HOLYWELL CHURCH OF ENGLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy for Holywell School (Adult version)

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Overview

As a Church of England School, our Child-on-child abuse policy, is underpinned by our Behaviour for Learning Policy and our Anti-Bullying Policy. Both policies are rooted in our distinctively Christian character and our core beliefs which are Gospel inspired and which support the school's Vision.

At Holywell, our vision is that everyone in our community chooses to "Live Life in all its Fullness" (John 10:10).

Inspired by the teaching of Jesus, the Good Shepherd,

we choose to live our values,

being the best we can be

in community."

Aim

Holywell School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every student, both inside and outside of the school premises, and is aware that abuse against children can be inflicted by other children. We implement a whole-school preventative approach to managing child-on-child abuse, ensuring that the wellbeing of students is at the forefront of all action taken.

This policy sets out a clear and consistent framework for delivering this promise, in line with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

It will be achieved by:

- Creating a culture of mutual respect amongst all students.
- Teaching students about behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable.
- Identifying and making provision for any student that has been subject to abuse.
- Ensuring that members of the governing board, the headteacher and staff members understand their responsibilities under safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, are alert to the signs of child-on-child abuse, and know to refer concerns to the DSL.
- Ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are transparent, clear and easy to understand for staff, students and parents.
- Creating a culture where all concerns are taken seriously, never dismissed as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'just having a laugh', and are responded to promptly and appropriately.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- Children's Wellbeing and School's Act 2026
- DfE 'Working together to safeguard children 2023'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education' (updated annually)

The policy also has regard to the following non-statutory guidance:

- DfE 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'
- DfE 'Information sharing'
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and UK Council for Internet Safety 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: how to respond to an incident (overview)'
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and UK Council for Internet Safety 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'
- National Police Chief's Council 'When to call the police: guidance for schools and colleges'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Youth Produced Sexual Imagery Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy
- Online Safety Policy

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Personal Electronic Devices Policy
- Cyber-security Policy
- Children Missing from Education Policy
- Low-level Safeguarding Concerns Policy

Definitions

"Child-on-child abuse" is defined, for the purposes of this policy, as any form of abuse that occurs between children. It can take place inside and outside of school, online or offline, and may involve a single child or a group of children abusing another child or group of children.

"Harmful sexual behaviour" refers to developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children which is harmful or abusive, and which may be harmful to the child displaying the behaviour as well as those affected by it. It may occur online, offline, or both simultaneously.

This policy will use the following terms to describe students involved in child-on-child abuse:

- **Victim(s)** – the individual(s) against whom the abuse has, or has allegedly, been inflicted.
- **Perpetrator(s)** – the individual(s) exhibiting abusive behaviour against their peers.
- **Alleged perpetrator(s)** – individual(s) against whom a report of abusive behaviour has been made, where guilt has not yet been ascertained.

Please note: The use of the word 'alleged' does not mean that the student in question is not guilty of child-on-child abuse, that the school does not believe the allegation, or that the allegation will not be taken seriously. Staff will recognise that the school has safeguarding and educational responsibilities towards all students involved, including those alleged to have displayed harmful behaviour. Staff will also keep in mind that, in some cases, the abusive behaviour will have been harmful to the perpetrator as well. Victims will be reassured that use of the term 'alleged perpetrator' is not an attempt to discredit their allegation.

Staff will also be conscious of the fact that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim or would want to be described this way. Staff will be prepared to use any term which the individual child is most comfortable with. Staff will think very carefully about terminology when speaking in front of students, and the use of appropriate terminology will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has a duty to:

- Ensure that the school complies with its statutory safeguarding and child protection duties.

- Hold the school to account for its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the arrangements published by the safeguarding partners.
- Guarantee that the policies, procedures and training opportunities in the school are effective and comply with the law at all times.
- Guarantee that the school contributes to multi-agency working in line with the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.
- Confirm that the school's arrangements for handling child-on-child abuse take into account the procedures and practices of the LA as part of the inter-agency safeguarding procedures.
- Appoint a member of staff from the SLT to the role of DSL as an explicit part of the role-holder's job description.
- Appoint one or more deputy DSLs to provide support to the DSL, ensuring that they are trained to the same standard as the DSL, and that the role is explicit in their job description(s).
- Ensure that the DSL has the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post.
- Ensure the DSL is given the additional time, funding, training, resources and support needed to carry out the role effectively.
- Make sure that students are taught about child-on-child abuse, including online , through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Ensure that staff members receive appropriate training to support all students, including those who may be more vulnerable to bullying, discrimination or abuse, e.g. students who are SEND, LGBTQ+ or discrimination against a protected characteristic.
- Ensure the school has clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible risk of harm in students, including clear routes to escalate concerns and clear referral and accountability systems.
- Guarantee that there are procedures in place to handle students' allegations against other students.
- Ensure that appropriate disciplinary procedures are in place, as well as policies pertaining to the behaviour of students.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to child-on-child abuse.
- Make sure that students' wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide to protect individual students.

