Kennington Primary School

Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

Reviewed by	Date	Signed
Head Teacher	September 2021	S. Pritchard

Kennington Primary School

Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy

Policy and Procedures

1. The School's responsibilities

Introduction:

Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021 states that Governing bodies and proprietors should

ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with.

Staff at Kennington are to make it clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to peer-on-peer abuse. The school has provided systems where children are able to report peer-on-peer abuse (such systems are both supported and challenged by staff at various levels). Staff are made aware that if there are no reported cases of peer-on-peer abuse, this doesn't mean it's not happening within the school.

The document also states it is most important to ensure opportunities of seeking the voice of the child are heard, '*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, any system and processes should operate with the **best** interests of the child at their heart.*'

The governors, senior leadership team, and all staff at Kennington are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of peer-on-peer abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the School.

In particular, we:

- believe that in order to protect children, all schools should (a) be aware of the nature and level of risk to which their students are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context; and (b) take a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to peer-on-peer abuse,
- regard the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure. We (a) do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to peer-on-peer abuse in response to alleged incidents of it; and (b) believe that in order to tackle peer on-peer abuse proactively, it is necessary to focus on all four of the following areas: (i) systems and structures; (ii) prevention; (iii) identification; and (iv) response/intervention,
- recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and peer-on-peer abuse in the school setting, and
- encourage parents to hold us to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers, they should inform the School so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

This policy:

- While it is recommended that Peer on Peer abuse is part of the Child Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer

abuse, we have completed this separate policy. Peer-on-peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate). At Kennington School we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration for that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

- It relates to, and should be read alongside, the School's child protection policy and any other relevant policies including, but not limited to, bullying (including cyber-bullying), sexual images, online safety, IT use, data protection and retention of records, children missing in education, student behaviour and discipline and exclusions.

- Sets out our strategy for improving prevention, and identifying and appropriately managing peer-on-peer abuse. In producing this policy we have discussed it's content with the Headmaster, Designated Safeguarding Leads and the Safeguarding Governor. This Policy will be rolled out to the staff via the annual safeguarding update.

- Applies to all [governors, the senior management team, and staff]. It is reviewed annually at the start of the academic year, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which students are or may be exposed. A number of staff are involved in each annual review which involves, and is informed by, an assessment of the impact and effectiveness of this policy over the previous year. This is done through staff meetings, especially with the DSLs and the pastoral care staff at the beginning of each term. The SLT will also discuss matters with regards to the effectiveness of certain strategies within school that may reduce the occurrence of peer on peer abuse at weekly SLT meetings.

- Recognises that abuse is abuse, and should never be passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', or 'part of growing up',

- Is compliant with the statutory guidance on peer on-peer abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021).

- Does not use the term 'victim' and/or 'perpetrator'. This is because our School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in concerns or allegations about peer on peer abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused, and those who are alleged to have abused their peers. Research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of peer-on-peer

abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers.

- Should, if relevant, according to the concern(s) or allegation(s) raised, be read in conjunction with the DfE's advice on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges (DfE's Advice) (May 2018), and any other advice and guidance referred to within it, as appropriate.

- Uses the terms 'child' and 'children', which is defined for the purposes of this policy as a person aged under 18.

- If services or activities are provided by the school, under direct supervision from staff, their arrangements for child protection will apply. The necessary recruitment checks are carried out by or HR department. If another organisation is providing services or activities on the site, the governing body or proprietor should ensure that appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are in place.
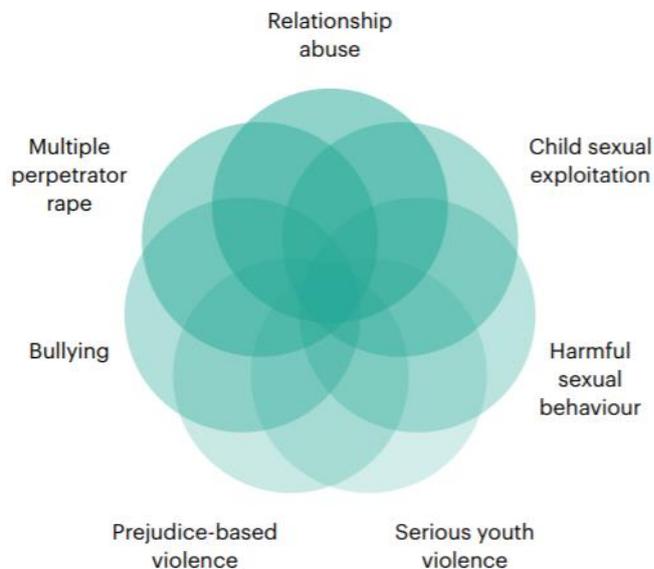
2. <u>Understanding peer-on-peer abuse</u>

What is peer-on-peer abuse?

For these purposes, peer-on-peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children, and within children's relationships (both intimate and nonintimate), friendships and wider peer associations. Peer-on-peer abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to): serious bullying (including cyberbullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence and abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or prejudice-based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence. Examples of online peer-

on-peer abuse would include sexting, online abuse, peer-on-peer grooming, the distribution of youth involved sexualised content, and harassment.

Holistic account of peer-on-peer abuse

What is Contextual Safeguarding?

In order to prevent and tackle peer-on-peer abuse, Kennington staff endeavour to adopt a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which is an approach to understanding, and responding to, children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that children are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

This policy: (a) encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which is about changing the way that professionals approach child protection when risks occur outside of the family, thereby requiring all those within a Local Safeguarding Partnership to consider how they work alongside, rather than just refer into, children's social care, to create safe spaces in which children may have encountered peer-on-peer abuse. (b) adopts a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach, which means:

- Being aware of and seeking to understand the impact that these wider social contexts may be having on the School's students.
- Creating a safe culture in the School by, for example, implementing policies and procedures that address peer-on-peer abuse and harmful attitudes.
- Being alert to and monitoring changes in students' behaviour and/or attendance, and contributing to local child protection agendas by, for example, challenging poor threshold decisions and referring concerns about contexts to relevant local agencies (see section entitled 'multi-agency working').

Kennington have the following policies and documents in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Safeguarding policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Child protection policy
- Acceptable use policy
- Code of conduct policy
- ICT policy
- Prevent Approach policy
- Independent Listener
- Staff Handbook
- KCSE (September 2019)
- Working Together (July 2018) Note updates in February 2019

How prevalent is peer-on-peer abuse?

Research suggests that peer-on-peer abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse affecting children in the UK.

Education and implementation at the school

Kennington have implemented the following strategies, tailored to preventing and tackling peer-on-peer abuse. Staff and pupils are educated in accordance to the specific risks to which our pupils are or may be exposed – both in and outside of the school community (including on-line).

Staff are trained and are informed of the potential risks to which our pupils are or may be exposed to peer-on-peer abuse through the following opportunities:

- their safeguarding training (this includes all new staff appointed at the school which takes place on a termly basis led by the DSLs).
- staff in regular activity at the school are invited to Safeguarding INSETS annually.
- SLT meetings on a weekly basis
- staff meetings – weekly basis
- attending appropriate ICT INSETS regarding internet safety every three years.
- teachers deliver a weekly PHSE lessons - which cover topics related to peer-on-peer abuse such as anti-bullying and, online safety and cyber-bullying.
- safeguarding leads attend regular meetings with the LA which covers topics on peer-on-

peer abuse and the risks associated with it

- KCSE document is made available to staff annually
- Updates to the KCSIE document are highlighted to staff by email from the DSL
- 7 Minute Briefings are circulated to staff regarding safeguarding to update their knowledge and understanding, some of these updates relate to peer-on-peer abuse.
- The Governing Body meet with the Headmaster on a termly basis.

