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CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE (including harassment and violence) POLICY

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1. UNDERSTANDING CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE

What is child-on-child abuse?

All staff are aware that children can abuse other children and that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online. Staff are aware of the important role they play in preventing child-on-child abuse and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

If a pupil behaves unkindly or inappropriately towards another pupil, this is a safeguarding issue for both the victim and the alleged perpetrator.

Child-on-child 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. It also includes prejudice-based harm, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other forms of discriminatory behaviour that can have a significant impact on a child's welfare, wellbeing and sense of safety and should be considered with safeguarding practice where appropriate.

Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including but not limited to:

1. **bullying** - including cyber bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying.
2. **discriminatory behaviour** – including racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other prejudice-based incidents.

3. **abuse in intimate personal relationships between children** - sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse', which may also include an online element.
4. **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.
5. **serious physical assault and harm**, or the threat of harm with a weapon.
6. **initiation or 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 well include an online element.
7. **harmful sexual behaviour (HSB)** - is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people that is harmful or abusive. HSB can occur online and/or face to face. HSB includes:
 - **sexual violence** - such as:
 - rape
 - assault by penetration
 - sexual assault(the three harms above may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence.)
 - 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.
 - **sexual harassment** – which is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school. It can include, but is not limited to:
 - sexual comments, such as telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remark about clothes and appearance, calling someone sexualized names, intrusive questions about a person's sex life, and spreading sexual rumours;
 - sexual 'jokes' or taunting;
 - suggestive looks, staring or leering;
 - sexual gestures;
 - physical behaviour, such as deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes;
 - displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature;
 - upskirting, which is a criminal offence and 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.
 - **online sexual harassment** – this may be stand-alone or part of a wider pattern of sexual violence and/or harassment. It may include:



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- consensual and non-consensual making and sharing of nudes and semi-nudes;
- sharing of unwanted explicit content;
- sexualized online bullying;
- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media;
- sexual exploitation, coercion and threats;
- coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they are not comfortable with online.

8. child exploitation

- **child sexual exploitation (CSE)** – including in the context of abusive relationships, and/or gang activity, and/or county lines, including in the context of modern slavery and human trafficking.
- **child criminal exploitation (CCE)** – including in the context of abusive relationships, and/or youth or serious youth violence, and/or gang activity, and/or county lines, including in the context of modern slavery and human trafficking.

9. **online child-on-child abuse** - is any form of child-on-child abuse where an element might be facilitated by digital technology, for example, consensual and nonconsensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos, online abuse, coercion and exploitation, child-on-child grooming, threatening and hate speech delivered via online means, the distribution of sexualised content (which might be youth-produced, commercial pornography or pseudo sexual images), and harassment.

It is critical to be aware of the role that inequality and discrimination can play in child-on-child abuse. Socio-economic inequality within a school can increase bullying, and racial and ethnic minority status can be a risk factor for victimisation by peers. Children from minoritised groups are at much higher risk for poor health and behavioural outcomes as a result of discriminatory bullying. LGBTQ children may also be at greater risk of abusive behaviour from their peers.

An overview of child-on-child abuse



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 child-on-child abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of child-on-child abuse, and to capture the full context of children's experiences.¹⁹ This can be done by adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that a school's or college's response to alleged incidents of child-on-child abuse takes into account any potential complexity.

How prevalent is child-on-child abuse?

By way of example, with respect to:

Bullying: Ditch the Label's Annual Bullying Survey 2020 found that:

- 25% of over 13,000 12 to 18 year olds reported having been bullied in the last 12 months (the number of victims has increased by 25% compared to 2019, in which a quarter of those bullied saying they'd received physical and online attacks).
- Of the 25%, 9% reported that the bullying occurred daily, 13% reported that it occurred several times a week, and 8% said weekly.
- Of this 25%, 47% felt they were bullied because of attitudes towards their appearance and 11% felt it was because of attitudes towards their sexuality.
- In relation to the impact of bullying, 44% of those who reported being bullied in the last 12 months said it left them feeling anxious, 36% said it left them feeling depressed, 33% had suicidal thoughts, 27% had self-harmed and 18% truanted from school/college.

Online bullying: The Office for National Statistics Online bullying in England and Wales: year ending March 2020, found that:

- Around one in five (19%) 10 to 15 year olds experienced at least one type of online bullying behaviour – equivalent to 764,000 children. More than half (52%) of those children who experienced online bullying behaviours said they would not describe these behaviours as bullying, and one in four (26%) did not report their experiences to anyone.
- Being called names, sworn at or insulted and having nasty messages about them sent to them were the two most common online bullying behaviour types, experienced by 10% of all children aged 10 to 15 years.
- Nearly three out of four children (72%) who had experienced an online bullying behaviour experienced at least some of it at school or during school time.

Harmful sexual behaviour: Ofsted found, in its Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, June 2021, that the girls who responded to its questionnaire indicated that the following types of harmful sexual behaviour happened 'a lot' or 'sometimes' between people their age:

Non-contact forms, but face-to-face:

- sexist name-calling – 92%
- rumours about their sexual activity – 81%
- unwanted or inappropriate comments of a sexual nature – 80% Non-contact forms, online or on social media:
- being sent pictures or videos they did not want to see – 88%
- being put under pressure to provide sexual images of themselves – 80%
- having pictures or videos that they sent being shared more widely without their knowledge or consent – 73%
- being photographed or videoed without their knowledge or consent – 59%
- having pictures or videos of themselves that they did not know about being circulated – 51%

Contact forms:

- sexual assault of any kind – 79%
- feeling pressured to do sexual things that they did not want to – 68%
- unwanted touching – 64%

Ofsted states that: “these findings are strongly supported by existing research into harmful sexual behaviour between peers.”

2. UNDERSTANDING CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

What is Contextual Safeguarding?

This policy 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 Pan Dorset 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 child-on-child abuse. In addition it:

- is an approach to understanding, and responding to, the risk of harm to which children can be exposed, and/or harm which they can experience, in extra-familial contexts, and seeks to include these contexts within prevention, identification, assessment and intervention safeguarding activities.
- recognises that as children enter adolescence they spend increasing amounts of time outside of the home in public environments, including those online, within which they may be exposed to risk of harm or experience abuse, and that the different relationships that children form in their neighbourhoods, schools, and online can feature violence, coercive control, and abuse. Parents can have little influence over these contexts, and the risk of harm to which children can be exposed, or harm which they can experience, outside of the family, can undermine parent-child relationships; and
- considers interventions to change the systems or social conditions of the environments in which abuse has occurred. For example, rather than move a child from a school, professionals could work with the school leadership and pupil body to challenge harmful, gendered school cultures, thus improving the pre-existing school environment.

Therefore, educators and social care practitioners, alongside wider safeguarding partnerships, need to engage with individuals and sectors that do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these extra-familial contexts is a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that children are vulnerable to, and can experience, abuse in a range of social contexts. When adopted by a wider safeguarding partnership, a Contextual Safeguarding approach supports services to respond to different forms of extra-familial harm, including child-on-child abuse, across four 'system-domains'. These domains require that systems:

1. Target the contexts in which extra-familial harm occurs.
2. Use a child protection and wider child welfare lens in response to extra-familial harm.
3. Feature partnerships with individuals and organisations that have a reach into, or influence over, extra-familial contexts where harm occurs.
4. Measure the contextual impact of their responses to extra-familial harm.

The Contextual Safeguarding Network states that: "Extra-familial harm' refers to a broad category of harm types, including [child-onchild] harm, sexual and criminal exploitation and bullying. Often these different harm types share overlapping drivers, methods and consequences for young people. Schools can be settings in which young people are harmed and exploited and they can also be settings that support positive peer relationships and safety."