- Guarantee that there are systems in place for students to express their views and give feedback.
- Ensure that all governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) training at induction that is regularly updated, in order to equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place are effective and support the delivery of a robust, whole-school approach to safeguarding – this training should include, amongst other things, the expectations and responsibilities on staff in relation to filtering and monitoring.

The headteacher has a duty to:

- Safeguard students' wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.
- Ensure that the policies and procedures adopted by the governing board, particularly concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect, are followed by staff members.
- Provide staff, upon induction, with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, part one and, where appropriate, Annex A of KCSIE, the Behaviour Policy, the Children Missing from Education Policy, online safety training, and the identity of the DSL and any deputies.
- Ensure staff receive training on recognising indicators of abuse and handling disclosures or concerns about a student.

The DSL has a duty to:

- Understand and keep up-to-date with local safeguarding arrangements.
- Act as the main point of contact with the three safeguarding partners and the child death review partner.
- Make the necessary child protection referrals to appropriate agencies.
- Understand when they should consider calling the police, in line with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) guidance.
- Liaise with the headteacher to inform them of safeguarding issues and ongoing enquiries.
- Liaise with the deputy DSL(s) to ensure effective safeguarding outcomes.
- Act as a source of support for students who have been abused by, or who have abused, other students.
- Lead the school in taking a preventative approach to child-on-child abuse.

Other staff members have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard students' wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.

- Provide a safe environment in which students can learn.
- Act in accordance with school procedures with the aim of eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to child-on-child abuse.
- Maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.
- Be aware of the signs of abuse and understand that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school, inside and outside the home, and online.
- Adhere to the early help process and understand their role in it.
- Understand and adhere to the procedure to follow in the event that a child confides they are being abused by a peer.
- Understand that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful.
- Understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding issues.
- Support social workers in making decisions about individual children, in collaboration with the DSL.
- Maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality when dealing with individual cases and always act in the best interest of the child.
- Understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours and not dismissing abusive behaviour as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'just having a laugh'.
- Build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.
- Keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of safeguarding concerns, decisions made, and whether or not referrals have been made, and understand the purpose of this record-keeping.
- Report all concerns relating to child-on-child abuse to the DSL (or deputy DSL) without delay and never assume that somebody else has already acted.

Types of child-on-child abuse

Staff will familiarise themselves with the forms that child-on-child abuse can take, including but not limited to:

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which may involve actions such as hitting, throwing, burning, drowning and poisoning, or otherwise causing physical harm to another child.

Sexual abuse

A form of abuse involving sexual activity between children – sexual abuse, for the purposes of this policy, is divided into two categories: sexual violence and sexual harassment.

“Sexual violence” encompasses the definitions provided in the Sexual Offenses Act 2003, including rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, i.e. non-consensual sexual touching, and causing another child to engage in sexual activity without consent, e.g. forcing someone to touch themselves sexually.

“Sexual harassment” refers to any sexual behaviour that could violate another child’s dignity, make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated, and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment, including:

- Sexualised jokes, taunting or comments.
- Physical behaviour, e.g. deliberately brushing against someone.
- Online sexual harassment, including:
- Upskirting.
- Sexualised online bullying.
- Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media.
- Sexual threats or coercion.
- The creation or sharing of AI-generated or AI-altered nudes and semi-nudes.

The **“making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes”** can also constitute sexual harassment. This includes the consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nude or semi-nude images and/or videos involving children, including images that have been generated or altered using AI.

This includes content depicting:

- Another child posing nude or semi-nude.
- Another child touching themselves in a sexual way.
- Any sexual activity involving another child.
- Someone hurting another child sexually.

Staff will be aware that the making, possessing and sharing of nudes and semi-nudes involving children may constitute a criminal offence. Incidents will be managed in accordance with the school's procedures for handling the making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Bullying

Bullying may constitute child-on-child abuse where it is abusive, persistent or causes significant harm to the victim.

Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:

- Verbally

- Physically
- Emotionally
- Online (cyberbullying)

Bullying will generally be handled in line with the Anti-bullying Policy; however, particularly severe instances will be handled in line with this policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Online abuse

This involves the use of technology, the internet, social media, online gaming platforms, messaging services and AI-enabled technologies to harass, threaten, intimidate, exploit or abuse another child. Instances of online abuse will be managed in line with this policy, the Online Safety Policy and the Anti-bullying Policy.

