



# Northbrook Primary School Peer on Peer Abuse Policy



Adopted by Governors  
Last Review Date : Spring 2018  
Next review : Spring 2019  
Person Responsible : Headteacher

# NORTHBROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL

## PEER ON PEER ABUSE POLICY

*'Navigating pathways to success'*

### Aims

This policy is intended to raise staff awareness of the many forms of peer on peer abuse, minimise risk and assist staff in preparing and planning a supportive response if such action is required.

### Introduction

At Northbrook Primary School we believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the school and other pupils.

We recognise that some pupils will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with using the school's behaviour policy. Occasionally however, allegations may be made against pupils by other pupils in the school,

### Definition

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which could be classified as peer on peer abuse.

However, if one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse: bullying, fighting and harassment between children are not generally seen as child protection issues. This is a matter of professional judgement.

Occasionally, allegations may be made against pupils by other young people in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, teenage relationship abuse and sexual exploitation, bullying, cyber bullying and sexting.

However, it may be appropriate to regard a young person's behaviour as abusive if:

- There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned; or
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged young person;
- If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

## Framework and Legislation

This policy has been compiled in response to the following legislation:

- The Children's Act, 1989
- Working Together To Safeguard Children, (HM Government, 2015)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), (Department for Education, September 2016)

## Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Cyber Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

## Types of abuse

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. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE, 2016).

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Examples of safeguarding issues against a pupil could include:

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse may include violence, particularly pre-planned such as hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. It may also include forcing others to smoke, use drugs or alcohol. 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.

## Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse can include blackmail or extortion and may also include threats and intimidation. This harmful behaviour can have a significant impact on the mental health and emotional well-being of the victim and can lead to self-harm.

## Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse

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, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse. It can also include indecent exposure or forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting.

## Bullying (physical, name calling, homophobic etc.)

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both children who are bullied and 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 such as Facebook and Twitter, WhatsApp and Snapchat to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 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 or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support pupils may require in these instances, we will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

### **Sexting**

Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes 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, pupils are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

### **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 – 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).

### **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.

### **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.

### **Sexual Exploitation**

This can include encouraging other young people to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour or grooming and recruiting members of the peer group into being sexually exploited by other young people or adults. It can also include photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts.

### **Procedures**

We are committed to ensure that any form of peer on peer abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately, sensitively and consistently. This will reduce the extent of harm to the young person and minimise the potential impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

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.

### **Gathering the facts**

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another pupil or inappropriate behaviour is observed, Information will be gathered as soon as possible after the incident to get the facts around what has occurred before the child(ren) forget.

It is our policy to speak to all the young people involved in an allegation of peer on peer abuse separately to gain a statement of facts from them. The member of staff will

ask the children to tell them what happened only asking questions to gain clarity e.g. where did the incident happen, when etc.

The member of staff will be sensitive to the language they use and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. For example; the word 'perpetrator' would not be used as this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

Staff will not act in a prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible manner when dealing with such sensitive matters. Staff will not minimise the concerns raised it may result in a young person seeking no further help or advice. Staff will not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood.

A factual record should be made of the allegation on the School's Concerns Log or using CPOMs.

Staff will consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. Members of staff should consider whether the complaint/observation was a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another.

If there is a safeguarding concern the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be informed.

In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. The DSL should contact Social Services to discuss the case. It is possible that social services are already aware of safeguarding concerns around this young person.

### **Facts that we need to know:**

#### **The age of the children involved and if there is any age difference between those involved.**

NB 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 the incident or incidents took place.**

If the incident was in an open, visible place it may have been observed and more information can be gathered. If the incident did not take place in an open visible place then the school must consider if more supervision is required within this particular area.



### **The explanation that was given by all of the children involved about what occurred.**

If all of the children give the same explanation of the incident we can have more faith in the account. If the versions differ we need to discover why. The effect of the incident may be different upon the different children involved.

### **The children's own understanding of what occurred.**

It is important to be aware of what the children know about what they are doing, for example whether they know the names of body parts, about privacy and what it is inappropriate to touch. It may be that the child's explanation is in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behavior. Also, it is important to establish whether the child knows the impact of their behaviour upon another.

### **Any instances of repetition**

We need to find out if the behaviour has been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion and whether the behaviour has continued after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved.

### **Deciding on our next course of action informing Social Services**

In consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), contact will be made with Social Services to gain advice about future actions. They will advise whether or not to inform parents.

The DSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a social services referral where appropriate.

The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in the files of both pupils' files.

If the allegation indicates a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police should be contacted at the earliest opportunity.

### **Informing parents**

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care and Social Services are not going to be involved then School will share information with parent and child together (depending on the child's age) as soon as possible.

Parents, of both the student/s being complained about and the alleged victim/s, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral.



## Next Steps

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 child who has been harmed

Support for the child who has been harmed depends on the individual young person. School can refer a child to counselling or group support via nurture sessions. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the child may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other children or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group, for example, a speaker on cyber or bullying etc. Issues can be discussed in PHSE lessons and addressed through the SMSC curriculum.

If the child 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.

The child is continued to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future

### For the child who has displayed harmful behaviour

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the child has behaved in such a way. It may be that the child is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases counselling may also be necessary or involvement of Social Services. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an early help referral or CAF 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 that the child receives a consequence for their behaviour in line with our behaviour policy. 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. Northbrook Primary School may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour. 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). 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 whilst off site.

Following the closing of an investigation there may be a need for an individual risk assessment 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 child 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.

### **After care**

It is important that following the incident the children involved continue to feel supported and receive help. It is important to ensure that the child does not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). In which case, regular reviews with the child following the incident(s) are important.

### **Minimising the risk of safeguarding concerns towards pupils from other pupils**

As a school we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:-

- Having an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them;
- Having systems in place for any pupil to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued;
- Using pupil voice and the school council to encourage children to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour' to create a positive ethos in school and one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive;
- Providing a developmentally appropriate PSHE/ SMSC curriculum which develops pupils understanding of acceptable behaviour, appropriate touch in an age appropriate way and keeping themselves safe. It also provides an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another;
- Having a robust online safety programme which develops pupils knowledge, understanding and skills, to ensure personal safety and self protection when using the internet and social networking;

- Having robust monitoring and filtering systems in place to ensure pupils are safe and act appropriately when using information technology in school;
- Providing appropriate adult supervision. Adults will be vigilant at all times to ensure children are working and playing safely. Hot spots such as dens, play houses and piles of coats will be closely monitored;
- Liaising with appropriate services if a pupil raises safeguarding concerns:
- Being able to signpost children in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer;
- Delivering targeted work on assertiveness and keeping safe to those pupils identified as being at risk:
- Developing robust risk assessments & providing targeted work for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils;
- Issuing individual risk management plans for children who pose a safeguarding risk to ensure that other pupils are kept safe and they themselves are not laid open to malicious allegations;
- Having regular staff training and updates to enable an open and honest environment where staff feel confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including the use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another.

## MONITORING & REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the safeguarding review calendar.

Signature of the Chair of Governors:

Date:

Signature of the Head Teacher:

Date: