



Whitburn Church of England Academy

Child on Child Abuse Policy and Procedures

Preface - Vision and values

The Academy Vision and Values can be found here:

<https://www.whitburncofeacademy.org/about-us/academy-vision-and-values/>

This policy and its associated procedures are based on these key principles and values.

Introduction

At Whitburn C of E Academy, we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

Purpose and Aim

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as child on child abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child on child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Child Protection Policy, as well as policies linked to this document.

Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is 'Working Together to safeguard children', 2023, highlighting that 'Nothing is more important than children's welfare. Children who need help and protection deserve high quality and effective support as soon as a need is identified.' (page 5). This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2025.

Introduction to abuse and harmful behaviour

Children can abuse other children. This is generally referred to as child on child abuse and can take many forms.

In cases where child on child abuse is identified we will follow our child protection procedures, recognising that both the victim and perpetrator will require support. We recognise that child on child abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

- Child Sexual Exploitation / Child Criminal Exploitation
- Bullying / cyberbullying / prejudice based and discriminatory bullying
- Physical abuse
- Radicalisation
- Abuse in intimate friendships / relationships
- Sexual violence and harassment
- Gang associated and serious violence
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and / or videos
- 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
- Upskirting (which is a criminal offence)
- Initiation / hazing type violence and rituals
- Sexting

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as ‘banter’ or ‘part of growing up’. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE, 2025). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

Types of abuse

Children can abuse other children, and this can take many forms. It can happen both inside and outside of school. There may also be reports where the children concerned attend two or more different schools.

Child on child abuse will not be tolerated. All staff will take a zero-tolerance approach to any abusive behaviours and will stop and challenge inappropriate behaviours between children, many of which may be sexual in nature. We recognise that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse that such abuse may still be taking place and all staff should be vigilant.

A difficult feature of child-on-child abuse is that the perpetrators could be victims themselves and possibly are being abused by other family members, other adults and children.

In cases where child on child abuse is identified we will follow our procedures for dealing with concerns, recognising that both the victim and perpetrator will require support.

The school takes the following steps to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse:

- Promoting an open and honest environment where children feel safe and confident to share their concerns and worries
- Using the Relationship, Sex and Health Education/ PSHE to educate and reinforce our messages through stories, role play etc.
- Ensuring school is well supervised, especially in areas where children may be vulnerable
- Ensures staff are aware of the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse and how to identify them
- Addresses inappropriate behaviour (even if it appears to be relatively minor)
- Has clear robust policies on dealing with key issues of behaviour such as cyber bullying
- Ensures staff and children are aware of the policies
- Ensures robust supervision and be aware of potential risky areas in the school
- Increases supervision during key times
- Takes steps to prevent isolation
- Separates children if needed
- Where risk is identified, an individual child risk assessment is put in place

The following systems are in place to enable children to confidently report any abuse:

- All children know who they can report to in school (information can also be found in the student planner)
- Assemblies signposting children to key actions / people
- Posters around school

Each alleged incident will be recorded, investigated and dealt with on an individual basis based on the following principles:

- All information will be recorded in writing using the agreed procedures
- All children involved (victim and alleged perpetrator) in school will be spoken to separately by the Pastoral Lead
- Where the incident also involves a child at a different establishment the Pastoral Lead / DSL will ensure effective liaison and information sharing
- All children involved (victim and alleged perpetrator) will be appropriately supported throughout the process
- The Pastoral Lead will balance the child's wishes against their duty to protect the child and other children
- The school will work with our local safeguarding partners where appropriate
- The Pastoral Lead or DSL may need to go against the victim's wishes and make a referral to children's social care or the police. This will be handled sensitively, the reasons explained to the victim and appropriate support made available

- Parents will be informed of the incident and how their child will be dealt with and supported (unless this would put a child at greater risk)

Victims, perpetrators and any other children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported in the following ways:

- Support will be tailored on a case-by-case basis
- All children involved will be supported by an allocated member of staff
- The needs and wishes of the victim will be taken into account, along with protecting the child
- Wherever possible, the victim and witnesses will be able to continue their normal routine
- The victim will never be made to feel they are the problem for making a report or made to feel ashamed for making a report
- All reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment
- Adequate measures will be put in place to protect the children involved and keep them safe
- A needs and risk assessment will be made and a safety plan put in place when required
- Early help assessment, children's social care and other agencies will support where appropriate

Research tells us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by other children, and girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools. Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse. Boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs. There is an increasing evidence base emerging about the sexual exploitation of boys (both by adults and children). We recognise that both boys and girls experience child on child abuse but can do so in different ways.

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

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse and both occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources. In some cases, the abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage (such as increased status) of the perpetrator or facilitator. The abuse can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence.

Victims can be exploited even when activity appears consensual and it should be noted exploitation as well as being physical can be facilitated and/or take place online. (More information include definitions and indicators are included in Annex A KCSIE 2025).

Bullying (inclusive of all types)

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online. Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour.

[Preventing and tackling bullying \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Young people who bully use their power - such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity - to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Cyber bullying

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

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

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Physical abuse e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling etc.)

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

Prejudiced Behaviour

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

Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault, upskirting etc.)

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

Teenage relationship abuse

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

Upskirting

Upskirting typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; this is now a criminal offence and features in the KCSIE document 2025.

Sexting

Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference.

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

Initiation/Hazing

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

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

Expected action taken from all staff

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

Staff will gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred as soon after the child(ren) may have forgotten.

In all cases of child on child abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner.

Staff will not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters. Staff will:

- Gather the Facts
- Consider the Intent (begin to Risk Assess)
- Decide on your next course of action

If from the information gathered we believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm we will make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately (where a crime has been committed the police will also be contacted). If this is the case, once social care has been contacted and made a decision on what will happen, next steps will be communicated.

If social care and the police intend to pursue this further they may ask to interview the young people in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to also.

Next Steps

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

For the young person who has been harmed

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends.

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

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

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

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying.

In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

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

The school may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as suspension or internal inclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

After care

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Students will be able to speak to their ISA/Form Tutor, Pastoral Lead or any member of staff regarding how they are feeling and all issues will be dealt with sensitively and communicated home.

It is important that signposting is available to young people in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. Whitburn C of E Academy ensures that young people are reminded of the fact that they can speak to their form tutors, Pastoral lead, ISA and/or any of the DSLs whose photographs are up in all classrooms. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of child-on-child abuse.

References

[Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Principals, staff and governing bodies. July 2017](#)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

[Working together to safeguard children 2023](#)

KCSIE: [Keeping children safe in education 2025 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

LGBT - <https://lgbt.foundation/how-we-can-help-you>

Child on child Abuse Policy and Procedures		
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