Discriminatory behaviour

Discriminatory behaviour encompasses abuse inflicted on a student because of their protected characteristics, e.g. race, religion or belief, sex, disability, sexual orientation. The school also recognises that some students, including those with SEND, may be at increased risk of abuse or discrimination.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, schools will not tolerate unlawful discrimination against students because of any protected characteristics they may have.

Intimate partner abuse

This involves a romantic partnership between children in which one or both partners are emotionally, physically or sexually abusive to the other (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse'). This could include:

- Repetitive insults.
- Controlling behaviour, e.g. preventing a child from socialising with others or deliberately isolating them from sources of support.
- Sexual harassment.
- Threats of physical or sexual abuse.

The school will manage intimate partner abuse in the same way as a case of abuse between any other children, i.e. via the processes outlined in the Handling allegations of abuse against students section of this policy, and in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

A whole-school approach to tackling child-on-child abuse

The school will continue to involve all members of the school community, including the governing board, staff, students, parents and other stakeholders, in creating a whole-school approach to child-on-child abuse.

The governing board will ensure that keeping children safe and protected from harm, including child-on-child abuse, is central to all policies and procedures implemented across the school. The school will ensure that procedures for handling child-on-child abuse are transparent, clear and understandable, and are readily accessible to any member of the school community who wishes to access them.

The school will implement a contextual safeguarding approach to child-on-child abuse and will take into account incidents that occur inside and outside of school, online and offline – including where it occurs concurrently. Wider environmental factors that may be present in a student's life will also be considered.

The headteacher will ensure that all staff receive adequate training on handling child-on-child abuse.

School culture

The school will prioritise cultivating a safe and respectful environment amongst students, ensuring that all students are aware that the school will not tolerate child-on-child abuse of any kind and will respond promptly, proportionately and appropriately to all concerns.

The school will promote respectful interactions amongst students, and all staff will model appropriate and respectful behaviour. Staff will take care to avoid normalising harmful behaviour, particularly harmful sexual behaviour, e.g. by refraining from the use of phrases such as 'boys will be boys' or describing such behaviour as 'just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up', as these phrases can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and normalised abuse.

The school will ensure that wider societal factors that exacerbate the problem of child-on-child abuse are reflected in its approach to creating a preventative culture. This means that individuals who may be more vulnerable to abuse, including girls, LGBTQ+ students, students with SEND, students who are LAC and PLAC, and students with social workers, will be given additional support from an early stage. The school will also ensure that students who may be at increased risk of displaying harmful behaviour, e.g. due to abusive home situations or difficulties managing their emotions, receive appropriate support and intervention.

The school will manage all intervention for students that show early signs of harmful behaviour, or early signs of being the victim of harmful behaviour, in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Support before statutory intervention

Upon receiving notice of a concern or incident, the DSL or deputy DSL will advise whether the children involved in a child-on-child abuse incident require referral to children's social care services (CSCS) or would benefit from support before statutory intervention, including universal services, community-based Early Help, or the targeted early help level of Family Help. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis following consideration of all available information, with the aim of preventing concerns from escalating and improving outcomes for the children involved.

The rationale for the decision to provide support before statutory intervention as opposed to a referral to CSCS will be recorded on the Safeguarding Concern Report Form.

The school will ensure that DSLs and deputy DSLs are suitably trained in local arrangements for support before statutory intervention, including community-based Early Help and the targeted early help level of Family Help, and are able to access further advice and support where required.

The school will ensure that students who show early signs of harmful behaviour, or who may be at risk of experiencing child-on-child abuse, are considered for support before statutory intervention, including universal services, community-based Early Help, or the targeted early help level of Family Help, where appropriate, in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and local safeguarding arrangements.

Curriculum

The school maintains the position that education surrounding respectful and healthy attitudes and behaviour towards others is the best way to combat child-on-child abuse in the school. All staff, not just teaching staff, will be responsible for passing this knowledge on to students.

In order to prevent child-on-child abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, the school will educate students about abuse, its forms and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

The school will also ensure that students are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. The school will also teach a planned programme of evidence-based **RSHE**, delivered in regularly timetabled lessons and reinforced throughout the whole curriculum. Such content will be fully inclusive, age and stage of development appropriate, especially when considering the needs of students with SEND, and tackle issues such as the following:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Boundaries and consent
- Stereotyping, prejudice and equality
- How to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour
- LGBTQ+ identities and relationships
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- The risks associated with online abuse, including the making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, AI-generated or AI-altered intimate images, and harmful online content
- The concepts of, the laws relating to, and how to access support for the following:
    - Sexual consent
    - Sexual exploitation

- Abuse
- Grooming
- Coercion
- Harassment
- Rape
- Domestic abuse
- So called honour-based violence, e.g. forced marriage or FGM
- What constitutes sexual violence and sexual harassment and why these are always unacceptable

Pupils will be allowed an open forum to talk about concerns and sexual behaviour. They will be taught how to raise concerns and make a report, including concerns about their friends or peers, and how a report will be handled.

