care services - save for a number of specific exceptions - to children and, in the case of adult social care services, to adults with care and support needs. Similarly, the School's response to incidents involving the exchange of youth involved sexual imagery will need to differ depending on the age of the pupils involved. There is also likely to be a more significant criminal justice response in relation to any pupil responsible for abuse who is aged 18 or over;

- is compliant with the statutory guidance on peer-on-peer abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021);

- should, if relevant according to the concerns/allegations raised, be read in conjunction with the DfE's advice on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges (September 2021), and any other advice and guidance referred to within it, as appropriate;

- should be read in conjunction with the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board's (DSCB) Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant practice guidance issued by it.



2. UNDERSTANDING PEER-ON-PEER ABUSE

What is peer-on-peer abuse?

The boundary between an incident/behaviour which can be regarded as abusive and an incident/behaviour which can be dealt with by the Bryanston School Behaviour Policy is not clear. If a pupil behaves unkindly or inappropriately towards another pupil, this is not bound to be seen as a safeguarding matter. Unacceptable peer-on-peer behaviour may be viewed as being abusive if there is a significant power imbalance between the pupils concerned. The intention of the alleged perpetrator should also be considered as is the case whether the incident has happened repeatedly.

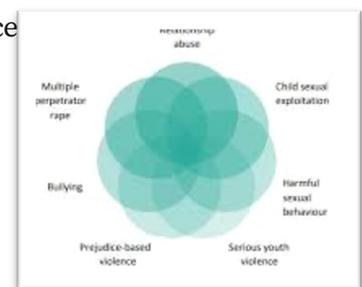
Peer-on-peer abuse may be viewed as physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships and wider peer associations.

Peer-on-peer abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to):

1. serious bullying including cyber bullying.
2. physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
3. relationship abuse, domestic violence and abuse;
4. child sexual exploitation;
5. youth and serious youth violence;
6. harmful sexual behaviour including sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault.
7. sexual harassment such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes or online sexual harassment which maybe stand alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
8. upskirting which involved taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing.
9. initiating/hazing type violence and rituals.
10. prejudice-based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence

Examples of online peer-on-peer abuse would include:

1. sharing of nudes or semi-nudes (sexting);
2. online abuse;
3. peer-on-peer grooming;
4. the distribution of youth involved sexualized content;
5. harassment.



These types of abuse rarely take place in isolation and often indicate wider safeguarding concerns. For example, a teenage girl may be in a sexually exploitative relationship with a teenage boy who is himself being physically abused by a family member or by older boys. Equally, sexual bullying in schools and other settings can result in the sexual exploitation of children by their peers. For 16 and 17 year olds who are in abusive relationships, what may appear to be a case of domestic violence may also involve sexual exploitation. Children's 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 peer-on-peer abuse therefore needs to



consider the range of possible types of peer-on-peer abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's experiences. This can be done by adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that our response to incidents of peer-on-peer abuse takes into account any potential complexity.

What is Contextual Safeguarding?

This policy encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which:

- encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which is about changing the way that professionals approach child protection when risks occur outside of the family, thereby requiring all those within a Local Safeguarding Partnership to consider how they work alongside, rather than just refer into, children's social care, to create safe spaces in which children may have encountered peer-on-peer abuse.
- adopts a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach, which means:
 - being aware and seeking to understand the impact that these wider social contexts may be having on our pupils,
 - creating a safe culture in the School by, for example, implementing policies and procedures that address peer-on-peer abuse and harmful attitudes; promoting healthy relationships and attitudes to gender/sexuality; hotspot mapping to identify risky areas on the School; training on potential bias and stereotyped assumptions.
 - being alert to and monitoring changes in pupils' behaviour and/or attendance, and
 - contributing to local child protection agendas by, for example, challenging poor threshold decisions and referring concerns about contexts to relevant local agencies.



How prevalent is peer-on-peer abuse?

Research suggests that peer-on-peer abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse affecting children in the UK. For example, more than four in ten teenage schoolgirls aged between 13 and 17 in England have experienced sexual coercion (Barter et al 2015). Two thirds of contact sexual abuse experienced by children aged 17 or under was committed by someone who was also aged 17 or under (Radford et al 2011).



When does behaviour become problematic or abusive?