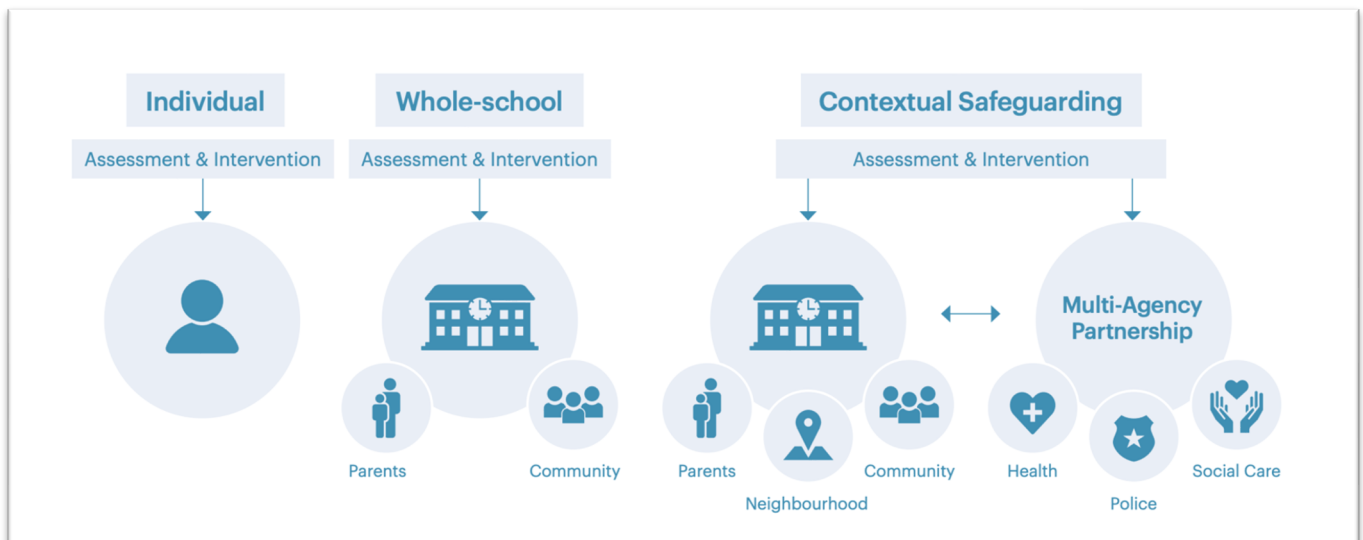
What does Contextual Safeguarding mean to Bryanston?

Bryanston encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach in its Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures, and adopts a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach which means:

- being aware of and seeking to understand the impact that these wider social contexts may be having on their students;
- creating and embedding a safe culture in the school or college by, for example,

- being aware and seeking to understand the impact that these wider social contexts may be having on our pupils,
- creating and embedding a safe culture in the School by, for example:
 - fostering an environment in which all types of extra-familial harm, including child-on-child abuse, are promptly identified and appropriately responded to;
 - effectively implementing policies and procedures that address child-on-child abuse and harmful attitudes;
 - promoting positive and healthy relationships and attitudes to difference including gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability; hotspot mapping to identify risky areas in the school or college; training on potential bias and stereotyped assumptions;
- being alert to and monitoring changes in pupils' behaviour 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.

An overview of a Contextual Safeguarding Approach



What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality is the recognition that people's experiences are shaped by their multi-layered identities. A person's interactions with the world are shaped by their ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, class and abilities, and these aspects of a person's identity interrelate. Someone may experience racism, sexism and ageism collectively or individually at different times and in different environments. For example, a teenage black boy may experience discrimination based on the fact that he is both black and male. The effect of his experiences may influence whether he is comfortable accessing support if he is



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a victim of child-on-child abuse. One aspect of intersectionality that is particularly relevant to managing child-on-child abuse is adultification. This is a form of racial prejudice in which children

from minoritised groups are treated as more mature than they actually are by a reasonable social standard of development. This may lead to failure to recognise victims of child-on-child abuse and to respond appropriately to the experiences of children from minoritised ethnic groups. Whilst adultification can impact all children in certain ways it is important that there is an acknowledgement that it specifically affects black children. Their behaviour may also attract a harsher disciplinary response than the same behaviour in white peers of the same age. To address this risk, behaviour policies should be applied consistently and behaviour sanctions regularly reviewed for evidence of discrimination against children from minoritised ethnic groups.

3. THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDING SAFEGUARDING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICE

The Governors, the Senior Leadership Team and all staff are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse both within and beyond the School.

In particular, the School knows that in order to protect children, it should:

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

The School recognises it is not acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to child-on-child abuse in response to alleged incidents of it. In order to tackle child-on-child abuse proactively, it is necessary to focus on all five of the following areas:

- i. systems and structures,
- ii. prevention,
- iii. identification,
- iv. response/intervention, and
- v. culture context

This policy is the product of consultation with senior pupils and some staff. In producing this policy, we have briefed the Governors, briefed House Parents, briefed Prefects and in addition, the staff are alerted regularly to any updates in relation to child-on-child abuse in KCSiE, most recently in KCSiE 2026.

Further and most importantly, to ensure a robust strategy for improving the prevention of child-on-child abuse, the School's pastoral and safeguarding team conducts a regular (every two to three years) community wide safeguarding culture review by way of a comprehensive survey. This is distributed to key stakeholders, including pupils, teaching staff, support staff, and governors. The last survey was conducted in January 2025. The survey explores, among other things, attitudes and behaviours towards ethnicity, disability, sexuality, religion and gender equality.

The above ensures that the School's approach and management of child-on-child abuse is tailored specifically to our pupils, and is under constant review. This helps to confirm that this policy:

1. continually identifies and addresses the level and nature of risk to which the pupils are, or may be, exposed
2. remains fit for purpose
3. is 'owned' by the School, and
4. is effectively implemented in practice – including to mitigate harmful attitudes and child-on-child abuse within the School.

The School:



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- encourages parents to hold it to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of another child, they should inform the school so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.
- identifies and handles cases sensitively, appropriately, and promptly. It ensures that it has effective policies, procedures and practices in place to prevent, identify, and appropriately respond to cases of child-on-child abuse.
- will always acknowledge 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.
- recognises that having a separate child-on-child abuse policy, in addition to its reference within the Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures, is a preventative measure.

This policy:

- is the School's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute child-on-child abuse. It relates to, and should be read alongside, the Bryanston School Safeguarding Policy & Child Protection Procedures, Anti-bullying Policy, Online Safety policy, Digital Communications Policy and Relationships and Behaviour Policy;
- outlines the School's safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in allegations of, or concerns about, child-on-child 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 child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of another child;
- 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 child-on-child 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 child-on-child 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 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 child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026);



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- if relevant according to the concerns or allegations raised, should be read in conjunction with KCSiE Part 5: Child-on-child sexual harassment and sexual violence.
- 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.
- 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 using, among other methods, data collected from MyConcern.

4. PREVENTION

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

Any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child 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 child-on-child abuse due to how others now perceive them, regardless of any characteristics which may be inherent in them 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 or who are socially isolated from their peers may be more vulnerable to child-on-child 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:

- child-on-child abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms, particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed, rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure will also be different.
- children with SEND are three times more likely to be abused than their peers without SEND. Additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in this group of children.
- some children may be more likely to experience child-on-child abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, trans status, disability, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs.
- Children and young people with mental health difficulties may not only be at greater risk of being targeted, but bullying can exacerbate their mental health needs.
- LGBTQ children and young people experience significantly higher levels of verbal, physical and sexual abuse than their peers.

Being Alert to and Monitoring Changes in Pupil Behaviour

The School maintains and monitors a behaviour incident log that is used to assess any behavioural trends that may be emerging across a cohort of pupils, at a particular time of day or in a specific location. This is mainly detailed on MyConcern which is overseen by the Safeguarding Coordinator and the Senior Deputy Head. In addition, a separate behavioural log is maintained by the Senior Deputy Head.

These behavioural logs provide a summary account of the nature of the actions that staff take to address such behaviours, particularly those at the inappropriate and problematic end of the behaviour spectrum (see p22).

The School's safeguarding team regularly reviews the behaviour incident logs to help identify any changes in behaviour or concerning patterns or trends at an early stage. The information gathered from the behavioural incident logs is presented to the Governors annually.