Kennington endeavours to provide an environment and opportunities to seek the voice of the child to ensure that they are heard by fostering the following:

- All staff are encouraged to listen to pupils as a matter of priority, should the pupil have a concern related to peer-on-peer abuse.
- Worry Boxes are in place in all classrooms and corridors for children to write any concerns on. These are monitored by Teaching Assistants on a daily basis
- DSL and Learning Mentor meet each week in SLT meeting to discuss any safeguarding concerns
- Pupils (whole school) take part in lessons on a range of safeguarding topics including on-line/internet safety
- Pupils are taught about on-line safety through our PSHE and Computing Curriculum. On-line and internet safety is taught on an annual basis.
- Pupils are taught and educated about various topics which cover peer-on-peer abuse such as anti-bullying and cyber-bulling through our PSHE lessons on an annual basis.
- Pupil anonymous questionnaires (PAQ – Pupil Attitude Questionnaire)
- Parents are updated with guidance on a range of safeguarding issues including online safety through the school news letter and school website.

Many of these strategies incorporate a whole school approach to seek input from key members of staff, as well as pupils and parents to preventing and responding to peer-on-peer abuse. These strategies are tailored to preventing, identifying and appropriately managing peer-on-peer abuse. Our School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in allegations of or concerns about peer-on-peer abuse.

Kennington's practice and procedures for prevent, identify and appropriately respond to cases of peer-on-peer abuse are documented in several policies including anti-bullying, online safety, behaviour and discipline policies. Safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented in the school handbook and induction pack. Safeguarding update is held annually for all staff and provides training on identifying and managing cases concerning issues on peer-on-peer abuse. Kennington adopts a zero tolerance policy towards all forms of peer-on-peer abuse and that no forms of such abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) are ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing. It is important to review this peer-on-peer abuse policy, it should therefore be deemed is a constant work in progress.

When does behaviour become problematic or abusive?

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and 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'. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. boys being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE, 2019). It is important to consider the forms of abuse that may take place and the subsequent actions required. This is done appropriately through PHSE lessons where the age of the child is taken into consideration.

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. All staff should be alert to the well-being of pupils and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by peer-on-peer abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ.

Signs that a child may be suffering from peer-on-peer abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse and can include:
(a) failing to attend school, disengaging from classes or struggling to carry out school related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected;
(b) physical injuries;
(c) experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing;
(d) becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much;
(e) broader changes in behaviour including alcohol or substance misuse;
(f) changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age;
(g) abusive behaviour towards others.

Abuse affects children very differently. The above list is by no means exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse. The behaviour that children present with will depend on their particular circumstances. Rather than

checking behaviour against a list, staff are trained to be alert to behaviour that might cause concerns, to think about what the behaviour might signify, to encourage children to share with them any underlying reasons for their behaviour, and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents/carers so that the cause(s) of their behaviour

Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for his/her age, staff should always consider whether an underlying concern is contributing to their behaviour (for example, whether the child is being harmed or abused by their peers) and, if so, what the concern is and how the child can be supported going forwards.

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

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

Sexual behaviours

Simon Hackett has proposed the following continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children, which may be helpful when seeking to understand a student's sexual behaviour and deciding how to respond to it.

Sexual behaviours continuum model:

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
• Developmentally expected • Socially acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Problematic and concerning behaviour • Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected • No overt elements of victimisation • Consent issues may be unclear • May lack reciprocity or equal power • May include levels of compulsivity	• Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given • May include elements of expressive violence	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour • Sadism

Hackett's continuum relates exclusively to sexual behaviours and is not exhaustive.54 The Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool can help professionals working with children to

distinguish between three levels of sexual behaviour – green, amber and red, and to respond according to the level of concern.

Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual 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. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language or inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

Sexting

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

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

As a preventative measure concerning peer-on-peer abuse:

- Pupils must read and sign an acceptable ICT use agreement
- Pupils are not allowed to bring mobile devices into school
- Pupils have restricted access to sites which are deemed inappropriate for their age
- Pupils accounts are monitored for any inappropriate activity

Other behaviour

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on aspects of Hackett's continuum to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, whether it:

- is socially acceptable,
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time,
- is socially acceptable within the peer group,
- is problematic and concerning,

- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability,
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning,
- involves a power imbalance between the child/ children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power, and
- involves a misuse of power.

Bullying (physical, name calling, homophobic etc.)

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children 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 those who bully others 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

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

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people

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

Initiation/Hazing

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

Prejudiced Behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical, emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised. This is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality, 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

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

How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?