The curriculum will ensure that students of all ages are taught about and understand the concept of consent and its importance in an age-appropriate way.

Protecting students with increased vulnerability

The school recognises that child-on-child abuse can happen to any child. Some students, however, may be more vulnerable to experiencing child-on-child abuse and may face additional barriers to recognising abuse, reporting concerns or accessing support.

Staff will be careful to acknowledge the increased risk certain students face while refraining from making assumptions about the nature of any reported, witnessed or suspected abuse. Staff will be aware that students who are generally at increased risk of abuse can also be perpetrators of abuse.

The school will ensure that action is taken, where possible, before major concerns arise; therefore, incidents of low-level abuse related to the characteristics of the below groups will be handled in line with the school's arrangements for support before statutory intervention, which are laid out within the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Girls

Staff will be aware that girls are more likely to be on the receiving end of child-on-child sexual abuse than their male counterparts, and that sexual violence and sexual harassment against are disproportionately experienced by girls.

Taking into account that sexual harassment against girls is widespread in society, and largely based in gender inequality, the school will aim to encourage gender equality in all aspects of its operations. The school will aim to promote and nurture healthy attitudes and relationships

amongst students of all genders, e.g. by challenging and working to deconstruct gender stereotypes in school.

Staff will challenge any incidents of misogynistic language or gender-based abuse, whether of a sexualised nature or not, as holding misogynistic viewpoints can make a student more likely to commit sexualised violence in the future.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual students

Staff will be aware that students who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, or who are perceived to be, may be more likely to experience discriminatory bullying, harassment or abuse from their peers.

The school will not tolerate homophobic or biphobic language or behaviour, regardless of whether or not it is directed at a particular individual. All staff will challenge such behaviour and make clear that discrimination, harassment and abuse are unacceptable.

The school will ensure that students who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, or who are perceived to be, can access appropriate support and are able to raise concerns with trusted members of staff.

Pupils who are questioning their gender

Staff will recognise that students who are questioning their gender may also be vulnerable to bullying, harassment or abuse from their peers. Concerns affecting these students will be managed on an individual basis, taking account of the student's needs, wishes, wellbeing and safety.

The school will not tolerate transphobic language or behaviour and will challenge any incidents promptly and appropriately. Staff will ensure that students who are questioning their gender are able to raise concerns with trusted members of staff and access appropriate support in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Pupils with SEND

Staff will be aware that students with SEND are at increased risk of child-on-child abuse. Staff will also be aware that children with disabilities are three times more likely to be abused than their peers, particularly in the context of harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual violence. The school will ensure that there are mechanisms in place to support students with SEND in reporting abuse, with due regard that these students may face additional barriers to reporting abuse and that spotting signs of abuse in these students may be harder.

Staff will avoid assuming that changes in the behaviour of students with SEND are as a result of their needs or disability and will report any concerns to the DSL. The DSL and the SENCO will collaborate in the handling of instances of abuse towards students with SEND to ensure that barriers to communication can be effectively managed.

Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds

Staff will be aware that minority ethnic students, particularly Black students, may be less likely to report abuse committed against them, and may be more likely to be misidentified as perpetrators of abuse.

The school will hold a zero-tolerance policy towards students using racist language, regardless of whether the language is being directed at another individual. Every staff member will be individually responsible for challenging such behaviour and making clear to all students that any abuse towards students from ethnic minority backgrounds is unacceptable.

Staff will also be aware that girls, students with SEND, or LGBTQ+, or perceived LGBTQ+ students, who are from minority ethnic backgrounds are likely to face increased abuse due to the intersection of these identities. Staff will be vigilant with regard to these students and the ways in which other students behave towards them, in order to ensure any incidents or potential incidents can be handled as soon as they occur.

LAC, PLAC, and students with social workers

Staff will recognise that LAC, PLAC, and students with social workers may be more vulnerable to abuse because of the experiences of adversity and trauma they have faced. The school will ensure that these students receive appropriate support and that safeguarding concerns are identified and acted upon promptly.

1. Channels for students to report abuse

Pupils will be able to report incidents of child-on-child abuse or concerns about the behaviour of their peers through the following channels:

● Parental contact via direct contact with school - face-to-face, phone call and/or email to the safeguarding or pastoral team.

● Disclosing to a member of staff, who in turn will share with the DSL.

All channels for reporting abuse will be promoted and publicised throughout the school, and all students will be made aware of how, and to whom, to report incidents of abuse. The school will also ensure students are aware of the type of behaviour that should be reported, ranging from criminal behaviour, e.g. rape or sexual assault, to everyday harassment, e.g. sexualised jokes or inappropriate comments, to ensure that victims do not view their experience as ‘not serious enough’ to report. 13

The school will maintain a culture that promotes reporting abuse, whether the individual reporting is the victim, a bystander, or a friend or relative of the victim. Staff will address any incidents of students equating reporting abuse to ‘snitching’ and will convey to these students how important it is to report abuse and will reinforce that reporting concerns helps to protect students and prevent further harm.