Proactive Assessment

- 1. The School's pastoral and safeguarding team conducts a regular community wide safeguarding culture review by way of a comprehensive survey (every two to three years). This constitutes a proactive assessment to determine the risks to which the pupils are or may be exposed, as well as any protective factors which may exist. This assessment was last conducted in January 2025.**

The assessment considers:

- the nature and level of risk of the different variants of child-on-child abuse within the school.
- the makeup of the pupil body, including specific characteristics that might affect their vulnerability to child-on-child abuse such as, for example, gender, age, learning difficulties, special educational needs or disabilities, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religious belief.
- the fact that pupils may not always understand that they have experienced or carried out child-on-child abuse, for example, because they do not know what constitutes inappropriate sexualised behaviour, they have experienced sexual abuse and do not realise that what happened to them was wrong, they do not know whether consent was given, they are younger and therefore lack knowledge of sex/sexuality as they are less likely to have received sex or relationships education, or the abuse happened between friends or partners.
- which of these pupils are affected, or are more at risk of being affected, by child-on-child abuse
- any trends
- the various sociocultural contexts to which those pupils are associated including, for example, their peer group (both within and outside the school or college), family, the school environment, their experience(s) of crime or victimisation in the local community, and their online identities, which may impact on their behaviour and engagement in school.
- the levers and barriers within the School environment that will affect our ability to respond to child-on-child abuse – i.e. systems and structures, prevention, identification, response and intervention, and culture context. It should be noted that such abuse can be harmful to children who engage in it as well as those who experience it, and the School balances its duty to both. In addition, there may be barriers to a child disclosing abuse, such as a culture of “no snitching,” how the child thinks they will be perceived, or thinking that their parents will be informed.

It should be noted that this assessment:

- is a proactive assessment of the general risks facing the pupil body, and any protective factors which may exist with respect to them. It is distinct from any responsive risk and needs assessment that may be required following a concern or allegation of child-on-child abuse.
- informs the child-on-child abuse content within the child protection policy.

- feeds into and informs:
 - (i) the governors' oversight of safeguarding, to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place in the School are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole school approach to safeguarding, and
 - (ii) any safeguarding risk register(s) that they may choose to put in place.

2. The School put in place action plans to address any identified risks and keeps these under regular review.

Multi-agency Working

The School actively engages and works closely with its local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse. This includes the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership via the Family Support and Advice Line (FSAAL), Dorset Police and the Safer Schools Community Team.

The School:

- request any updates on local trends relating to child-on-child abuse that might be impacting upon pupils.
- monitors the Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership website to look for any resources associated with child-on-child abuse that can be used to strengthen the curriculum and members of the safeguarding team attend webinars or meetings held on this topic.
- seeks out the education representative who sits on local multi-agency operational or strategic groups where child-on-child abuse is discussed.

The relationships that the School builds with its local partners are essential to enabling it to prevent, identify early, and appropriately handle cases of child-on-child abuse.

These relationships should help the School to:

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

A Whole School Approach

A. The School environment

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

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

This includes:

- i. Contextual Safeguarding.
 - ii. the identification and classification of specific behaviours, including digital behaviours.
 - iii. the importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how low level they may appear (and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as 'banter', 'teasing', 'horseplay', 'part of growing up' or 'just having a laugh').
 - iv. 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:
 - (a) the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse, positive, responsible and safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts about consent, via PSRE and the wider curriculum. For example, by addressing gender inequality in a statistics class, tackling racial injustice in a history class, or by reviewing literature in an English class which addresses bullying and its effect on mental health.
 - (b) consent, including teaching them basic facts such as (i) a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity; (ii) the age of consent is 16; and (iii) sexual intercourse without consent is rape.
 - frequently telling them 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.
 - regularly informing them about the School's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse.
3. Engaging parents on these issues by:
 - talking about them with parents, both in groups and, as appropriate, on a one-to-one basis.
 - addressing these issues in newsletters and other school communications as appropriate
 - asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the school address those risks.
 - involving parents in the review of relevant School policies and lesson plans, as appropriate
 - encouraging parents to hold the School to account on this issue, in part as a result of visibility of the Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures.

4. supporting and promoting the on-going wellbeing and mental health of the pupil body by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise pupil wellbeing, resilience and mental health, and by providing in-school counselling and therapy to address underlying mental health needs. These interventions can be 'de-clinicised' and brokered through a positive relationship with the School
5. and its staff. All staff are trained to meet low-level mental health difficulties within the pupils through regular pastoral INSET. Key staff are Youth Mental Health First Aid Trained.
6. Working with governors, senior leadership team, and all staff, pupils and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the School community.
7. Creating an inclusive and equitable School culture where students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds feel safe and can thrive. The School ensures that it actively promotes equality of gender, ethnicity and other characteristics, positive values and healthy relationships, and incorporates work on child-on-child abuse into its curriculum.
8. Creating conditions in which 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 the 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,
 - which (i) proactively identifies positive qualities in pupils; (ii) nurtures these qualities; (iii) teaches and encourages pupils to think about positive hopes for the future; and (vi) supports pupils in developing small-scale goals that enable realistic ambitions.
 - which provides supervised activities to pupils that give them the experience of having their needs met that might otherwise apparently be met in abusive circumstances. These can include experiencing (i) status; (ii) excitement; and (iii) a degree of risk.
9. Responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately.
10. Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the School's team so that they can (i) ensure that any referrals which may be necessary are made to the relevant statutory services as appropriate, (ii) spot and address any concerning trends, (iii) identify pupils who may be in need of additional support, and (iv) address any locations in or around the School in need of attention.

B. The internet and social media

The internet can provide pupils with extraordinary positive opportunities, including for learning, sharing information and developing key skills, but it can also facilitate harm. The School focuses on enabling and empowering the pupils, staff and parents to navigate the online world in a safe, responsible and positive way via relevant, accurate and engaging training and education.

With respect to pupils, this should involve developing their understanding and education about social media from an early age, and before they start to engage with social media platforms. This is done gradually by weaving age-appropriate discussions into the curriculum and encouraging safe and positive use of social media. Any such discussions:

- reinforce (as appropriate) that most social media platforms require users to be at least 13 years of age before they sign up (and some sites have raised this age limit to 16), and acknowledge that a significant number of children, in some cases young children, nevertheless access these platforms by providing a false date of birth.
- explain these age limits (as appropriate) to children, the reasons for them, and the consequences of breaching them. The Data Protection Act 2018 states that children who are aged 13 years or older are capable of giving consent for data collection online. Although not illegal for the children, underage use of social media constitutes a breach of the platform's terms and conditions. It can also mean that these children are exposed to material that is not appropriate for their age, and to safeguarding risks. Where a child provides a false age of 18 or over, it can mean that they access sites without the additional protections that some sites provide to users under the age of 18. It also means that any liability for harm from the service provider can be waived, because the user has invalidated terms and conditions. If discovered, it can also lead to the child's profile, and any content that they shared, being deleted.
- celebrate difference. Not all children want to be on social media and children should never feel pressured into making choices that are not right for them.
- always encourage children to share any concerns they may have from using the online environment, including social media – even if they are accessing a site that they should not and, where possible, provide reassurance to them that they will not be punished for doing so.
- provide children with advice on how to (i) share their concerns with staff in the School, (ii) report inappropriate or harmful online content or contact to a platform provider or an independent agency, and (iii) seek support and advice if they are worried, either from the School, or from an external body. Children should know that they will not get into trouble for disclosing a concern.

The School has a comprehensive and age-appropriate plan to address social media use, which aims to:

- develop online and social media charters or agreements with pupils. This charter (i) encourages kind, safe, and responsible internet use; and (ii) provides a useful reference point for pupils, parents, and staff if any concerns or allegations should subsequently arise by enabling the School to revisit what was previously agreed.
- hold in-class discussions about the social media sites and applications that children like and why.
- draw on engaging and accurate resources, where appropriate.

5. IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING BEHAVIOUR

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

All staff should be vigilant in respect of the dynamics of peer groups in the School and should be alert to the wellbeing of pupils and to signs of abuse. They should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ.

Signs that a child may be suffering from child-on-child abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse and can include:

- being afraid of particular places or situations or making excuses to avoid particular people
- being afraid or reluctant to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- running away or regularly going missing from home or education
- experiencing difficulties with mental health or emotional wellbeing
- becoming nervous, anxious, distressed, clingy or depressed
- becoming isolated from peers, usual social networks, losing confidence and becoming withdrawn
- self-harming or having thoughts about suicide
- having problems eating, including developing eating disorders, or sleeping (including suffering from nightmares)
- regularly wetting the bed or soiling their clothes
- belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a bully)
- unexplained gifts, money or new possessions (e.g. clothes and/or mobile phone)
- unexplained physical injuries and other signs of physical abuse
- changes in appearance eg weight loss
- changes in performance or behaviour at school
- knowing about or being involved in 'adult issues' which are inappropriate for their age or stage of development, for example, alcohol, drugs or sexual behaviour
- involvement in abusive relationships
- involvement in gangs or gang fights
- having angry outbursts or behaving aggressively or abusively (including displaying HSB) 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. Concerns may also be raised by parents, peers, and others.

