Child on Child

Abuse Policy

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Approved by the Governing Body	**August 2026**
Date of Review	**August 2027**

1. Context and Definition

Balshaw Lane Primary School has a **zero-tolerance approach to abuse**, including child on child abuse. **Child on child abuse** is defined as abuse between children.

Child on child abuse can be manifested in many different ways, including:

- Bullying, including cyberbullying and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying.
- Physical abuse – this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse.
- Sexual violence – this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence.
- Sexual harassment, including online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent.
- The consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos.
- Upskirting.
- Initiation- and hazing-type violence and rituals, which can 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.

This abuse can:

• be motivated by perceived differences e.g. on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other differences

• result in significant, long lasting and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to the victim

Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs e.g.:

- significant disruption in their own lives
- exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering abuse
- educational under-achievement
- involvement in crime

Balshaw Lane Primary School are aware that child on child abuse is not necessarily carried out with intent due to the child's level of vulnerability, therefore it is essential that the facts are gathered within the initial stage to ensure that the incident is being dealt with appropriately in relation to development stage and understanding of the pupil/s involved.

2. Responsibility

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2026 states that:

'all staff will be aware that child on child abuse can occur between pupils of any age and gender, both inside and outside of school, as well as online.'

All staff will be aware of the indicators of child on child abuse, how to identify it, and how to respond to reports. All staff will also recognise that even if no cases have been reported, this is not an indicator that child on child abuse is not occurring. All staff will speak to the DSL if they have any concerns about child on child abuse.

All staff will understand the importance of challenge inappropriate behaviour between peers, and will not tolerate abuse as "banter" or "part of growing up".

All staff will be clear as to the school's policy and procedures regarding child on child abuse and the role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

All staff will be made aware of the heightened vulnerability of pupils with SEND, who evidence suggests are more likely to be abused than their peers. Staff will not assume that possible indicators of abuse relate to the pupil's SEND and will always explore indicators further.

All staff will be made aware of the heightened vulnerability of LGBTQ+ pupils, who evidence suggests are also more likely to be targeted by their peers. In some cases, pupils who are perceived to be LGBTQ+, regardless of whether they are LGBTQ+, can be just as vulnerable to abuse as LGBTQ+ pupils. The school's response to sexual violence and sexual harassment between pupils of the same sex will be equally as robust as it is for incidents between children of the opposite sex.

Pupils will be made aware of how to raise concerns or make a report and how any reports will be handled. This includes the process for reporting concerns about friends or peers. Pupils will also be reassured that they will be taken seriously, be supported, and kept safe.'

'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that their child protection policy includes:

- procedures to minimise the risk of child on child abuse;
- how allegations of child on child abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with;
- clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other child affected by child on child abuse will be supported;
- a clear statement that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up";
- recognition of the gendered nature of child on child abuse (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators), but that all child on child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously; and
- the different forms child on child abuse can take.

It also emphasises that the voice of the child must be heard: 'Where there is a safeguarding concern, governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account 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, all systems and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at heart.'

Whilst child on child abuse is referenced in the school's Safeguarding Policy, the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with child on child abuse necessitate separate policy guidance. Balshaw Lane Primary School aims to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to the impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

3. Purpose of Policy

Our policy includes a clear and comprehensive strategy taking a contextual whole school approach to preventing and responding to child on child abuse, which includes a clear understanding to staff, children and young people and their parents about everyone's responsibility in managing any child on child abuse incidents. This will include both our prevention measures as well as our response to any incidents of harm.

The following policies in place should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

4. Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the:

- Children's Act, 1989
- Working Together 2026
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

5. Abuse and harmful behaviour

It is necessary to consider:

- what abuse is and 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

• what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm. Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'.

It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required:

• children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures

• staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action

• staff should be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people

• staff should be aware of the added vulnerability of children acting as perpetrators. They may also be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and be in need of protection. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the alleged perpetrator must address their needs.

6. 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 in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

6.1 Physical abuse

This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, 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 accidently before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

6.2 Sexual violence and sexual harassment

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will follow the DfE Guidance: Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges with consideration of:

- Early Help
- MASH referral
- Reporting to the police

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. 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 to the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may include:

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh”; and
- challenging behaviours and not dismissing or tolerating such behaviours by normalising them.

6.3 Bullying

Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online.