Pupils will be made aware that, while the school will always take their wishes into account, it cannot promise confidentiality where doing so would place a child at risk of harm.

2. Staff identifying and reporting concerns

Staff will receive safeguarding training as part of their induction, and receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, including **annual** refresher training. This training will include guidance on how to recognise indicators of child-on-child abuse of all kinds, and how to distinguish between behaviour, particularly sexual behaviour, that is developmentally appropriate and that which is harmful.

Staff will receive training to recognise the signs and indicators of child-on-child abuse, including harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will report any concerns in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Where a student is displaying signs of being impacted by child-on-child abuse, or perpetrating child-on-child abuse, staff will report this to the DSL or deputy immediately, or as soon as possible after the concern arises.

Staff will challenge all instances of abusive or harmful behaviour displayed by students that they witness or are reported to them. Staff will not wait for concerns or situations between students to escalate before intervening; minor or singular instances of abusive behaviour will still be brought to the attention of the DSL and the student will always be spoken to about their behaviour and disciplined, where appropriate, in line with the Behaviour Policy.

The school will ensure that all substantiated incidents of abusive or harmful behaviour are responded to appropriately. Any disciplinary measures or other interventions will be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the views of the victim, the context of the behaviour, the needs of all students involved, and the severity of the incident.

Staff will recognise that a victim may not report abuse immediately, may minimise what has happened, or may not recognise that the behaviour is abusive. A lack of disclosure or visible distress will not be interpreted as an indication that no harm has occurred.

Staff will ensure that the perpetrator(s) or alleged perpetrator(s) understand that their behaviour was unacceptable. Victims will be reassured that the behaviour they experienced was not acceptable and that they will be supported appropriately. staff will be made aware that failing to challenge a student on unacceptable behaviour can normalise that behaviour not just for the student in question, but for all students who see the behaviour going unchallenged.

Staff will remain cognisant that downplaying abusive behaviour can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour throughout the school and, as such, will treat all displays or reports of abusive behaviour seriously, sensitively and proportionately. To minimise incidents of abusive behaviour, It will be reinforced to all students that abusive behaviour will not be tolerated.

3. Serious violence

The school recognises that child-on-child abuse may involve serious violence and that involvement in serious violence, either as a victim or perpetrator, can be an indicator that a child is at risk of significant harm.

Staff will be alert to the signs that a student may be at risk from, or involved in, serious violence. Indicators may include, but are not limited to:

- Increased absence from school.
- A change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups.
- A significant decline in educational performance.
- Signs of self-harm, a significant change in wellbeing, or unexplained injuries.
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions, which may indicate criminal exploitation or involvement with criminal networks or gangs.

Staff will understand that certain factors may increase a child's vulnerability to serious violence, including previous experiences of abuse or neglect, suspension or exclusion from education, offending behaviour, substance misuse, or previous involvement in violence.

The school will also recognise that the risk of serious violence may increase during journeys to and from school, or in locations outside the school premises. The school will seek to understand local risks by listening to students, consulting staff and working with safeguarding partners where appropriate. Where concerns are identified, appropriate safeguarding action will be taken in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The DSL will work with the police, CSCS and other relevant agencies, where appropriate, to assess and manage any identified risks. Where necessary, students will be referred for support before statutory intervention, Family Help or statutory safeguarding services in line with local safeguarding arrangements.

4. Handling reports of child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment

When responding to reports of child-on-child sexual violence or sexual harassment, staff will always take the report seriously, reassure the victim, support them and work to keep them safe. Victims will never be made to feel like they are causing a problem by reporting **any** form of abuse, be made to feel ashamed, or have their experience minimised by staff at the school. Staff will not dismiss or minimise reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment and will remain supportive of both the victim and the alleged perpetrator whilst maintaining their duty of care to both.

If a friend of a victim makes a report or a member of staff overhears a conversation, staff will take action – they will never assume that someone else will deal with it, or wait for a disclosure. The basic principles remain the same as when a victim reports an incident; however, staff will consider why the victim has not chosen to make a report themselves, and the discussion will be handled sensitively and with the help of CSCS where necessary. If staff are in any doubt, they will speak to the DSL. All staff will be aware that students may not feel ready or know

how to tell someone that they are being abused, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. This will not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have any concerns.

Where an alleged incident took place away from the school or online but involved students from the school, the school's safeguarding responsibilities will remain the same. The incident will be treated as seriously as if it had occurred in school and responded to in accordance with this policy and the Safeguarding Policy.