Rather than relying on 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 so that the cause of their behaviour can be investigated. Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for their 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 child-on-child 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.

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 Behaviour

Prep and Primary School aged children

As explained by the NSPCC, Research in Practice and Professor Simon Hackett in their harmful sexual behaviour framework (HSB framework):

“it should be standard professional practice to view the sexual behaviours of children and young people along a continuum, ranging from normal to abusive...It is vital that professionals consider the continuum in line with children’s development. Some behaviours that are considered normative in earlier childhood, may be highly abnormal and inappropriate in adolescence. Similarly, some behaviours that are part of normal adolescent sexual development are highly problematic if expressed by younger children...In particular, younger children (under 12) exhibiting harmful or problematic sexual behaviours should be identified early to prevent the possible establishment of persistent patterns later...Guidance indicates that professionals should avoid analysing single behaviours, and instead consider the sexual behaviour within a wider context...Assessment should consider wider welfare needs and concerns, including family issues, and social, economic, and developmental factors...and should be dealt with differently to adolescents, who are likely to have different motivations for their behaviour... Professionals should notice any changes in the sexual behaviour of younger children that appear to be out of step with their developmental stage and level of understanding as such behaviours may be reflective of sexual victimisation, physical abuse, family violence, neglect, poor parenting or exposure to sexually inappropriate material...”

The distinction between sexual behaviours

The HSB framework explains the distinction between problematic and abusive sexual behaviours:

- **“Problematic behaviours** don’t include overt victimisation of others [sic] may be disruptive to the child’s development and can cause distress, rejection or increase victimisation of the child displaying the behaviour. They include behaviours involving sexual body parts that are developmentally inappropriate or potentially harmful to the child or others. They range from problematic self-stimulation and nonintrusive behaviours, to sexual interactions with other children that include behaviours more explicit than sex play, and aggressive sexual behaviours. Sometimes, the term ‘problematic sexual behaviour’ is used to describe behaviours that may be developmentally appropriate but that are expressed inappropriately in a given context.

When this type of behaviour appears to be trauma-related – for example when symptoms originate from sexual abuse the child has experienced – the behaviour may be termed sexually reactive. Sexually reactive and sexually problematic behaviours are more commonly associated with children in the pre-adolescent age range

- **Abusive behaviours** involve an element of coercion or manipulation and a power imbalance that means the victim cannot give informed consent, and where the behaviour has potential to cause physical or emotional harm. Power imbalance may be due to age, intellectual ability, disability or physical strength. Abusive sexual behaviour may or may not have resulted in a criminal conviction or prosecution. Such behaviours are more commonly associated with young people over the age of criminal responsibility or those in puberty...”

The HSB framework also states that: “it is vital for professionals to distinguish normal from abnormal sexual behaviours. Chaffin [et al, 2002]...suggest a child’s sexual behaviour should be considered abnormal if it:

- occurs at a frequency greater than would be developmentally expected
- interferes with the child’s development
- occurs with coercion, intimidation, or force
- is associated with emotional distress
- occurs between children of divergent ages or developmental abilities
- repeatedly recurs in secrecy after intervention by caregivers.”

The Hackett continuum, Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool, NICE guidelines and NSPCC Learning – sexual development and behaviour in children

The School is likely to reference all four of these resources when making any decision on the level of HSB.

Professor Hackett has proposed the below continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, which may be helpful when seeking to understand a child’s sexual behaviour and deciding how to respond to it.

Sexual behaviours continuum model

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
• Developmentally expected • Socially acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• 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	• 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	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour • Sadism

Alongside the notion of a continuum of HSB, the Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool and training can help professionals to identify, understand and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours in children. As explained in the HSB framework, in broad terms the categories in Hackett's continuum of sexual behaviour and the Brook Traffic Light Tool relate to each other in the following way:

- Green behaviours (Brook) are those that constitute normal behaviours on the continuum model.
- Amber behaviours (Brook) are those that are likely to [constitute] inappropriate or problematic behaviours on the continuum model.
- Red behaviours (Brook) are likely to be those classified as abusive or violent behaviours on Hackett's continuum.

Once identified harmful sexual behaviour (ie those behaviours that are not part of a child's normal sexual development) should be viewed within a child protection context and Children's Services should be contacted to provide assessment and recommendations if more specialist help is need. In some cases, children's HSB may be a marker of their own histories of abuse that need to be addressed.

It should be noted, as explained by Brook, that in order to access their Traffic Light Tool, professionals must complete training on it – "to ensure safe use of the Tool. The Tool cannot be shared with people who have not completed the training. Both the Tool and training are designed to complement existing safeguarding processes and should not be considered a replacement for your organisation's safeguarding procedures". At least one member of the School's safeguarding team has received training of Brook's Traffic Light Tool.

The HSB framework states that it should be used alongside the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline [NG55] on harmful sexual behaviour among children and young people, which "makes recommendations about the roles of universal services, early help assessment and risk assessment, supporting families and the key principles and approaches for intervention;" and "aims to ensure that children and young people who display HSB, are offered early support so that their sexual

behaviour problems don't escalate and possibly lead to them being charged with a sexual offence. It also aims to ensure that children are not referred to specialist services unnecessarily."

NSPCC guidance and resources

The NSPCC highlights that a child's behaviour can change depending on the circumstances they are in, and sexual behaviour can move in either direction along the continuum, so it is important to look at each situation individually, as well as considering any patterns of behaviour. The NSPCC has produced a range of resources on harmful sexual behaviour, including, for example, guidance on understanding sexualised behaviour in children, on the stages of developmentally typical sexual development and behaviour in children, on learning about healthy sexual development in children, on responding to an incident of HSB, and on how to prevent HSB in children; and offers online training courses to help manage harmful sexual behaviour in primary and secondary schools in the UK. It has also produced, in partnership with Professor Hackett, Durham University and NHS Health Education England, a continuum 'quick guide' "[Responding to children who display sexualised behaviour](#)". The NSPCC explains that this is a tool to support objective decision making about a child's sexual behaviour, and does not replace professional judgement or policy and legislation.

Hackett's continuum of sexual behaviour, the Brook Traffic Light Tool and the NSPCC guideline relate to each other in the following way:

- 'developmentally typical' – to describe green behaviours on the continuum – ie 'healthy', 'normal' or 'developmentally expected';
- 'problematic sexual behaviour (PSB)' – used by the NSPCC as an umbrella term for all amber behaviours on the continuum – ie 'inappropriate' and 'problematic';
- 'harmful sexual behaviours' – used by the NSPCC as an umbrella term for all red behaviours on the continuum – i.e. 'abusive' and 'violent'.

In terms of identifying the sexualised behaviour, and what to consider in deciding where it sits on the continuum, the NSPCC suggests the following:

- The ages and developmental stages of the children who have displayed the sexual behaviour.
 - sexual behaviour may be considered harmful if there is a significant age difference, typically more than two-years' difference or if one is pre-pubescent and the other is not.
- Is the behaviour unusual for that particular child or young person?
- Have all the children or young people involved freely given consent?
- Are the other children or young people distressed?
- Is there an imbalance of power?
- Is the behaviour excessive, degrading or threatening?
- Is the behaviour occurring in a public or private space?

It also states that other behaviours might give cause for concern if they are particularly secretive or are being carried out in private after intervention from adults.

Approaches to HSB assessment

The HSB framework highlights that there is a wide range of approaches to HSB assessment across different agencies in the UK, and that core considerations in the assessment of all children and young people displaying HSB include:

- working within a multi-agency, multidisciplinary context
- close attention to child protection concerns
- use of evidence-based assessment models
- risks and needs based, not just focused on the HSB
- effective inter-professional communication
- analysis of the behaviour in quality written reports

It also highlights the distinction made by NICE, in its aforementioned guideline, between early help assessments and more specific HSB risk and needs assessments ie that:

“An ‘early help’ assessment is warranted when a child’s sexual behaviours are indicated at the level of ‘inappropriate’ on the continuum. NICE suggests that a designated lead practitioner acts as a single point of contact for the child and family, coordinates early help and develops a care plan to deliver agreed actions. A NICE early help assessment would take into account the child or young person’s development status, gender and any neurodevelopmental or learning disabilities. The purpose of the assessment is to ascertain whether the child’s needs can be met by universal services or whether a referral for a more specialist HSB risk and needs assessment is necessary.

