

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy 2026-2027

Version control

Scope:	The Lanes Primary School
Consultation:	School safeguarding team / Governing Body
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Owner:	Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mr Pete Wilkes

Introduction

At The Lanes Primary School, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. We recognise that children can abuse other children and that this can happen inside or outside school, within peer groups, in the community and online. Child-on-child abuse is never acceptable and will not be dismissed as "banter", "just having a laugh", "a part of growing up" or "boys being boys".

This policy sets out The Lanes Primary School's arrangements for preventing, identifying and responding to child-on-child abuse, including harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual violence, bullying, exploitation, online abuse and technology-assisted harm.

The policy should be read alongside the School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2026–2027, Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Online Safety Policy, Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy, Equality Policy, RHE/PSHE arrangements and relevant Nottinghamshire safeguarding procedures.

Our approach is child-centred, trauma-informed and contextual. We will consider the needs, wishes and feelings of all children involved and recognise that a child who displays harmful behaviour may also have safeguarding needs.

Important Contacts

Role	Name	Contact
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Safeguarding Governor	Mr Rob Guyler	rguyler@thelanes.notts.sch.uk

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1. Purpose, scope and safeguarding ethos

At The Lanes Primary School, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. We recognise that children can abuse other children and that child-on-child abuse can happen in school, outside school, within peer groups, in the community and online. We maintain an attitude of "it could happen here", including where there have been no previous reports.

Child-on-child abuse is never acceptable. We will not dismiss abusive or harmful behaviour as "banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys". We will respond promptly, proportionately and in a child-centred way, taking account of the safety, wishes, feelings, lived experience, age, developmental stage, SEND and individual circumstances of every child involved.

This policy applies to all staff, supply staff, trainees, governors, volunteers, contractors and visitors working with or on behalf of the school. It covers concerns occurring on school premises, during school activities and trips, outside school and online.

This policy forms part of our wider safeguarding arrangements and must be read alongside The Lanes Primary School Safeguarding Policy 2026–2027.

2. Policy and statutory framework

This policy has been reviewed and updated for the 2026–2027 academic year against:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE), in force from 1 September 2026, including the requirements concerning child-on-child abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment, online safety and safeguarding responsibilities.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, including its strengthened emphasis on child-centred practice, anti-discriminatory practice, multi-agency working, family help and responding to multiple and overlapping harms.
- The Lanes Primary School Safeguarding Policy 2026–2027, including the school's reporting, recording, referral, escalation, online safety and support arrangements.
- Nottinghamshire County Council / Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Child Protection Policy Template 2026–2027 and local safeguarding procedures.
- Nottinghamshire guidance and model resources relating to child-on-child abuse, harmful sexual behaviour and contextual safeguarding.

Where this policy and another school policy overlap, safeguarding takes priority. Staff should seek advice from the DSL or a deputy where there is uncertainty.

3. Definitions and key principles

Child-on-child abuse means inappropriate behaviour between children that is abusive in nature. It can include physical, sexual or emotional abuse, exploitation, sexual harassment, bullying, coercive or controlling behaviour and initiation or hazing-type behaviour, both online and offline.

We recognise that children involved in child-on-child abuse may have different experiences and needs. A child who has displayed harmful behaviour may also be experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation, trauma or other unmet needs. This does not reduce the need to protect other children or respond to the behaviour.

We will use child-centred and strengths-based language wherever possible, such as "the child who

has experienced harm” and “the child who has displayed harmful behaviour”. The terms “victim” and “alleged perpetrator” may be used where appropriate because they are widely understood safeguarding terms, but labels will not define a child.

Our response will always consider:

- the best interests and immediate safety of the children involved
- the child’s wishes, feelings and lived experience
- age, developmental stage and understanding
- SEND, communication needs, disability and other vulnerabilities
- power imbalance, coercion, intimidation or controlling behaviour
- prejudice, discrimination, misogyny or other harmful attitudes
- the online and offline context and whether the harms are connected
- whether other children may also be at risk
- whether the behaviour indicates wider safeguarding, exploitation or contextual concerns.

4. What constitutes child-on-child abuse

- bullying, including cyberbullying and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying
- physical abuse and violence
- emotional or psychological abuse
- controlling or coercive behaviour within peer or intimate relationships
- abuse connected to prejudice, misogyny, misandry or harmful attitudes
- initiation or hazing-type violence and rituals
- online abuse, harassment, impersonation, manipulation or intimidation
- the use of technology or generative AI to create, alter or distribute harmful material
- threats, exploitation or serious violence
- sexual harassment, sexual abuse or sexual violence
- the creation, sharing or distribution of nudes or semi-nudes, including digitally altered or AI-generated imagery
- upskirting and other image-based abuse.

Abuse may be carried out by an individual or a group and may affect children of any age. It may happen face to face, online or through a combination of both. The school will respond to concerns even when the behaviour occurred away from school or outside school hours where it affects, or may affect, the safety or welfare of a child.

5. Harmful sexual behaviour

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a continuum from developmentally expected behaviour through to inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent behaviour. At The Lanes, decisions will be based on professional safeguarding judgement and the child's age and developmental stage rather than applying adult assumptions to children's behaviour.