6.4. Online Bullying / Cyber bullying

Online Bullying / Cyberbullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, e-mail, chat rooms etc.) to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. Online bullying can take many forms:

- abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
- posting abusive comments on social media sites
- sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- stealing someone’s online identity
- spreading rumours online
- trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms or games
- developing hate sites about another person
- prank calls or messages
- group bullying or exclusion online
- anonymous messaging

- encouraging a young person to self-harm
- pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

6.5 Sexting

The term 'sexting' relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content; these are created and sent electronically. They are often 'shared' via social networking sites and instant messaging services. This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

6.6. Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies. The ceremony 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.

6.7. 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 – for example disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life and sexual identity.

7. Expected Staff Action

Staff should consider the seriousness of the case and make a quick decision whether to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately before taking any further in-school actions.

8. Recognising Peer Abuse

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:

- chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved
- difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability
- all alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident
- whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
- what was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery
- the effect on the victim

• any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret

• the child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred

• whether this was a one-off incident, or longer in duration 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. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled. Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

8.1 <u>Taking Action:</u>

Balshaw Lane Primary School including the headteacher and DSL's will consider:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed
- the nature of the alleged incident
- the ages of the children involved
- the development stages of the children involved
- any power imbalance between the children
- if the incident a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse
- if there are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, school or staff
- contextual safeguarding issues.

They will:

• take complaints seriously

• gain a statement of facts from the pupil(s) - or witness if pupils are unable to give a statement

• assess needs of victim and alleged perpetrator

• consider referral to Police or Social Care

• contribute to multi-agency assessments

• consider a risk management meeting

• record all incidents and all action taken

8.2 Recording Sexualised Behaviour:

Balshaw Lane Primary School including the headteacher and DSL's will:

• be clear, explicit and non-avoidant, and avoid vague statements or euphemisms

- record as soon as possible, as you can quickly forget or confuse detail
- follow the prompts on CPOMs safeguarding and child protection recording system
- use proper names for body parts but record exactly any language or vocabulary used by the child. Use the child's exact words in quotation marks
- note where and when the incident happened and whether anyone else was around

8.3 Gather the Facts:

Balshaw Lane Primary School including the headteacher and DSL's will speak to all the young people involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account. Take into consideration the pupils' own communication needs and methods using open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?). They will not interrogate or ask leading questions.

8.4 Decide on the Next Course of Action:

If it is believed that any young person is at risk of significant harm the Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

8.5 Informing Parents/Carers:

The best way to inform parents/carers is face to face, however this isn't always possible, and so a telephone call may take place instead. Parents/Carers should be informed on the same day the incident took place. When speaking to parents the headteacher/DSL will be clear about what school will be putting into place to prevent another incident.

8.6 Recording

Child on child abuse should be logged within 24 hours of the incident and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead on completion.

9. Points to consider and Key Questions to use

9.1. What are the ages and needs of the children involved?

All staff who were present and children (dependant on age and understanding) should be spoken to, using consistent language and open questions. The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the young people to tell you what happened. The young person should only be interrupted from this to gain clarity with open questions, "where, when, why, who". (What happened? Who observed/saw the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?) Different communication strategies dependant on the child's needs should be considered.

9.2. Where did the incident or incidents take place?

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

9.3. What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?

Can each of the young people give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the version of one young person different from another and why?

9.4. What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?

Do the young people know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the young person's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the young person have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

9.5. Repetition

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with?

10. 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.

10.1. For the Young Person Who Has Been Harmed

Support required will depend on each individual incident. It may be that the pupil wishes to seek one to one support via a staff member, or they may want time away from the class. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends; in which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support within the school improving peer groups/relationships with other young people, or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required. 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.

10.2. For the Young Person Who Has Displayed Harmful Behaviour?

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 to consider whether it is appropriate to receive 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 elsewhere. It may be that 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.

10.3. After Care

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help as the needs are identified.

11. Preventative Strategies

Child on child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most robust policies and support processes. It is important to develop appropriate strategies to proactively prevent child on child abuse. Balshaw Lane Primary School has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them – in a way that is appropriate to their individual needs and levels of understanding. There is a strong and positive PHSE curriculum and values based assemblies that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. Teaching Assistants in school will play a significant role in supporting children through regular group and 1:1 sessions following an identified need. The work within the school drivers will all play the part in developing the caring, considerate, happy children who are able to achieve.