All staff should be alert to the well-being of students and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by peer-on-peer

abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ.

Looking behind students' behaviour

Tracking programme. The School's safeguarding team should regularly review behaviour incident logs which can help to identify any changes in behaviour and/or concerning patterns or trends at an early stage. Kennington are currently using Arbor to monitor the student's behaviour.

Are some children particularly vulnerable to abusing or being abused by their peers?

Any child can be vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to the strength of peer influence during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers. For example, an image of a child could be shared, following which they could become more vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to how others now perceive them, regardless of any characteristics which may be inherent in them and/or their family. Peer group dynamics can also play an important role in determining a child's vulnerability to such abuse. For example, children who are more likely to follow others and/or who are socially isolated from their peers may be more vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse. Children who are questioning or exploring their sexuality may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their peers.

Research suggests that:

- peer-on-peer abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure will also be different. As a result, schools need to explore the gender dynamics of peer-on-peer abuse within their settings, and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender- imbalanced environments,
- children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers without SEND, and additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in children with SEND. These can include:
  - assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to a child's disability without further exploration,
  - the potential for children with SEND to be disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying and harassment, without outwardly showing any signs,
  - communication barriers and difficulties, and – overcoming these barriers.

• some children may be more likely to experience peer-on-peer abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs.

3. <u>A whole school approach School environment</u>

School environment

The School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of peer-on-peer abuse by:

- Supporting the on-going welfare of the pupils by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise mental health and well-being of the pupils.
- working with governors, senior leadership team, and all staff, students and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the School community,
- creating conditions in which our students can aspire to, and realise, safe and healthy relationships fostering a whole-school culture:
    - which is founded on the idea that every member of our School community is responsible for building and maintaining safe and positive relationships, and helping to create a safe School environment in which violence and abuse are never acceptable.

- in which students are able to develop trusting relationships with staff, and in which staff understand, through regular discussion and training, the importance of these relationships in providing students with a sense of belonging, which could otherwise be sought in problematic contexts,
- in which students feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to, – which (i) proactively identifies positive qualities in students; (ii) nurtures these qualities; (iii) teaches and encourages students to think about positive hopes for the future; and (vi) supports students in developing small-scale goals that enable realistic ambitions, and – which provides supervised activities to students that give them the experience of having their needs met. These can include experiencing (i) status; (ii) excitement; and (iii) a degree of risk,

- Responding to cases of peer-on-peer abuse promptly and appropriately, and
- Ensuring that all peer-on-peer abuse issues are fed back to the School's DSL so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who may be in need of additional support and challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom).

Multi-agency working

The School actively engages with its Local Safeguarding Partnership in relation to peer-on-peer abuse, and works closely with, for example, children's social care, the police, local authority MASH agencies in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's procedures, and other schools.

The relationships the School has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the School is able to prevent, identify early, and appropriately handle cases of peer-on-peer abuse. They help the School to: (a) develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in its local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist; (b) ensure that its students are able to access the range of services and support they need quickly; (c) support and help inform the School's local community's response to peer-on-peer abuse; (d) increase the School's awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in its local area to enable it to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by its students.

The School actively refers concerns and allegations of peer-on-peer abuse where necessary to children's social care, the police, or the Local Authority MASH agencies in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's procedures. This is particularly important because peer-on-peer abuse can be a complex issue, and even more so where wider safeguarding concerns exist. It is often not appropriate for one single agency (where the alleged incident cannot appropriately be managed internally by the School itself) to try to address the issue alone – it requires effective partnership working.

Preventative Strategies for peer-on-peer abuse at Kennington

Kennington works hard to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of peer on peer abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way.

Firstly, and most importantly for Kennington is recognition that peer-on-peer abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. It is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people, so they talk about any issues and share information with all staff.

This can be supported by ensuring that there is an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This is strengthened through a strong and positive PSHE curriculum 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.

To enable such an open and honest environment Kennington ensures that all staff feel confident and enabled to talk about issues, and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. It is incredibly important that staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right, before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a young person seeking no further help or advice.