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

Sexual behaviours

As the NSPCC explains that children's sexual behaviours exist on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to highly abnormal and abusive. Staff should recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour. As both problematic and abusive sexual behaviours are developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage, a useful umbrella term is harmful sexual behaviours or HSB. This term has been adopted widely in the field, and is used throughout the NSPCC's and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, as well as this policy.

For the purpose of the NSPCC's and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, and as adopted in this policy, harmful sexual behaviours are defined as "Sexual behaviours expressed by children...that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child...or adult."

Simon Hackett has proposed the following continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children, which may be helpful when seeking to understand a pupil's sexual behaviour and deciding how to respond to it.

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

Hackett's continuum relates exclusively to sexual behaviour and is not exhaustive. The Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool can also be very helpful in identifying sexual behaviours by children. Staff



should always use their professional judgment and discuss any concerns with the DSL. Where an (alleged) incident involves a report of sexually harmful behaviour, staff should consult the DfE's Advice Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges (September 2021).

Other behaviour

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on aspects of Hackett's continuum to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond.

This could include, for example, 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/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power
- involves a misuse of power

It should be borne in mind that there are some aspects of Hackett's continuum which may not of course be relevant or appropriate to consider in response to other alleged behaviour involving reports of other types of abuse. For example, the issue of consent is unlikely to apply in the same way in cases where the alleged behaviour is reported to involve emotional and/or physical abuse, as it could in cases of alleged sexual behaviour which is reported to involve harmful sexual behaviour.

In addition, the School could be required to deal with cases involving a range of alleged behaviours including sexual behaviour, emotional, physical behaviour and digital behaviour.

It should also be recognised that the same behaviour presented by different children may be understood at different points on a spectrum, depending on the particular context. For example, an incident involving the sharing of nudes and semi nudes may be inappropriate in one context, for example, when exchanged between two children in a consenting relationship, and abusive in another, for example, when it is (a) shared without the consent of the child in the image; (b) produced as a result of coercion; or (c) used to pressure the child into engaging in other sexual behaviours.

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. For example, a physical fight between two



children may not constitute peer-on-peer abuse where the fight is a one-off incident, but may be abusive where the child's/children's behaviour subsequently deteriorates into a pattern of bullying behaviour and requires a safeguarding response from a multi-agency partnership – including a statutory assessment of whether this has led, for example, to a risk of significant harm to a child.

The importance of intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour does not just apply on an individual pupil basis, but could also apply across the pupil body.

Behaviour generally considered inappropriate may in fact indicate emerging concerning behaviour to which the School needs to take a whole-school approach in order to prevent escalation. For example, where multiple boys are making inappropriate comments about girls, one-off sanctions are unlikely to be effective and wider actions should be considered, such as arranging for an external person to deliver a year group intervention exercise; revising the School's Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) programme; and/or a discussion around whether anything is happening within the wider community that might be affecting the pupils' behaviour.

It will also be important to consider the wider context in which the alleged behaviour is reported to have occurred, and which may trigger the need for a referral. For example, some behaviour that is considered inappropriate may be capable of being dealt with internally. However, if there are wider safeguarding concerns relating to the child/children in question, a referral to statutory agencies may be necessary. Where the behaviour which is the subject of the concern(s)/allegation(s) is considered or suspected by the DSL to constitute peer-on-peer abuse, the School will follow the procedures set out below.

How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?

All staff should be alert to the well-being of pupils and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by peer-on-peer abuse. The SLT regularly review the behaviour incident log which can help identify any changes in behaviour and/or concerning patterns or trends. Staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ.

Signs that a child may be suffering from peer-on-peer abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse (please see Appendix 2 of the child protection policy for indicators of abuse) and can include:

1. failing to attend school, disengaging from classes or struggling to carry out school related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected;
2. regularly feeling sick/unwell in the morning;
3. physical injuries to include unexplained bruises and cuts;
4. experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing;
5. becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much;
6. broader changes in behaviour including alcohol or substance misuse;
7. changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age;



8. abusive behaviour towards others.