For children and young people whose sexual behaviours are more indicative of abusive and violent categories on the continuum model, a more specific assessment of risk and need is likely to be required. NICE recommends that professionals responsible for risk assessments should consider using tools judiciously, taking into account the child or young person’s age, neurodevelopmental disabilities and gender...”

A number of the specific recommendations made by NICE with respect to appropriate risk assessment tools are also set out. It should be noted that, in the NICE guideline, the term ‘risk assessment tool’ is used “for tools that estimate the risk of sexual re-offending or the level of supervision needed, and helps users decide what action to take. It includes tools such as J-SOAP-11 and ERASOR, which are North American tools designed to assess the risk of sexual reoffending. The AIM assessment model was developed in the UK and considers the level of management and supervision needed for people displaying [HSB].”

The HSB framework contains a continuum of HSB assessment – listing key behavioural elements, assessment levels indicated, possible frameworks and tools, and likely intervention focus.

Local authorities use a range of assessment and intervention frameworks and tools which can be very helpful in assessing where any given behaviour falls on a continuum. The AIM Project assessment models are one example.

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes

The (non-statutory) sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people, produced by the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) Education Group, outlines how to respond to an incident of nudes and semi-nudes being shared, and states that:

“The types of incidents which this advice covers are:

- a person under the age of 18 creates and shares nudes and semi-nudes of themselves with a peer under the age of 18
- a person under the age of 18 shares nudes and semi-nudes created by another person under the age of 18 with a peer under the age of 18

- a person under the age of 18 is in possession of nudes and semi-nudes created by another person under the age of 18

This advice does not cover:

- the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes of under 18s by adults (18 and over) as this constitutes child sexual abuse and education settings should always inform their local police force as a matter of urgency
- children and young people under the age of 18 sharing adult pornography or exchanging sexual texts which do not contain images.”

In response to these issues, the School follows Dorset guidance and the School also refers to KCSiE 2025.

The UKCIS guidance explains, in terms of:

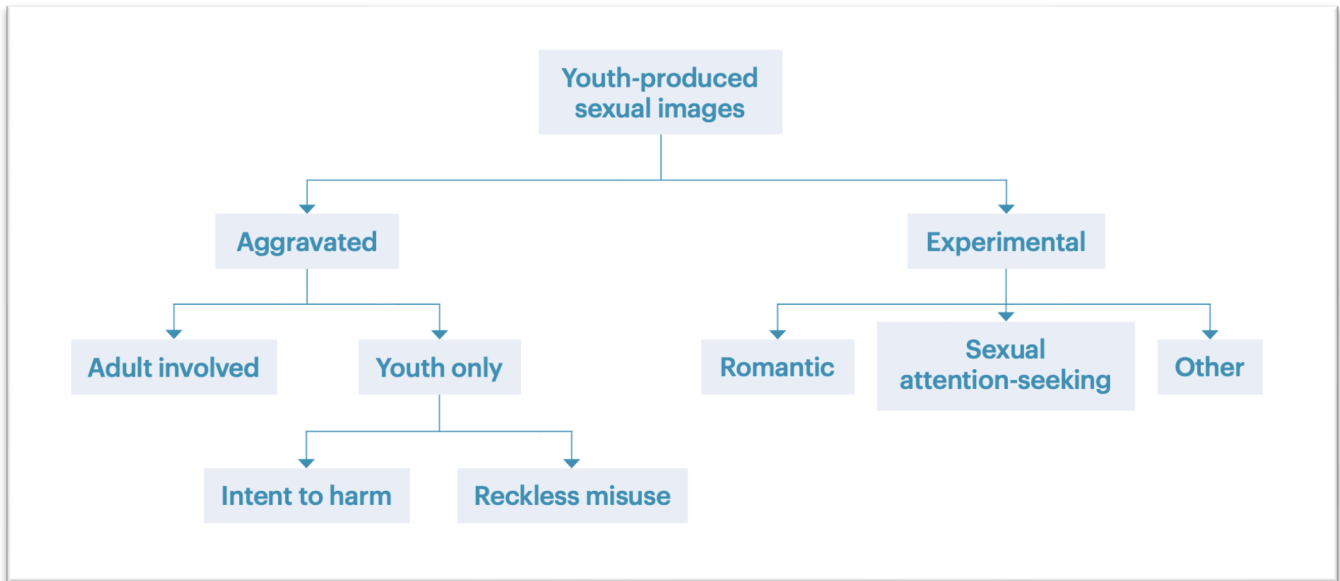
- “**Understanding motivations and behaviours:** Nudes and semi-nudes can be shared by, and between, children and young people under a wide range of circumstances, and are often not sexually or criminally motivated. An education setting’s response to an incident will differ depending on the motivations behind the incident and the appropriateness of the child or young person’s behaviour. In order to ensure an appropriate and proportionate response to an incident of nudes and semi-nudes being shared, education settings can use the tools set out below”
- “**Defining the incident:** Finkelhor and Wolak’s typology of youth-produced imagery cases (see below) can be used to define and assess incidents according to motivations.

Incidents can broadly be divided into two categories:

- **aggravated:** incidents involving additional or abusive elements beyond the creation, sending or possession of nudes and semi-nudes. These can further be sub-categorised into:
 - **adult involved:** adult offenders attempt to develop relationships by grooming children and young people, in criminal sex offences even without the added element of nudes and semi-nudes. Victims may be family friends, relatives, community members or contacted via the Internet. The images may be solicited by adult offenders
 - **youth only – intent to harm:** these cases can arise from interpersonal conflict, such as break-ups and fights among friends, or criminal/abusive conduct such as blackmail, threats or deception, sexual abuse or exploitation by young people
 - **youth only – reckless misuse:** no intent to harm but images are taken or sent without the knowing or willing participation of the young person who is pictured. In these cases, pictures are taken or sent thoughtlessly or recklessly and a victim may have been harmed as a result.
- **experimental:** incidents involving the creation and sending of nudes and seminudes with no adult involvement, no apparent intent to harm or reckless misuse. These can further be subcategorised into:
 - **romantic:** incidents in which young people in ongoing relationships make images for themselves or each other, and images were not intended to be distributed beyond the pair;



- **'sexual attention seeking'**: the phrase 'sexual attention seeking' is taken directly from the typology however it is important to note that incidents within this category can be a part of normal childhood. A child or young person should not be blamed for taking and sharing their image;
- **other**: cases that do not appear to have aggravating elements, like adult involvement, malicious motives or reckless misuse, but also do not fit into the Romantic or Attention Seeking sub-types. These involve either young people who take pictures of themselves for themselves (no evidence of any sending or sharing or intent to do so) or pre-adolescent children (age 9 or younger) who did not appear to have sexual motives.



- **Assessing behaviour**: DSLs need to be mindful of that behaviour, which may not initially appear to be sexually motivated, may have occurred as a result of risky or harmful behaviour or sexual abuse being 'normalised' for children and young people.

Hackett's 'Continuum of children and young people's sexual behaviours' model can also help practitioners to understand that children and young people's sexual behaviours exist on a wide continuum..., and may move fluidly between each category. It is important to note that an isolated incident that demonstrates problematic or abusive behaviour may not necessarily be indicative of the child or young person's overall sexual behaviour. The incident should be dealt with proportionally to the behaviour being displayed.

...It is important for professionals to place a child's sexual behaviour within the context of their age and development. DSLs must ensure that they are familiar with and follow the relevant local policies and procedures to help them do so.

This includes contact with safeguarding partners and guidance on recognising and responding to harmful behaviours and/or underage sexual activity when dealing with children under 13. Frameworks such as Brook's Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool can also be used to identify when a child or young person's sexual behaviour is a cause for concern in relation to their development.

Any child or young person displaying [HSB] should be safeguarded and supported in moving forward from the incident and adopting positive behaviour patterns.

Where a child or young person displays appropriate sexual behaviour within the context of their age or development, consideration should still be given as to whether the taking or sharing of the nude or semi-nude raises any additional concerns.”

Other Behaviour

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional 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.

When drawing on Hackett’s continuum, in order to assess the seriousness of other (ie non HSB) alleged behaviour, it is recognised that there are some aspects of Hackett’s continuum which may not be relevant or appropriate to consider. For example, the issue of consent and the nuances around it, are unlikely to apply in the same way in cases where the alleged behaviour is reported to involve emotional or physical abuse, as it could in cases of alleged HSB.