All staff will be trained to respond appropriately to disclosures. This includes:

- Listening carefully and taking the report seriously.
- Never promising confidentiality.
- Reassuring the student that they have done the right thing by telling someone.
- Avoiding leading questions.
- Making an accurate record of the disclosure.
- Reporting the concern to the DSL or deputy DSL immediately.

All reports will be passed to the DSL or a deputy DSL. Where a report involves a student with SEND, the DSL will work with the SENCO to consider the student's needs and determine an appropriate course of action, always acting in the student's best interests.

Confidentiality

The school will only share information with those staff and agencies who need to know in order to support the victim and/or carry out their safeguarding or investigative responsibilities. If a victim asks the school not to tell anyone about the disclosure, the school will not make this promise. The school will adhere to the principle that fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. In doing so, the school will explain to the victim that information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis and only where necessary to safeguard them or other students.

The DSL will consider the following when making confidentiality decisions:

- Parents will be informed unless it will place the victim at greater risk
- If a student is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger or has been harmed, a referral will be made to CSCS
- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are crimes – reports containing any such crimes will be passed to the police

The DSL will weigh the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and others. Where a referral is made against the victim's wishes, the reasons for this decision will be explained to the victim, wherever appropriate, and appropriate specialist support will be offered.

Anonymity

There are legal requirements for anonymity where a case is progressing through the criminal justice system. The school will do all it can to protect the anonymity of children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment. It will carefully consider, based on the nature of the report, which staff will be informed and what support will be in place for the children involved. When deciding on the steps to take, the school will consider the role of social media in potentially exposing victims' identities and facilitating the spread of rumours.

The school will ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibility to maintain the anonymity of the children involved and only share information on a need-to-know basis.

Risk and needs assessments

The DSL or a deputy will make an immediate risk and needs assessment any time there is a report of sexual violence. For reports of sexual harassment, a risk assessment will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Risk and needs assessments for reports of sexual violence will consider:

- The victim's safety and support needs
- Whether there may have been other victims.
- The alleged perpetrator.
- The wider school community, including staff and students, and any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms.
- The time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer.

Risk and needs assessments will be recorded, regularly reviewed and used to inform ongoing safeguarding decisions. The school will, at all times, actively consider the risks posed to students and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe.

The DSL will engage with CSCS and specialist services as needed. In cases of sexual violence, professional risk assessments by social workers or sexual violence specialists will likely be required. The school's risk assessment will not be intended to replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals. Professional assessments will be used to inform the school's approach to supporting and protecting students.

Taking action following a disclosure

The DSL or a deputy will decide the school's initial response, taking into consideration:

- The victim's wishes.

- The nature of the incident.
- The ages and developmental stages of the students involved.
- Any power imbalance between the students.
- Whether the incident is a one-off or part of a pattern.
- Any ongoing risks.
- Any related issues and the wider context, such as whether there are wider environmental factors in a student's life that threaten their safety and/or welfare.
- The best interests of the students involved.
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment are always unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Immediate consideration will be given as to how to support the victim, alleged perpetrator and any other students involved.

For reports of rape and assault by penetration, the alleged perpetrator will be removed from any classes shared with the victim whilst the school establishes the facts of the report. The school will consider how to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator apart on school premises, and on transport where applicable. These actions will not be seen as a judgement of guilt on the alleged perpetrator.

For reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator and the suitability of shared classes, premises and transport will be considered immediately. In all cases, the initial report will be carefully evaluated and the wishes of the victim, nature of the allegations and requirement to protect all children will be taken into consideration.

Where a student is found to have been involved in harmful sexual behaviour, e.g. non-consensually making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes involving another student, the school will help the student to move forward from the incident by supporting them in adopting more positive behaviour patterns and attitudes.

Managing the report

The decision of when to inform the alleged perpetrator of a report will be made on a case-by-case basis. If a report is being referred to CSCS or the police, the school will speak to the relevant agency before informing the alleged perpetrator.

There are four likely outcomes when managing reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment:

- Managing internally.
- Providing support before statutory intervention, including universal services, community-based Early Help or Family Help.

- Referring to CSCS.
- Reporting to the police.

Whatever outcome is chosen, it will be underpinned by the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment are never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons behind decisions will be recorded either on paper or electronically.

The following situations are statutorily clear and do not allow for contrary decisions:

- The age of consent is 16
- A child under the age of 13 can **never** consent to sexual activity
- Sexual intercourse without consent is **always** rape
- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are defined in law
- Creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of children under 18 **is illegal** – including children making and sending images and videos of themselves

Appropriate intervention

In some cases, the school may decide that statutory intervention is not required but that the children involved would benefit from support through universal services or community-based Early Help. The DSL, or a deputy, will work with relevant agencies and parents, where appropriate, to access support and help prevent concerns from escalating.