Abuse affects children very differently. The above list is by no means exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse. The behaviour that children present with will depend on their particular circumstances. Rather than checking behaviour against a list, staff are trained to be alert to behaviour that might cause concerns, to think about what the behaviour might signify, to encourage children to share with them any underlying reasons for their behaviour, and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents/carers so that the cause(s) of their behaviour can be investigated. Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for his/her age, staff should always consider whether an underlying concern is contributing to their behaviour (for example, whether the child is being harmed or abused by their peers) and, if so, what the concern is and how the child can be supported going forwards.

The power dynamic that can exist between children is also very important when identifying and responding to their behaviour: in all cases of peer-on-peer abuse, a power imbalance will exist within the relationship. This inequality will not necessarily be the result of an age gap between the child responsible for the abuse and the child being abused. It may, for example, be the result of their relative social or economic status. Equally, while children who abuse may have power over those who they are abusing, they may be simultaneously powerless to others.

Are some children particularly vulnerable to abusing or being abused by their peers?

Any child can be vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to the strength of peer influence during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers. For example, an image of a child could be shared, following which they could become more vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to how others now perceive them, regardless of any characteristics which may be inherent in them and/or their family. Peer group dynamics can also play an important role in determining a child's vulnerability to such abuse. For example, children who are more likely to follow others and/or who are socially isolated from their peers may be more vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse. Children who are questioning or exploring their sexuality or gender identity may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their peers.

Research suggests that:

1. peer-on-peer 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. As a result, the School needs to explore the gender dynamics of peer-on-peer abuse within its settings, and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender-imbalanced environments.)
2. children with SEND and LGBTQIA children are at greater risk of peer on peer abuse.



3. A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

How can the School raise awareness of and prevent peer-on-peer abuse?

School environment

The School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of peer-on-peer abuse by:

1. Educating Governors, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, pupils and parents about this issue. This includes training Governors, the Senior Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it.

This includes:

- Contextual Safeguarding;
 - the identification and classification of specific behaviours;
 - the importance of taking seriously all forms of peer-on-peer abuse (no matter how low level they may appear (and ensuring that no form of peer-on-peer abuse is ever dismissed as ‘banter’, ‘part of growing up’ or ‘just having a laugh’.
 - social media and online safety, including how to encourage children to use social media in a positive, responsible and safe way, and how to enable them to identify and manage abusive behaviour online.
2. educating children about the nature and prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse and the unequivocal facts about consent, via PSRE and the wider curriculum. For example, by addressing gender inequality in a statistics class, or by reviewing literature in an English class which addresses bullying and its effect on mental health. Pupils are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse. They are regularly informed about the School's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of peer-on-peer abuse. Educating pupils about consent includes teaching them basic facts such as:
 - a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity;
 - the age of consent is 16
 - sexual intercourse without consent is rape
 3. engaging parents on this issue by communicating with parents about this, both in groups and, as appropriate, on a one-to-one basis and seeking their views about the perceived risks and areas for improvement.
 4. supporting the ongoing welfare of the pupils by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise pupil mental health, and by providing in-school counselling and therapy to address underlying mental health needs.
 5. working with governors, SLT, and all staff, volunteers, parents and pupils to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect among all members of the School community.



6. creating conditions in which our pupils can aspire to, and realise, safe and healthy relationships fostering a whole-school culture:
 - which is founded on the idea that every member of our School community is responsible for building and maintaining safe and positive relationships, and helping to create a safe School environment in which violence and abuse are never acceptable.
 - in which pupils are able to develop trusting relationships with staff, and in which staff understand, through regular discussion and training, the importance of these relationships in providing pupils with a sense of belonging, which could otherwise be sought in problematic contexts.
 - in which pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to
7. responding to cases of peer-of-peer abuse cases promptly and appropriately and ensuring that all peer-on-peer abuse issues are fed back to the DSL so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who may be in need of additional support.

Multi-agency working

The School actively engages with its Local Safeguarding Partnerships in relation to peer-on-peer abuse, and would work closely with the Dorset ChAD, Dorset Police and other relevant agencies (and other schools), as appropriate.

The relationships the School has built with these partners should assist the School in preventing, identifying early and appropriately handling cases of peer-on-peer abuse. They help the School to:

- develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in its local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist;
- ensure that pupils are able to access the range of services and support they need quickly;
- support and help inform our local community's response to peer-on-peer abuse;
- increase our awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in our local area to enable us to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by pupils.