In addition, the School could be required to deal with cases involving one type or a range of alleged behaviours including sexual behaviour, emotional, physical behaviour and digital behaviour, and by a single child or by groups of children, and involving single incidents or ongoing, and the alleged behaviour may be entirely offline or online, or a combination of both.

The School must consult its own local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. For example, in terms of recognition and referral of abuse, the London Safeguarding Children Procedures state the following:

“Professionals must base their decision on whether behaviour directed at another child should be categorised as harmful or not on the circumstances of each case. It will be helpful to consider the following factors:

- The relative chronological and developmental age of the two children. The greater the difference, the more likely the behaviour should be defined as abusive.
- Whether the alleged abuser is supported or joined by other children.
- A differential in power or authority eg related to race, gender, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability of the victim.
- The actual behaviour (both physical and verbal factors must be considered).
- Whether the behaviour could be described as age appropriate or involves inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation.
- The degree of physical aggression, intimidation or bribery.
- The victim’s experience of the behaviour and the impact it is having on their routines and lifestyle e.g. not attending school.

- Attempts to ensure secrecy.
- Duration and frequency of behaviour.

These procedures are written with particular reference to sexually harmful behaviour, though when there are serious child protection concerns as a result of serious non-sexual violence or serious emotional abuse by a child or children, these procedures should also be followed.”

In terms of online behaviour, the HeadStart Kernow Online Resilience Tool provides a practical way for staff to assess children’s and young people’s behaviour and help them make informed judgements and decisions about whether that behaviour represents risk of harm. Behaviours are organised by age group and divided into ‘Not Harmful’, ‘Potentially Harmful’ and ‘Harmful’.

It should 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 kissing and touching may be inappropriate in one context for example during a lesson between two 14 year olds who are in a consensual relationship, and abusive in another – for example, when it (a) occurs without the consent of one of those involved; (b) takes place as a result of coercion; or (c) is then used to pressure a child into other sexual acts.

Behaviour which starts out as inappropriate may escalate to being problematic and then abusive, either 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 becoming problematic, abusive or violent – and ultimately requiring more formal engagement with specialist external or statutory agencies. For example, a physical fight between two children may not constitute child-on-child abuse where the fight is a one-off incident but may be abusive where the child’s behaviour subsequently deteriorates into a pattern of bullying behaviour and requires a safeguarding response from a multiagency partnership, including a statutory assessment of whether this has led to a risk of significant harm to a child. When there is ‘reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm’ a bullying incident should of course be addressed as a child protection concern under the Children Act 1989.

The importance of intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour does not just apply on an individual pupil basis but could also apply to a cohort of the pupil body, such as a year group, or across the pupil body as a whole. 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 implementing a bystander intervention model throughout the school or arranging for an external person to deliver a year group intervention exercise; 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 in question, a referral to statutory agencies may be necessary. Where the behaviour which is the subject to the concern(s)/allegation(s) is considered or suspected by the DSL to constitute child-on-child abuse, schools should follow the procedures set out in their child protection policy.

6. HANDLING INCIDENTS

Responding to alleged incidents of child-on-child abuse

The School will consult with the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership via the Family Support and Advice Line and seek advice from a social worker. There is nothing in writing on the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership website but, by way of an example, in terms of recognition and referral of abuse, the London Safeguarding Children Procedures state that:

“All professionals should make a referral to local authority children’s social care in line with Referral and Assessment Procedure when there is a suspicion or an allegation of a child:

- having been seriously physically abused or being likely to seriously physically abuse another child.
- having been seriously emotionally abused or being likely to seriously emotionally abuse another child.
- having harmed another child.

These procedures are written with particular reference to HSB, though when there are serious child protection concerns as a result of serious non-sexual violence or serious emotional abuse by a child, these procedures should also be followed...It is possible that the child with harmful behaviours may pose a significant risk of harm to their own siblings, other children or adults. The child will have considerable needs themselves, and may also be or have been the victim of abuse.”

When responding to alleged incidents of the following, in addition to following its own Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures, [WTSC 2026](#) and any advice from Dorset Family Support and Advice Line, the School has regard to:

1. Sexual violence and sexual harassment: Part five of [KCSiE 2026](#).
2. Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: [Advice for education settings working with children and young people](#).
3. The DfE’s Behaviour in Schools, [Advice for headteachers and school staff](#) also contains a section on ‘Guidance on specific behaviour issues’ – including child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment, behaviour incidents online, mobile phones and, as below, suspected criminal behaviour.

Suspected criminal behaviour

Where a pupil has potentially committed a crime on the School premises, the DSL will refer to the National Police Chiefs’ Council, [When to call the police: Guidance for schools and colleges](#). It provides advice on what the School should bear in mind when considering contacting the police in the following situations: assault, criminal damage, cyber crime, drugs, harassment, sexual offences, theft and weapons.

If a referral to the police is necessary, the School will manage police presence on the site very carefully. Following the safeguarding review in the Child Q case, new guidance on police attendance at schools is forthcoming from the Department for Education. In the meantime, KCSiE 2026 states

that the DSL is expected to be aware of the requirement for children to have an Appropriate Adult, and signposts to further information being available in the statutory guidance, PACE Code C 2019.

Where a concern or allegation of child-on-child abuse also involves a concern or allegation about an adult working with children that may meet the harm threshold, the School will follow its own Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures, WTSC 2026, as well as contact the Dorset LADO. KCSiE 2026 also provides guidance at paragraphs 75 to 77 including in respect of low-level concerns which may be relevant where, for example, staff behaviour or school culture may have facilitated or failed to deter child-on-child abuse.

As a registered charity, where appropriate, according to the particular facts and circumstances of the concern or allegation raised, the School will consider whether to make a serious incident report to the Charity Commission in accordance with the Commission's guidance.

General principles when responding to alleged incidents of child-on-child abuse

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

Individuals raising a concern or allegation about child-on-child abuse should not be promised confidentiality as it is very likely that it will be in the best interests of the children involved to seek advice and guidance from others (e.g. the DSL or deputy) in order to provide support and engage relevant agencies as appropriate. Staff should only share the report with those people who are necessary in order to progress it.

A key point to raise here is that child-on-child abuse can be a complex issue, and even more so where wider safeguarding concerns exist. It is often not appropriate for one single agency where the alleged incident cannot appropriately be managed internally by the School to try to address the issue alone. It requires effective partnership working.

Any response should:

- include a thorough investigation of the concerns or allegations and the wider context in which they may have occurred as appropriate. However, depending on the nature and seriousness of the alleged incident it may be appropriate for the police and children's social care to carry out the investigation.
- treat all children involved as being at potential risk and be mindful that there may be other victims who have not yet been identified. 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. The School ensures that a safeguarding response is in place for both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter. To inform the risk and needs assessment, a range of considerations should be taken into account such as risk of retribution from alleged perpetrators or individuals associated with them, risk of harm from gossip and social media, known relevant history of other behaviours and any other factors that could have an impact on the children involved; and
- 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 these contexts to address the child's/children's needs and to mitigate risk.
- whether there is a discriminatory aspect to the alleged incident, or whether the child/children involved may have any particular vulnerabilities because of a protected characteristic.
- the potential complexity of child-on-child 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.

Information sharing, data protection and record keeping

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

- report any potential crimes to the police.
- always consider carefully, in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies any case in which it is considered unsafe to share information about a concern or allegation with the pupil affected, and their parents.
- 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 KCSiE 2026, WTSC 2026 and [DfE advice on Information Sharing](#) (May 2024).

When considering whether and how to share information, the School will consider a number of factors, in consultation with the above as relevant, and in accordance with the aforementioned

DfE advice on Information Sharing. These factors include, but are not limited to ensuring, as far as possible, that:

- a. the information sharing does not prejudice any investigation.
- b. the information sharing keeps individuals' personal sensitive data confidential unless it is not appropriate to do so, for example, where the School needs to share information in order to enable individuals to safeguard and support a child and comply with its obligations to make referrals to the local authority children's social care or the police or other relevant agencies.
- c. the School shares information about a child with that child's parents unless there are legitimate reasons not to do so because it would put a child or children at greater risk.
- d. the School keeps individuals updated on developments where possible and appropriate.
- e. the School's responsibilities to inform everyone involved of the need for confidentiality to ensure the integrity of investigations, whilst giving them a point of contact at the School who they can speak to as well as other appropriate support as identified by a risk and needs assessment.

