



**Woolpit Primary Academy**

NURTURE • RESILIENCE • INSPIRATION • RESPECT

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## Peer on Peer abuse policy

October 2021

Reviewed By	<b>Sarah Clayton.</b>
Signature	
Date	

## Our vision

Our core values are; **Nurture, Resilience, Respect, Inspiration**, which are at the heart of all we do. This is to ensure children leave Woolpit Primary Academy with a love of learning, as resilient individuals who are prepared for their futures. Our nurturing approach will ensure all pupils grow into well-rounded individuals with healthy minds. Children will leave our primary school as respectful members of the community; inspired to learn and motivated to achieve.

### Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 (KCSIE) states that Peer on peer abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers;
- 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);
- sexual violence, 11 such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);
- sexual harassment, 12 such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- 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;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos<sup>13</sup> (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);
- upskirting,<sup>14</sup> which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

The document also states it is most important to ensure the voice of the child is heard, 'Governing bodies, and school leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are considered when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, any system and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.'

We acknowledge that peer on peer abuse will occur in any school, even one with a very caring ethos. At Woolpit Primary Academy, we try to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to any child and prevent further occurrences.

Peer on Peer Abuse is featured in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; however due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse this separate policy has been completed as an addition to support the policy.

### Aims

Children may harm one another in a number of ways which is classified as peer on peer abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of peer on peer abuse and include a planned and supportive response to any issues that arise.

### Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount, also HM Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 (KCSIE) which outlines the need to ensure procedures are in place to hear the voice of the child.

### Abuse and harmful behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen in any school and it is necessary to consider what abuse is, what it looks like, how it can be managed, what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and also what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

At our school abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. We recognise that abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE, 2021).

We realise the importance of considering the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions we may need to take.

### Types of abuse

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, followed by the support and action that may be required.

#### Physical abuse

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or any other way of causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another. We take the time to listen and try to understand why a child has engaged in such behaviour before considering the follow up action to be imposed.

#### Sexually harmful behaviour

Sexually harmful behaviour from children 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 to the child on the receiving end. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, sexually touching or sexual assault/abuse.

#### Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both the victim and the bully may have serious, lasting problems. 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 Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites 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 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 the immediate support children may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

#### Sexting

Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video, this includes both consensual and non-consensual as children are not old enough to consent. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressurising a person into sending a nude picture of themselves 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 a structure such as sports team, club, gang 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 structure, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

### Upskirting

This typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their buttocks or genitals to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or harm.

### Prejudiced Behaviour.

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, either physical, 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).

### Our Procedure and Action.

The type of abuse will have a varying effect on the victim and initiator of the harm, so we follow simple steps to clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the follow up action for those involved in perpetrating harm. It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred before the child/ren has forgotten or been influenced.

It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and its impact on both the children and the parents when they become involved. For example; we do not use the word perpetrator, this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled. In all cases of peer on peer abuse, all staff deal with any incident by talking to the child/ren and putting immediate support in place in a calm and consistent manner.

Staff will ensure they are not prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

- Gather the Facts
- Speak to all the children involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account. We do this by asking the child to explain what happened and we will ask open questions to gain clarity
- Consider the Intent (begin to Risk Assess)
- We consider if this has been a deliberate or contrived situation for a child to harm another.
- Decide on the next step
- If from the information that we gather we believe a child to be at risk of significant harm we will make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately.
- Inform parents

We always seek to talk face to face with parents. We recognise that the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a child may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child has been harmed or harmed another.

### Information we consider

*What is the age of the children involved?*

How old are the children involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved?

*Where did the incident or incidents take place?*

Was the incident in an open, visible place? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?

*Were the explanations by all children the same?*

Does each child give the same explanation of the incident and what is the effect on the child/ren involved? Is the incident regular and repeated? Is the version of one young person different from another? If so, why?

### *Does each child understand the significance of what occurred?*

Does the child understand what they are doing? i.e. do they have knowledge of body parts, privacy and inappropriate touches? Is the child's explanation related to something they may have heard, seen or been learning about? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the child understand the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut and if necessary we will seek advice from Children's Services Social Care.

### **Repetition**

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual or series of individuals on more than one occasion?

### **Next Steps**

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

### *For the young person who has been harmed*

The support required depends on the individual child.

- There may be a need for counselling or 1:1 support via a mentor.
- The child may feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends, in which case they will be monitored
- If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the child may need help and advice to develop assertiveness skills or support to improve peer group relationships or for some restorative work with those involved.

Other interventions could be:

- To target a whole class or year group with a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc.
- Continued PHSE and SMSC lessons that enable more frequent discussion and debate
- A risk assessment that provides a trusted person that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.
- Discuss the child and support needed in a pastoral team meeting.

### *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.

- Follow behaviour and discipline policy.
- Support such as 1:1 mentoring or counselling may be necessary.
- Particular support from identified services may be necessary through a CAF (Common Assessment Framework) referral or TAC (Team Around the Child) meeting to ensure the child receives additional support from family members.
- In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in 1:1 work with a particular service or agency
- If behaviour continues to pose a risk to others an individual risk assessment will be carried out. Additional supervision of the child to prevent further inappropriate or harmful behaviour may be needed.

### *After care*

It is important that the children continue to feel supported. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage. It is important to ensure that the child does not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping. We ensure regular reviews with the children are carried out.

### *Preventative Strategies*

The strategies we use to prevent peer on peer abuse are:

- We manage the risks and share information with all staff.
- We have an open environment in which children feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them.
- We follow a strong and positive PHSE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than look for opportunities to be harmful to one another.

- The whole staff team are confident to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another.
- Staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' and consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action.

### **References**

Keeping Children Safe in Education - September 2020

HM Working Together to Safeguard Children – July 2018

DfE Preventing and tackling bullying - October 2014

DfE School Support for Children and Young People who are being Bullied – March 2014

DfE Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff – November 2014

Children's Act 1989

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Communications Act 2003

### **Linked Policies**

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Behaviour and Discipline Policy

On-line Safety

Acceptable Use Policy for Pupils

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed every two years unless regulations or laws change.