The School actively refers concerns and allegations of peer-on-peer abuse where appropriate to the Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD), Dorset Police and other relevant agencies. This is important because peer-on-peer 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.

4 RESPONDING TO CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS OF PEER-ON-PEER ABUSE

General Principles

It is essential that all concerns and allegations of peer-on-peer abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on the School environment.



Any response should:

- include a thorough investigation of the concerns or allegations and the wider context in which they may have occurred (as appropriate), depending on the nature and seriousness of the alleged incident it may be appropriate for the police and/or children's social care to carry out the investigation;
- treat all children involved as being at potential risk. While the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, they may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. Schools should ensure a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter;
- take into account:
 - that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved, and consider and address the effect of wider socio-cultural contexts, such as the child's/children's peer group (both within and outside the School); family; the School environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence. Consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child's/children's needs and to mitigate risk; and
 - the potential complexity of peer-on-peer abuse and of children's experiences and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent. While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited they are not consenting;
 - the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/children and their parents and obtain consent to any referral before it is made. The School should manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so. It is particularly important to take into account the wishes of any child who has allegedly been abused, and to give the child as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and how they will be supported.

What should staff do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s)?

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay (in accordance with Section 9 of the safeguarding policy and child protection procedures) so that a course of action can be agreed.

If a child speaks to a member of staff about peer-on-peer abuse that they have witnessed or are a part



of, the member of staff should listen to the child and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement. For further details please see the procedure set out in Section 22 of the Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures.

If a pupil is in immediate danger, or at risk of significant harm, a referral to the ChAD (if the pupil is aged under 18) and/or the police should be made immediately. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made (see Section 22).

How will the School respond to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse?

The DSL will discuss the concerns or allegations with the member of staff who has reported them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected.

DSLs should always use their professional judgement to determine whether it is appropriate for alleged behaviour to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required. In borderline cases the DSL may wish to consult with the ChAD and/or any other external agencies on a no-names basis to determine the most appropriate response. Where the DSL considers or suspects that the behaviour in question might be abusive (as opposed to inappropriate or problematic), the DSL should contact the ChAD (Children's Advice and Duty Service) on 01305 228558 or as otherwise in accordance with the DSCB's procedures immediately, and in any event, within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of it. The DSL will discuss the allegations/concerns with the ChAD or as otherwise in accordance with the DSCB's procedures and agree on a course of action.

Where the DSL considers or suspects that the alleged behavior in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum or where the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question might otherwise require it, the DSL should contact children's social care and/or the police immediately and, in any event, within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of the alleged behaviour. The DSL will discuss the concern or allegation with the agency and agree on a course of action, which may include:

- A. manage internally with help from external specialists where appropriate and possible. Where the alleged behaviour between peers is abusive or violent (as opposed to inappropriate or problematic), scenarios B, C or D should ordinarily apply.
- B. undertake/contribute to an inter-agency early help assessment, with targeted early help services provided to address the assessed needs to the child/children and their family. These services may, for example, include family and parenting programmes, responses to emerging thematic concerns in extra familial contexts, a specialist harmful sexual behaviour team, CAMHS and/or youth offending services.
- C. refer the child/children to children's social care for a section 17/47 statutory assessment. Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer form harm, it is important that a referral to children's social care (and, if appropriate, a report to the police) is made immediately. This referral will be made to the ChAD in the first instance but ongoing work may be needed with children's services in the area where the child/children live. Depending on the safeguarding procedures issued by the ChAD, there will normally be an initial review and assessment of



the referral.

- D. report alleged criminal behaviour to the police. Alleged criminal behaviour will ordinarily be reported to the police. However, there are some circumstances where it may not be appropriate to report such behaviour to the police. For example, where the exchange of nudes or semi-nudes does not involve any aggravating factors. All concerns or allegations will be assessed on a case by case basis, and in light of the wider context.

Safety plans

The School will always carry out a safety plan in respect of:

- any child who is alleged to have behaved in a way that is considered to be abusive or violent,
- any child who has reportedly been abused or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child, or
- any child who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child as deemed appropriate by the DSL.

Where it is alleged that a child has behaved in a way that is considered to be inappropriate or problematic (as opposed to abusive or violent), the DSL will use their professional judgement, based on the particular concern or allegation raised, and the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question to determine whether it would be appropriate to contact children's social care, and to carry out a safety plan.