Where children and families require more targeted support than is available through universal services or community-based Early Help, the school may make a referral to Family Help in line with local arrangements. The DSL and deputy DSL will be familiar with the local Family Help process and understand how and where to access support.

Where a student has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, the school will make a referral to LA CSCS. Parents will normally be informed unless doing so would place the student at additional risk. Any decision not to inform parents will be made in consultation with LA CSCS.

Decisions relating to targeted support, Family Help and statutory intervention will be handled in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the DfE's flowchart setting out the actions taken where there are concerns about a student.

Reporting to the police

Reports of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault will be passed on to the police – even if the alleged perpetrator is under 10 years of age. Generally, this will be in parallel with referral to CSCS. The DSL and deputies will follow the local process for referral.

Parents will be informed unless there is a compelling reason not to do so. Where parents are not informed, it is essential for the school to support the student with any decisions that are made, in unison with CSCS and any appropriate specialist agencies.

The DSL, working with the police, CSCS and other relevant agencies where appropriate, will determine what information will be disclosed to staff and others, including the alleged perpetrator and their parents. The school will take all reasonable steps to protect the victim and their anonymity. The DSL will be aware of local arrangements and specialist units that investigate child abuse.

Where the police decide not to take further action, the school will continue to assess the needs of the children involved and provide or access appropriate safeguarding and pastoral support, including specialist support where required.

Bail conditions

Where the police take further action, an alleged perpetrator may be released on bail with conditions or 'released under investigation' (RUI), where bail is not considered necessary.

Pupils against whom further action is taken by the police may be released under bail conditions or RUI in circumstances that do not warrant the application of bail.

Where an alleged perpetrator is released on bail or RUI, the school will work with the police, CSCS and other relevant agencies to assess and manage any ongoing risks and implement appropriate safeguarding arrangements.

The school will consider what additional measures may be necessary to manage any assessed risk of harm and will liaise closely with the police to develop a balanced set of arrangements.

Managing delays in the criminal justice system

The school will not wait for the outcome, or even the start, of criminal proceedings before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator and other children. The associated risk assessment will be kept under review and used to inform any decisions made. The DSL will work closely with the police to ensure the school does not jeopardise any criminal proceedings, and to obtain help and support as necessary.

The end of the criminal process

Risk assessments will be updated if the alleged perpetrator receives a caution or is convicted. If the perpetrator remains in the same school as the victim, the school will set out clear expectations regarding the perpetrator, including their behaviour and any restrictions deemed reasonable and proportionate with regards to the perpetrator's timetable. The school will ensure that the victim and perpetrator remain protected from bullying and harassment (including online).

Where an alleged perpetrator is found not guilty or a case is classed as requiring 'no further action', the school will offer support to the victim and alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. Staff will be aware that the victim is likely to be traumatised and the fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. The school will discuss decisions with the victim and offer support. The alleged perpetrator will also be offered ongoing support if needed, as they have also been through a difficult and upsetting experience.

The headteacher will carefully consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether allowing the victim and the alleged perpetrator to share classes or attend the same activities is conducive to either party's effective education, and will implement alternative arrangements, in consultation with the DSL (and SENCO where the victim or alleged perpetrator has SEND), where necessary.

Ongoing support for the victim

Any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the victim will be made with the following considerations in mind:

- The victim's needs and wishes, ensuring they feel as much control over the process as is reasonably possible while safeguarding them and other children.
- The victim's age, developmental stage and any vulnerabilities.
- The nature of the allegation, any power imbalance between those involved, and the risk of further abuse.
- Supporting the victim to continue with their normal routine wherever possible, so that school remains a safe and supportive environment.
- Ensuring the victim is never made to feel they are to blame or should feel ashamed for making a report.
- Providing a response that is proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the incident and tailored to the victim's individual needs.
- Any physical, mental or emotional health needs arising from the incident, including access to specialist support where appropriate.
- Keeping support arrangements under regular review and identifying any wider patterns of concerning behaviour or cultural issues that may require further action.

Victims may not disclose the whole picture immediately and they may be more comfortable talking about the incident on a step-by-step basis; therefore, dialogue will be kept open and the school will ask the victim whether they would like a designated trusted adult to talk about their needs.

Staff will be aware that victims may struggle in a normal classroom environment. Whilst the school will understand that it is important not to isolate the victim, the victim may wish to be withdrawn from lessons and activities at times. The school will ensure that this will only happen when it supports the victim's needs, not because it makes it easier to manage the situation. The school will provide a physical space for victims to withdraw to.