Where appropriate, the views of the pupil(s) affected should be sought on how information about the concern or allegation is shared. These views should be taken into account and properly balanced against the School's duty to safeguard and protect any children affected by the alleged incident. Where a decision is taken to share information with local authority children's social care or the police or any other relevant agency against the wishes of a child, this needs to be handled extremely carefully, the reasons explained to them, and appropriate professional support offered; the School may seek legal advice on how best to handle this situation.

It is essential that written records of concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse are made.

These should:

- be contemporaneous;
- be comprehensive and accurate;
- clearly and explicitly describe the nature of the alleged behaviour without using euphemisms, and contain the exact words that have been said, irrespective of the vulgarity or impropriety of the language;
- note where the incident occurred and whether anyone else was around;
- distinguish between fact and opinion;
- contain adequate information for the purpose;
- include details of how the concern/allegation was followed up and resolved;
- include a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

These records, including in behaviour incident logs, individual risk and needs assessments, and records of any conversations with children, their parents, staff, and external agencies are likely to contain highly impactful, sensitive personal data about children.

The School will take care when creating them and ensure that they are accessed on a need-to-know basis only by trained and appropriate staff.

Those with the responsibility for doing so must bear in mind that any records may need to be provided to the children involved or their parents in the future. For example, records could be requested as part of a parental complaint, or a legal claim, or under a subject access request (subject to limited exceptions – such as where it might not be in the child’s best interests to disclose to a parent, or if there are overriding privacy interests of other children or families – although, generally speaking, the requester’s rights will trump the privacy needs of staff). Increasingly individuals also seek to challenge records with ‘right to be forgotten’ or rectification requests.

All notes and related communications should always be concise, factual and objective, and focused on what is necessary for the safeguarding purpose. The language used should always be appropriate and professional.

That being said, professionals at the School should not feel hampered by excessive caution. The core aim here is to capture any relevant information that could help protect children, and important details should never be missed because of unfounded data protection concerns.

Risk Assessments

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

The umbrella term ‘harmful sexual behaviour’ (HSB) is widely used in child protection and applies to behaviour occurring online, face-to-face, or both. HSB is always considered within a child protection context.

The comprehensive framework set out below will be used by the DSL or deputy to inform their risk assessment, i.e. when (i) identifying and building on protective factors; (ii) identifying, assessing and mitigating risks; and (iii) considering how to support pupils and other members of the School community.

The DSL or deputy will decide whether or not a risk assessment is required. This decision may be taken in consultation with other external agencies.

Children’s sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent and may cause developmental damage.

When making their decision on the level of HSB, the DSL or deputy will refer to

- KCSiE 2026 part 5.
- Hackett’s continuum.
- Brook Sexual Behavior Traffic Light Tool
- guidance provided by the NSPCC (sexual development and behaviour in children)
- guidance may also be sought from the Lucy Faithful Foundation.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment / Abusive or violent behaviour

The DSL or deputy will always carry out a risk assessment 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;
- any child who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child as deemed appropriate by the DSL.

Consideration may need to be given to having separate but aligned risk assessments for the alleged perpetrator(s), and the victim(s) and any other children who may be affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour.

Where other children have been identified as witnesses to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour, consideration will also be given by the DSL to the impact on them, and whether there might be any risks posed to those children, and whether a risk assessment for them would be appropriate in the circumstances.

Inappropriate or problematic behaviour

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 exercise careful consideration and judgement regarding a range of factors when deciding whether (a) it would be appropriate to contact the local authority children's social care, (b) whether it is necessary and appropriate to carry out a risk assessment, and (c) for which children. These decisions will be based on:

- the particular concern or allegation raised, including the context.
- the severity of the alleged behaviour, and whether whilst it might be judged to be inappropriate or problematic by an adult, it might actually be harmful to another child. Consultation is likely with the local authority children's social care.
- the extent to which any child/children (i) may have experienced or otherwise been affected by the alleged behaviour, (ii) may be at risk due to the alleged behaviour, and (iii) been identified as witnesses and the impact on and possible risk posed to each of them. This will depend not only on the nature and extent of their involvement in, or proximity to the alleged behaviour, but also on factors such as their possible wider circumstances and needs, their age and understanding, and the extent to which the alleged behaviour might trouble or distress other children or expose them to inappropriate or problematic behaviour.
- any information recorded about the child/ children concerned in a Behaviour Log.
- whether there are any patterns of behaviour occurring.
- the needs and circumstances of the children concerned, and whether there are any wider safeguarding concerns about them, for example, where a child's behaviour may be considered to be inappropriate or problematic on Hackett's continuum, or at risk of escalating, the DSL or

the local authority children's social care, or other relevant external agencies, may determine that a risk assessment is required to control emerging risks.

- the importance of early intervention to address and to prevent escalation of inappropriate or problematic behaviours.

Again, consideration will be given to having separate but aligned risk assessments for the alleged perpetrator(s), and the victim(s), and any other child/children who may be affected by the alleged inappropriate or problematic behaviour.

In all cases where a risk assessment is not considered to be appropriate, the School will still take steps to safeguard and support the alleged perpetrator(s), victim(s), and any other child/ children who may be affected by the alleged behaviour and will continue to monitor the situation. If risks increase, consideration will again be given to conducting a risk assessment.

1. Key points to consider when conducting a risk assessment

In conducting a risk assessment the School will:

always act in accordance with WTSC 2026, KCSIE 2026, and any relevant multiagency safeguarding arrangements;

following a referral (where it is deemed to be necessary according to the particular facts of the case) to local authority children's social care, or a report to the police, or referral to other relevant agencies, seek to consult with them on the need for, and on developing and, whenever possible, agreeing the School's risk assessment. KCSIE 2026 states that in cases where professional risk assessments are required, for example, by social workers or sexual violence specialists where there has been a report of sexual violence, they should be used to inform the School approach to supporting and protecting their pupils, and updating its own risk assessment, which should be consistent with any such professional risk assessment.

in cases where the police are involved, ensure that the risk assessment does not potentially prejudice any criminal investigation, and that it protects all children concerned in any such investigation to the greatest extent possible.

if the local authority children's social care, or the police, or other relevant agencies do not, for whatever reason, engage with them, then the School will advise the relevant agency that it intends to conduct the risk assessment for the child/children concerned, and may consider escalating its referral if it believes that the local authority children's social care or the police should be engaged.

give consideration to consulting with and involving the child/children concerned and their parents, in accordance with any advice given by the relevant agencies. Where a report has been made to the police, the School will consult with them, and agree what information can be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator and their parents. There may be other circumstances where there are legitimate obstacles presented to parental knowledge or engagement, for example, if there is a suggestion or concern that informing the parents will put any child at additional risk. In these cases the School will work closely with local authority children's social care or the police to take advice on how best to proceed.

consider whether a planning meeting may be helpful to develop the risk assessment. Careful consideration will be given to whether the alleged perpetrator or their parents should attend such a meeting. Where a child or parent does not attend, their wishes and feelings should still be sought

in relation to any proposed risk assessment in advance of the meeting by a professional or in the case of the child, by a designated trusted professional with whom they have a positive relationship.

A version of the risk assessment which is appropriate for the child's age and level of understanding should be provided to the child and their parents. Efforts will be made to ensure that they understand what is proposed and the School will seek their agreement to the arrangements.

These steps will help to ensure that the risk assessment is appropriately tailored to the relevant child's/children's needs and will enable the School to work with others in an effort to meet those needs in the longer-term.

2. Content of risk assessment

A risk assessment should:

- Be as clear and user friendly as possible.
- Be proportionate, and not stigmatise or shame the alleged perpetrator(s), or victim(s), or other child/children who may be affected by the alleged behaviour.
- Set out all relevant background information, including an overview of:
 - the context;
 - the specific concern(s) or allegation(s);
 - any relevant detail about the relationships, and any power differentials between the children concerned;
 - the frequency of the alleged behaviour and any changes in it over time.

Details should also be shared of action taken regarding the alleged concern or allegation, and any advice provided by local authority children's social care, or the police, or other relevant agencies in accordance with the locally agreed multiagency safeguarding arrangements, or any other practitioner working with the child/ children concerned.