Careful judgement and consideration are required as to whether the alleged behaviour which might be judged to be inappropriate by an adult might be harmful to another child. Consultation is recommended with children's social care if there is any doubt about this. Careful consideration should also be given to a range of factors including the context, severity of the alleged behaviour, impact of the alleged behaviour on others, risk to others, and whether there are any patterns of behaviour occurring.

Where other children have been identified as witnesses to alleged abuse or violence, consideration should also be given by the DSL to whether there might be any risks to those children, and whether a safety plan would be appropriate in relation to any risks presenting to them.

If at any stage the child's needs escalate, the DSL should contact the ChAD (Children's Advice and Duty Service) on 01305 228558 or as otherwise in accordance with the DSCB's procedures to determine the appropriate course of action.

Information sharing, data protection and record keeping

When responding to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse, the School will:

- always consider carefully, in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies how to share information about the concern or allegation with the pupils affected, their parents, staff and other pupils.



- record the information that is necessary for the School and other relevant agencies to respond to the concern or allegation and safeguard everyone involved.
- keep a record for the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including relevant authorities, and ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and to only use it for the agreed legal purpose, and
- be mindful of and act in accordance with its safeguarding and data protection duties, including those set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018) and HM Government advice on Information Sharing (updated in July 2018).

Disciplinary action

The School will consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved. However, if there are police proceedings underway, or there could be, it is critical that the School works in partnership with the police and/or children's social care.

Where a matter is not of interest to the police and/or children's social care, the School may still need to consider what is the most appropriate action to take to ensure positive behaviour management. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including to:

- ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;
- demonstrate to the child/children and others that peer-on-peer abuse can never be tolerated;
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

However, these considerations must be balanced against any police investigations, the child's/children's own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action, the School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the peer-on-peer 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 usually only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the School. Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of peer-on-peer abuse, and the School will always consider the wider actions that may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards, as set out above and below.

On-going proactive work to a contextual whole-school approach

The School's response to concerns/allegations of peer-on-peer abuse should be part of on-going proactive work by the School to embed best practice and take a contextual whole-school approach to such abuse. As such the School's response can become part of its wider prevention work.



This response may include the School working with the local authority to undertake, for example, a Contextual Safeguarding school assessment. The response could also include the School asking itself a series of questions about the context in which an incident of peer-on-peer abuse occurred in the School, the local community in which the School is based, and the wider physical and online environment - such as:

- a) what protective factors and influences exist within the School (such as positive peer influences, examples where peer-on-peer abuse has been challenged etc.) and how can the School bolster these?;
- b) how (if at all) did the School's physical environment contribute to the abuse, and how can the School address this going forwards, for example by improving the School's safety, security and supervision?;
- c) how (if at all) did the online environment contribute to the abuse, and how can the School address this going forwards. For example, by strengthening the way in which the School encourages positive and safe use of the internet by pupils?
- d) did wider gender norms, equality issues and/or societal attitudes contribute to the abuse?;
- e) what was the relationship between the abuse and the cultural norms between staff and pupils, and how can these be addressed going forward?;
- f) does the abuse indicate a need for staff training on, for example, underlying attitudes, a particular issue or the handling of particular types of abuse?;
- g) how have similar cases been managed in the past and what effect has this had?;
- h) does the case or any identified trends highlight areas for development in the way in which the School works with children to raise their awareness of and/or prevent peer-on-peer abuse, including by way of the School's PSRE curriculum and lessons that address underlying attitudes or behaviour such as gender and equalities work, respect, boundaries, consent, children's rights?;
- i) are there any lessons to be learnt about the way in which the School engages with parents to address peer-on-peer abuse issues?;
- j) are there underlying issues that affect other schools in the area and is there a need for a multi-agency response?;
- k) does this case highlight a need to work with certain children to build their confidence and teach them how to identify and manage abusive behaviour?; and
- l) were there opportunities to intervene earlier or differently and/or to address common themes amongst the behaviour of other children in the School?



Answers to these questions can be developed into an action plan that is reviewed on a regular basis by the School's leadership and DSL. The School will, where possible and appropriate, work with the local authority and wider partners to deliver on this plan.

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Author: Deputy Head Boarding & Pastoral