The school will be aware that victims may require support for a long period of time and will be prepared to offer long-term support in liaison with relevant agencies. The school will ensure that everything possible will be done to prevent the victim from bullying and harassment as a result of any report they have made. If the victim is unable to remain in the school, alternative provision or a move to another school will be considered – this will only be considered at the request of the victim and following discussion with their parents. If the victim does move to

another school, the DSL will inform the school of any ongoing support needs and transfer the child protection file.

Ongoing support for the alleged perpetrator

Any decisions made regarding the support required for an alleged perpetrator will be made with the following considerations in mind:

- The need to balance safeguarding the victim and other children with providing the alleged perpetrator with education, appropriate safeguarding support and, where necessary, disciplinary sanctions.
- The alleged perpetrator's age, developmental stage, the nature of the allegations and any pattern or frequency of concerning behaviour.
- What constitutes a proportionate response, recognising that support and sanctions should be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Whether the alleged perpetrator has unmet needs or vulnerabilities that require additional support, including whether the behaviour may be linked to their own experiences of abuse or exposure to abusive practices or materials.

When making a decision, advice will be taken from CSCS, specialist sexual violence services and the police as appropriate. If the alleged perpetrator moves to another school, for any reason, the DSL will inform the destination school of any ongoing support needs and transfer the child protection file.

If the reported abuse is found to have taken place, the school will work with professionals, as required, to understand why the abuse took place and provide a high level of support to help the student understand and overcome the reasons for their behaviour and reduce the likelihood of them abusing again.

Disciplining the alleged perpetrator

Ongoing investigations by the policy or CSCS will not prevent the school reaching its own conclusion and imposing an appropriate penalty.

The school will make such decisions on a case-by-case basis, with the DSL taking a leading role. The school will take into consideration whether any action would prejudice an investigation and/or subsequent prosecution. The police and CSCS will be consulted where necessary. The school will also consider whether circumstances make it unreasonable or irrational for the school to make a decision about what happened while an investigation is considering the same facts.

Disciplinary action and support can take place at the same time. The school will be clear whether action taken is disciplinary, supportive or both.

Shared classes

Once the DSL has decided to progress a report, they will again consider whether the victim and alleged perpetrator will be separated in classes, on school premises and on school

transport. Decisions will be based on the school's risk assessment, the wishes of the victim and the need to safeguard all children.

Where there is a criminal investigation into rape or assault by penetration, the alleged perpetrator will be removed from classes with the victim and potential contact on school premises and transport will be prevented.

Where a criminal investigation into rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, this will constitute a serious breach of discipline and result in the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the school would harm the education or welfare of the victim and potentially other students.

Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, the school will consider suitable sanctions and permanent exclusion. If the perpetrator remains at the school, the school will keep the victim and perpetrator in separate classes and manage potential contact on school premises and transport. The nature of the conviction or caution, alongside the wishes of the victim, will inform any discussions made.

Where a report of sexual assault does not lead to a police investigation, this does not mean that the offence did not happen or that the victim has lied. Both the victim and alleged perpetrator will be affected and appropriate support will be provided. Considerations regarding sharing classes and potential contact will be made on a case-by-case basis.

In all cases, the school will record its decisions and be able to justify them. The needs and wishes of the victim will always be at the heart of the process.

Working with parents

In most sexual violence cases, the school will work with the parents of both the victim and alleged perpetrator. For cases of sexual harassment, these decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

The school will meet the victim's parents with the victim present to discuss the arrangements being put in place to safeguard the victim, and to discuss the arrangements being put in place to safeguard the victim and understand the victim's and their parents' wishes regarding support and the progression of the report.

The school will also meet with the parents of the alleged perpetrator to discuss arrangements that will impact their child, such as moving them out of classes with the victim. Reasons behind decisions will be explained and the support being made available will be discussed. The DSL or a deputy will attend such meetings, with agencies invited as necessary.

The school will make its procedures for responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, and the support available to victims and alleged perpetrators, available to parents.

Safeguarding other students

Pupils who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape and assault by penetration, will be provided with support. It is likely that students will “take sides” following a report, and the school will take appropriate steps to protect the victim, alleged perpetrator and any witnesses from bullying, harassment and victimisation, including online.

The school will keep in mind that contact may be made between the victim and alleged perpetrator, and that harassment from friends of both parties could take place via social media. Appropriate measures will be put in place to minimise the risk of further bullying, harassment or intimidation.

As part of the school’s risk and needs assessment following a report, transport arrangements will be considered, as it is a potentially vulnerable place for both the victim and alleged perpetrator. Schools will consider any additional support that can be put in place.

The whole-school approach to safeguarding will make clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and sexual violence, that it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. A robust preventative education programme will be implemented to help create an environment in which all students feel safe, supported and respectful of their peers, especially when reports of sexual harassment or sexual violence are made.

5. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually and as required by the DSL and the headteacher.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.