Kennington provide the opportunity for a 'pupil voice' and encouraging young people to support changes helps to create a positive ethos in the school and one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

All pupils in school annually complete an on-line survey which is used to target and address key areas within the school raised by both staff and pupils.

4. Responding to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse

General principles

It is essential that all concerns and allegations of peer-on-peer abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our School environment. Any response should:

- Include a thorough investigation of the concern(s) or allegation(s), and the wider context in which it/they may have occurred (as appropriate) – depending on the nature and seriousness of the alleged incident(s), it may be appropriate for the police and/or children's social care to carry out this investigation,
- Treat all children involved as being at potential risk – while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. The School should ensure that a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter,

- Take into account: − that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved, and consider and address the effect of wider sociocultural contexts − such as the child's/ children's peer group (both within and outside the School); family; the School environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence. Consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child/ children's needs and to mitigate risk, and

  − the potential complexity of peer-on-peer abuse and of children´s experiences, and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent. While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited they are not consenting,

  − the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/ children and their parents, and obtain consent to any referral before it is made. The School should manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so. It is particularly important to take into account the wishes of any child who has allegedly been abused, and to give that child as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and how they will be supported.

What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s)?

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay so that a course of action can be agreed.

Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to children's social care (and, if appropriate, the police) is made immediately. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made.

If a child speaks to a member of staff about peer-on-peer abuse that they have witnessed or are a part of, the member of staff should listen to the child and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement.

How will the School respond to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse?

The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the member of staff who has reported it/them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected. Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL should consider what urgent action can be taken in addition to the actions and referral duties set out in this policy, and in the School's Safeguarding Policy, to seek specialist help in preventing the images spreading further and removing the images from the internet.

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), for example, has a trained team that can evaluate and remove illegal images from the internet when the images are reported to them quickly. They will also share the image with the National Crime Agency's CEOP Command to facilitate an investigation. Any report to IWF will be made in consultation with the police. DSLs should always use their professional judgement to: (a) assess the nature and seriousness of the alleged behaviour,71 and (b) determine whether it is appropriate for the alleged behaviour to be to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required. In borderline cases the DSL may wish to consult with children's social care and/or the LA Safeguarding Team and/or other relevant agencies to determine the most appropriate response. Where the DSL considers or suspects that the alleged behaviour in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum or where the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question might otherwise require it, the DSL should contact children's social care and/or the police immediately and, in any event, within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of the alleged behaviour. The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the agency and agree on a course of action, which may include:

A Manage internally with help from external specialists where appropriate and possible.

However, where support from local agencies is not available, the School may need to handle concerns or allegations internally. In these cases, the School will engage and seek advice from external specialists (either in the private and/or voluntary sector).

B Undertake/contribute to an inter-agency early help assessment, with targeted early help services provided to address the assessed needs of the child/children and their family.

These services may, for example, include family and parenting programmes, responses to emerging thematic concerns in extra familial contexts, a specialist harmful sexual behaviour team, CAMHS etc.

C Refer the child/children to children's social care for a section 17/47 statutory assessment.

Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to children's social care (and, if appropriate, a report to the police) is made immediately. This referral will be made to children's social care in the area where the/each child lives. Depending on the safeguarding procedures issued by the Local Safeguarding Partnership in that area, there will normally be an initial review and assessment of the referral, in accordance with that area's assessment framework. As a matter of best practice, if an incident of peer-on-peer abuse requires referral to and action by children's social care and a strategy meeting is convened, then the School will hold every professional involved in the case accountable for their safeguarding response, including themselves, to both the/each child who has experienced the abuse, and the/each child who was responsible for it, and the contexts to which the abuse was associated.

D Report alleged criminal behaviour to the police.

Alleged criminal behaviour will ordinarily be reported to the police. However, there are some circumstances where it may not be appropriate to report such behaviour to the police. For example, where the exchange of youth involved sexual imagery does not involve any

aggravating factors all concerns or allegations will be assessed on a case by case basis, and in light of the wider context.

Safety plans – to keep the child safe.