- Set out any relevant information regarding the child/children concerned. For example:
 - relevant medical information;
 - any impact on their academic performance or social life, views of the parents or teachers may be helpful here;
 - any previous concerns about their behaviour, needs or harm that they may have been exposed to in the past.

Information should be shared on their wishes and feelings regarding the proposed risk assessment.

- Identify and assess the nature and level of risk that is posed or faced by the child/ children concerned:
 - a. in School, such as that which may arise in relation to locations, activities, contact with particular pupils and influential peer groups, or transport arrangements to and from school,

- b. contexts outside the School, including at home, in relationships with friends, peer groups, interactions in the neighbourhood or during online activity.

In order to give children a sense of freedom and opportunity to develop, spaces where no extra supervision is required should be promoted as far as is safe to do so.

- Set out the steps and controls that can be put in place to reduce or manage any risk – to avoid, so far as possible, the child/children concerned missing out on beneficial activities. Issues that may be addressed include:
 - how safety will be ensured in the classroom, outside of the classroom, on transport, and during unstructured or extra-curricular activities, including trips and residential stays away from School. This may involve separating the alleged perpetrator from the victim and any other child/children who may be affected by the alleged behaviour;
 - how to ensure that the victim and any other child/children who may be affected by the alleged behaviour feel supported, including by appointing a trusted member of staff (a ‘critical friend’) with whom they can speak if they have existing concerns, or if there are any future developments which cause them concern;
 - how best to draw on any other trusting relationships where these exist, and create them where they do not, to provide the child concerned with support and a sense of belonging;
 - where relevant, how to manage the child’s behaviour. This can be done in a number of ways including, by way of a de-escalation plan for staff which identifies any triggers, explains how their behaviour can escalate, sets out the function of the behaviour for the child, and proposes an appropriate action or response to it; identifying language that should be used and avoided; a positive handling plan; or implementing controls and measures to reduce or manage any risk;
 - whether restorative action would be appropriate and, if so, how best to take such action, bearing in mind the specific needs of the children concerned, and the appropriateness of any such action given the nature and seriousness of the concern or allegation. Advice should be taken from the local authority children’s social care, sexual violence specialists, and the police, where they are involved to avoid proposed restorative action potentially jeopardising any police investigation.
 - whether any targeted interventions are needed to address the underlying attitudes or behaviour of the child/ children, any emotional and behavioural disorders, developmental disorders, or learning difficulties, and/or to meet the child’s psychological, emotional or physical needs; drawing on local statutory, private or voluntary services as appropriate;
 - whether the behaviour is of such high risk that suitable controls cannot be put in place within the School setting which would enable it to be adequately managed.

In this case consideration will need to be given to alternative plans for the alleged perpetrator. The principle that any child who is reported to have experienced child-on-child abuse should not have restrictions or controls placed on them as a result of another child’s alleged behaviour should be given priority consideration.

- Identify and consider how to build on the strengths that each child possesses or is exposed to, such as those emanating from activities or lessons that they enjoy and engage with whether within or outside of school; positive characteristics and skills that they possess; or pre-existing positive and trusting relationships with their family, other pupils or staff; and consider how best to promote their positive development, for example do they respond well to praise?
- Assess any risks that are posed or faced by the wider School community, including all other pupils and, where appropriate, staff and parents and identify any steps that the School can take to mitigate these risks. This may include consideration of:
 - how to support any pupils and, where appropriate, staff and parents who may be affected by or know about the alleged behaviour, or who may be required to participate in any investigation. Where any pupils have their own standalone risk assessment, they should cross refer to and be consistent with one another;
 - work that can be undertaken with the wider staff or pupil population to help to protect children against child-on-child abuse in the future. Careful consideration will need to be given to managing confidentiality for victims and any other children affected by the alleged behaviour or engaged themselves in any such behaviour.
- Set out the steps needed to implement the risk assessment, including how to communicate with and what information should be shared with relevant staff members in the strictest confidence so that they are able to implement the actions set out in the risk assessment and safeguard the children concerned appropriately. Disclosure of the whole risk assessment may not be necessary for all individuals, and some may only need to be informed about relevant aspects. Additionally, the alleged perpetrator should be given a “safe story” to explain their behaviour or restrictions to someone who does not know about the risk assessment or that aspect of it.

3. Format and review of risk assessment

As stated by KSCIE 2026, in the context of sexual violence but with the same principles applying to the wider context of harmful sexual behaviour, risk assessments should be recorded (paper or electronic) and should be kept under review. At all times, the School will be actively considering the risks posed to all the pupils and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe.

Risk assessments will be reviewed on a regular basis, ie at least every three months or, if there is another alleged incident, or a material change of circumstances. Reviews will be carried out in light of the child's/ children's ongoing needs to ensure that real progress is being made which benefits the child/children concerned.

If at any stage the risk increases, there is a further alleged incident, or any individual child's needs escalate, the DSL will contact the local authority children's social care, or other relevant agencies, in accordance with the agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, to determine the appropriate course of action.

In the event that any new information is disclosed at any time indicating that a child may have been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, the School will, again, act in accordance with WTSC 2026, KCSIE 2026, and the locally agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, and make a new referral to local authority children's social care and, if appropriate,

report to the police. Similarly, any new information disclosed at any time regarding alleged rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault will always be shared with the police.

Disciplinary action

The School will consider whether disciplinary action, under the Bryanston School Relationships and Behaviour Policy, is appropriate for any child involved, including the alleged victim if it is determined that they deliberately raised a false or malicious allegation. However, if there are police proceedings underway, or there could be, it is critical that the School works in partnership with the police or the local authority children's social care.

Where a matter is not of interest to the police or children's social care, the School will still need to consider what is the most appropriate action to take to ensure positive behaviour management. Therefore, disciplinary action will sometimes be appropriate, in accordance with the School's Relationships and Behaviour Policy, to:

- ensure that the child takes responsibility for and realises the seriousness of their behaviour.
- demonstrate to the child and others that child-on-child abuse can never be tolerated.
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

These considerations must be balanced against any police investigations, the children's own potential unmet needs and any action or intervention planned regarding safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action, the School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children in its care 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 child-on-child abuse and the causes of it.

The School will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed moves or exclusion as part of 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, in accordance with the Relationships and Behaviour Policy, and where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the School. In the event of any exclusion or managed move, consideration will be given to sharing information with the receiving school or college regarding the child-on-child abuse in order to allow best protection of the child in the new school or college.

Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of child-on-child 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.

7. ONGOING PROACTIVE WORK

The School's response to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse forms part of its on-going proactive work to embed best practice and take a whole-school Contextual Safeguarding approach to such abuse. As such the School's response becomes part of its wider prevention work.

This response may include the School working with the local authority or an independent advisor 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 child-on-child abuse occurred in the School, the local community in which the School is based, and the wider physical and online environment - such as:

- what protective factors and influences exist within the School (such as positive peer influences where child-on-child abuse has been challenged etc.) and how can the School bolster these behaviours?
- 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?
- 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?
- did wider gender norms, equality issues or societal attitudes contribute to the abuse?
- what was the relationship between the abuse and the cultural norms between staff and pupils, and how can these be addressed going forward?
- does the abuse indicate a need for any staff training on, for example, underlying attitudes, a particular issue, or the handling of particular types of abuse, or to address any victim-blaming narratives from staff?
- how have similar cases been managed in the past and what effect has this had?
- 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 or prevent child-on-child abuse, including by way of the School's PSHE curriculum and lessons that address underlying attitudes or behaviour such as gender and equalities work, respect, boundaries, consent, children's rights and critical thinking or avoiding victim-blaming narratives?
- are there any lessons to be learnt about the way in which the School engages with parents to address child-on-child abuse issues?
- are there underlying issues that affect other schools in the area and is there a need for a multi-agency response?

- 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?
- were there opportunities to intervene earlier or differently 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, pastoral and safeguarding teams. The School will, where possible and appropriate, work with the local authority and wider partners to deliver on this plan, possibly as part of a wider Contextual Safeguarding school assessment led by or with input from the local authority or another external independent consultant.

In the context of child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment, and an ongoing response to safeguarding and supporting the victim, KCSIE 2026 states that: "It will be important in all scenarios that decisions and actions are regularly reviewed and that relevant policies are updated to reflect lessons learnt. It is particularly important to look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour. Where a pattern is identified, the school should decide on a course of action. Consideration should also be given as to whether there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled the inappropriate behaviour to occur and where appropriate extra teaching time or staff training could be delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again."