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Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School



Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

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Introduction

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016 we have produced this policy, and it's guidelines, to specifically address the issue of peer on peer abuse. This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and also links to other specific policies (e.g anti-bullying, e-safety).

It is our intention that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour be dealt with promptly and consistently to reduce harm to the young person, being mindful of the impact on the student's emotional/ mental health and well-being.

Purpose and Aim

Young people may be harmful to each other in ways which would be classified as peer on peer abuse. This policy explores the many forms of peer on peer abuse and includes planned and supportive responses to the issues.

Abusive behaviour can happen to students. It is important to be clear:

- what abuse is/ looks like
- how it can be managed
- what support/ intervention can be put in place
- what preventative strategies may be established.

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

Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Other forms of abuse that may not necessarily be classed as peer on peer abuse are listed in our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

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

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

Bullying - physical, name calling, spreading rumours, making threats. It may be connected to gender, religion, race, sexual orientation or even hair colour, etc. 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 young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. Cyber-bullying is the use of electronic media and instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. Cyber-bullying can

become criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 or the Communications Act 2003, Section 127.

Sexting – sending/ receiving sexually explicit text, images or video. This includes sending nude or semi-nude selfies. Pressurising a child into sending nude pictures is a form of sexual abuse. Having possession of, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 is an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Initiation/Hazing - a form of initiation ceremony used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies. The idea behind this practice is that it welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

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

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

School Response

All staff within school need to be prepared to deal with an issue of peer on peer abuse, following the approaches indicated below. In our school however, it is most likely that these actions will be followed by staff with a specific pastoral role within school.

It is important to deal with situations quickly and sensitively. Prompt information gathering is important to avoid key points being forgotten. Sensitivity is needed - the word “perpetrator” can create a blame culture and leave a student labelled. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with sensitive matters.

Gather the facts

Speak to all the young people involved separately to gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account. 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. Only interrupt the young person from this to gain clarity with open questions:

- What happened?
- Who observed the incident?
- What was seen?
- What was heard?
- Did anyone intervene?

In our school, students have the capacity to produce a written statement. These should be collected from all parties. Incidents should be promptly recorded within CPOMS and all statements attached.

Consider the intent (Risk Assess)

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another? Include your professional perspective in your report.

Decide on your next course of action

The situation may be one that is covered within school's formal policies. If so, follow the guidance within them. If the matter is more serious or there is increasing repetition it will be necessary to consult with senior staff within school.

Action, follow-up and informing parents

Actions should be appropriate and in line with school's behaviour policy which include a use of sanctions. It is important that situations are further monitored to ensure all students involved remain safe and protected. It will normally be appropriate to keep parents informed of how a matter has been resolved.

Further points to consider:

- What is the age of the students involved?
- Is there any significant age difference between those involved?
- Where did the incident or incidents take place?
- Do all students give the same explanation of the incident?
- Do the students know/understand what they have been doing?
- Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived?
- Does the student have an understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?
- Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion?

Serious Incidents

If the behaviours in question are sufficiently serious these should be passed on to the appropriate assistant headteacher (main school/ sixth form) for consideration with the headteacher.

If from the information that you gather you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must make a safeguarding referral to school's DSL immediately. The DSL will then pursue the matter, involving the police, children's social care or other agencies, as appropriate. School will work collaboratively with these agencies to ensure all matters are resolved, in the best interest of all student involved.

Parents will be informed as appropriate following consideration of the situation, advice from the police/children's social care, legal requirements and the wishes of the students involved (Fraser competency). School will always encourage students to share information with their parents but will not break confidentiality unless there are risks of significant harm.

Supporting Students

The support required by all students involved will depend on those young people. We will work to find the most appropriate forms of support for them. This support may include:

- therapeutic counselling (in-house)
- one to one support via a mentor (in-house)
- support via family and friends
- support from external services (ELCAS, victim support etc)
- restorative justice

- input into relationship development.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group, for example a speaker on cyber-bullying, relationship abuse, etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PHSE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

Preventative Strategies

Whilst we recognise that peer on peer abuse can and will occur, school continually works towards being a place of safety. Our pastoral system, the use of PSHE, the assembly programme and tutor sessions, our behaviour system and the continued responsiveness of students and parents all enable us to build an environment where students can remain safe.

We will maintain vigilance and ensure we are always responsive (and seen to be) to negative situations. We will continue to monitor, to consult and be ready to adapt and act where we find weaknesses. In doing so, we will ensure our safeguarding agenda retains a high profile within school.