The School will always carry out a safety plan in respect of:

- any child who is alleged to have behaved in a way that is considered to be abusive or violent,
- any child who has reportedly been abused or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child, or
- any child who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child as deemed appropriate by the DSL. Where it is alleged that a child has behaved in a way that is considered to be inappropriate or problematic (as opposed to abusive or violent), the DSL will use their professional judgment – based on the particular concern(s) and/or allegation(s) raised, and the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question – to determine whether (as explained above) it would be appropriate to contact children's social care, and to carry out a plan to keep the child safe 'safety plan'. Careful judgment and consideration are required as to whether alleged behaviour which might be judged to be inappropriate by an adult might actually be harmful to another child. Consultation is recommended with children's social care if there is any doubt about this. Where other children have been identified as witnesses to alleged abuse or violence, consideration should also be given by the DSL to whether there might be any risks to those children, and whether a safety plan would be appropriate in relation to any risks presenting to them.

Information sharing, data protection and record keeping

When responding to concern(s) or allegation(s) of peer-on-peer abuse, the School will:

- always consider carefully, in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies (where they are involved), how to share information about the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the student(s) affected, their parents, staff, and other students and individuals,
- record the information that is necessary for the School and other relevant agencies (where they are involved) to respond to the concern(s) or allegation(s) and safeguard everyone involved,
- keep a record of the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including relevant authorities, and ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and to only use it for the agreed legal purpose, and
- be mindful of and act in accordance with its safeguarding and data protection duties, including those set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018)74 and the HM Government advice on Information Sharing (updated in July 2018).75

Disciplinary action

The School may wish to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved. However, if there are police proceedings underway, or there could be, it is critical that the School works in partnership with the police and/or children's social care. Where a matter is not of interest to the police and/ or children's social care, the School may still need to consider what is the most appropriate action to take to ensure positive behaviour management. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including to:

(a) ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;

(b) demonstrate to the child/children and others that peer-on-peer abuse can never be tolerated; and

(c) ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

However, these considerations must be balanced against any police investigations, the child's/children's own potential unmet needs, and any action or intervention planned regarding safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action the School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children in its care from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the peer-on-peer abuse and the causes of it.

The School will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed moves or exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognizing that even if this is ultimately deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this policy may still be required. For example, action may still need to be taken by the School in relation to other students who have been involved with and/or affected by peer-on-peer abuse. Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the School. In the event of any managed move, consideration must be given to sharing information with the receiving school regarding the peer-on-peer abuse in order to allow best protection of children in the new school.

Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of peer-on-peer abuse, and the School will always consider the wider actions that may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards, as set out above and below.

On-going proactive work for a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach

The School's response to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse should be part of on-going proactive work by the School to embed best practice and in taking a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach (defined above) to such abuse. As such the School's response can become part of its wider prevention work.

This response may involve the School working with the local authority to undertake, for example, a Contextual Safeguarding school assessment which would fit into a systems approach to Contextual Safeguarding. The response could also include the School asking itself a series of questions about the context in which an incident of peer-on-peer abuse occurred

in the School, the local community in which the School is based, and the wider physical and online environment – such as:

- What protective factors and influences exist within the School (such as positive peer influences, examples where peer-on-peer abuse has been challenged, etc.) and how can the School bolster these?
- How (if at all) did the School's physical environment or the students' routes to and from the School contribute to the abuse, and how can the School address this going forwards, for example by improving the School's safety, security and supervision, or by working with local safeguarding partners to mitigate the risks to students' safety whilst travelling to and from the School?
- How (if at all) did the online environment contribute to the abuse, and how can the School address this going forwards, for example by strengthening the way in which the School encourages positive and safe use of the internet by students?
- Did wider gender norms, equality issues, and/or societal attitudes contribute to the abuse?
- What was the relationship between the abuse and the cultural norms between staff and students, and how can these be addressed going forward?
- Does the abuse indicate a need for staff training on, for example, underlying attitudes, a particular issue or the handling of particular types of abuse, or to address any victim-blaming narratives from staff?
- How have similar cases been managed in the past and what effect has this had?
- Does the case or any identified trends highlight areas for development in the way in which the School works with children to raise their awareness of and/or
- prevent peer-on-peer abuse, including by way of the School's PSHE curriculum and lessons that address underlying attitudes or behaviour such as gender and equalities work, respect, boundaries, consent, children's rights and critical thinking and/or avoiding victim-blaming narratives?
- Are there any lessons to be learnt about the way in which the School engages with parents to address peer-on-peer abuse issues?
- Are there underlying issues that affect other schools in the area and is there a need for a multi-agency response?
- Does this case highlight a need to work with certain children to build their confidence, and teach them how to identify and manage abusive behaviour?
- Were there opportunities to intervene earlier or differently and/or to address common themes amongst the behaviour of other children in the School?

Answers to these questions can be developed into an action plan that is reviewed on a regular basis by the School's leadership and the DSL. The School will, where possible and appropriate, work with the local authority and wider partners to deliver on this plan, possibly as part of a wider Contextual Safeguarding school assessment led by or with input from the local authority.

The school will continue to review comments and forums online in relation to peer on peer abuse. The school will respond as recommended by the advice of the government, and the experts in this field from training webinars and/or insets. The NSPCC launched a free and anonymous helpline for children and young people who have experienced abuse at school or for adults, professionals who need support and guidance: Tel **0800 136 663** or **help@nspcc.org.uk** (Monday – Fri 8am-10pm) and Weekend (9am-6pm).

Appendix A:

Expected action taken (by all staff)

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

safeguarding approach to all children involved in allegations of or concerns about peer-on-peer abuse, including those who have allegedly experienced abuse, and those who have allegedly been responsible for it.

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. 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. In all cases of peer on peer abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

- o Training for SLT members, and all staff is provided by the staff on how best to handle incidences concerning peer-on-peer abuse through INSETs and courses

Gathering the Facts

Speak to all the pupils involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use **consistent language** and **open questions** for each account (no leading 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 pupils may also be given the opportunity to write/pen there account of what happened if they are having difficulty communicating the events verbally. Only interrupt the young person from this to gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?) All records must be recorded, signed dated and handed into the Headmaster/deputy Safeguarding Leads.

Consider the Intent (begin to Risk Assess)

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?

Decide on your next course of action

If from the information that you gather you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm, then the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Safeguarding Lead/Yourself must make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also). If this is the case, once social care has been contacted and a decision has been made, then you will be informed on your next steps. If social care and the police intend to pursue this further they may ask to interview the

pupils and or parents. It may also be that social care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case you may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion, however, you agree with the decision, you may then be left to inform parents.

Schools should consult their Local Authority on safeguarding policy and procedures, and any relevant practice guidance issued by it, when responding to concerns/allegations of peer-on-peer abuse. Kennington should consult their MASA and LADO safeguarding and child protection procedures.

As a matter of best practice, if an incident of peer-on-peer abuse requires referral to and action by children's social care and a s
trategy meeting is convened, then Kennington will hold every professional involved in the case accountable for their safeguarding response, including themselves, to both the child who has experienced the abuse, and the child who was responsible for it, and the contexts to which the abuse was associated.

Informing parents

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care you have agreement to inform parents, or have been allocated that role from the other services involved, then the Headmaster or DSL will need to inform the parents as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents.

Points to consider

What are the ages of the children involved?

How old are the young people involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? (In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following).

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?

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 incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case, is it regular and repetitive? Is the version of one young person different from another and why?

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?

In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If you are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, please seek advice from Children's Services Social Care.

Repetition

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? Furthermore, it must be considered, has the behaviour persisted after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

Next Steps

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

For the young person who has been harmed

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor/form teacher/tutor. 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 pupil continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the pupil may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people, or some solution focused approach work with all those involved may be required.

Interventions that could be triggered sooner as a matter of priority: target the whole school/a class or a year group through a tailored PSHE class. Schedule a speaker on cyber bullying/relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of 'circle time'/PSHE that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

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

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

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

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that the young person receives a consequence for their behaviour as set out in the school behaviour policy:

Kennington may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion/exclusion for a period of time/full exclusion.

This may be in the form of a solution focused approach 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 pupil cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

After care

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the young people do not engage in any

further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). In which case, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.