When considering whether sexualised behaviour is harmful or concerning, the DSL will consider:

- the age and developmental stage of each child
- the nature, frequency and seriousness of the behaviour
- whether there is coercion, intimidation, pressure or a power imbalance
- the impact on the child who has experienced the behaviour
- whether the behaviour is repeated, escalating or part of a wider pattern
- SEND, communication needs, trauma or other vulnerabilities
- the online and offline context
- whether other children may be at risk
- whether the behaviour indicates wider safeguarding or exploitation concerns.

Staff must not attempt to undertake specialist assessments outside their role. Concerns must be passed to the DSL so that appropriate advice, assessment and support can be obtained, including from Nottinghamshire safeguarding partners and any specialist services where appropriate.

6. Sexual harassment and sexual violence

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. It can happen online or offline, inside or outside school, and may be a single incident or part of a wider pattern. It can include sexual comments, jokes or stories, remarks about appearance or clothing, unwanted physical behaviour, displaying sexual material, upskirting and online sexual harassment.

Sexual violence includes sexual offences such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault. The school will treat all reports seriously and will prioritise the safety and welfare of children involved.

When a report is made, staff must reassure the child, listen carefully, avoid judgement and report the concern to the DSL or deputy without delay. The child must not be made to feel that they are causing a problem by reporting abuse.

The school will not manage an allegation of sexual violence solely as an internal behaviour matter. In accordance with Nottinghamshire safeguarding procedures, the DSL will make or support appropriate referrals to children's social care and the police and will seek specialist advice. The school will not conduct its own criminal investigation.

7. Nudes and semi-nudes, including AI-generated imagery

Nudes and semi-nudes include nude or semi-nude photographs, videos, livestreams and other visual content involving children. This includes material created by a child, created by another person, digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence, including deepfake or similar imagery.

The school recognises that concerns involving such imagery may form part of child-on-child abuse, coercion, exploitation, blackmail or other safeguarding harm. Each incident will be considered on its individual circumstances.

If a child reports or staff become aware of such imagery:

- staff must not intentionally view, copy, print, save, forward or ask a child to share the image or video
- staff must verbally report the concern to the DSL or deputy immediately
- the DSL will consider immediate safety, the nature and context of the concern, whether an adult is involved, whether coercion, grooming, blackmail or exploitation is suspected, whether a child is at immediate risk, and whether other children may be affected
- the DSL will seek advice from children's social care, police or specialist services where required
- parents/carers will normally be involved unless there is a safeguarding reason not to do so or doing so would prejudice an external investigation or increase risk.

Staff should follow the school's Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety Policy and agreed procedures for harmful digital material. They should never use personal devices or accounts to collect or share safeguarding evidence.

8. Contextual safeguarding and extra-familial harm

The school recognises that risks to children can arise beyond the family home, including within peer groups, neighbourhoods, public places, transport routes, community settings and online. Child-on-child abuse may be part of wider exploitation, grooming, coercion, serious violence or harmful peer-group dynamics.

The DSL will consider the context in which behaviour occurs and whether wider environmental factors increase risk. This may include repeated incidents in a particular place or time, risks on the journey to or from school, online group activity, friendship groups, community locations or links with other safeguarding concerns.

Where concerns indicate wider or extra-familial harm, the school will work with Nottinghamshire safeguarding partners and other relevant agencies. The child will be viewed as a child first, including where they have displayed behaviour that may itself be harmful or concerning.

9. Prevention and education

Prevention is a whole-school responsibility. The school will use behaviour expectations, supervision, safeguarding training, curriculum provision, pastoral support and accessible reporting systems to reduce the risk of child-on-child abuse.

Children will receive planned, progressive and age-appropriate teaching that helps them to:

- recognise safe and unsafe behaviour and relationships
- develop healthy, respectful and kind friendships
- understand boundaries, privacy and consent in an age-appropriate way
- recognise bullying, harassment, discrimination, coercion and controlling behaviour
- understand how online behaviour can cause harm and how to seek help
- know how and where to report concerns about themselves or another child
- understand that harmful behaviour is never their fault and that asking for help is encouraged.

Teaching will be adapted for age, developmental stage, communication needs and SEND. Emerging concerns and patterns identified through safeguarding records will inform curriculum planning, assemblies, supervision and pastoral support.

10. Reporting concerns

Children

Children can report concerns to any trusted adult in school, including their teacher, a teaching assistant, lunchtime supervisor, office staff, Headteacher or another member of the safeguarding team. Children are regularly reminded who they can talk to and what will happen after a concern is raised.

The Lanes also provides worry boxes in classrooms and a safeguarding email route for children who may find verbal reporting difficult. Reporting arrangements will be adapted where children have communication or additional needs.

Staff

All staff must verbally report concerns to the DSL or a deputy without delay. An electronic or written CPOMS record does not replace the need to speak directly to the DSL or deputy where a concern is urgent.

If the DSL is unavailable, staff must report to a deputy. The absence of the DSL or a deputy must never delay protective action. Any member of staff may make a direct referral to children's social care or contact the police where necessary and should inform the DSL as soon as possible unless there is a valid reason not to.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the DSL or a deputy directly if they are concerned that their child has experienced or displayed harmful behaviour. Concerns should be shared with the school rather than discussed through wider parent or online groups.

11. Responding to a concern

The first response to a disclosure is important. Staff should:

- listen calmly and give the child their full attention
- allow the child to speak at their own pace
- use open prompts only where clarification is necessary and avoid leading or investigative questions
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling someone
- explain that information may need to be shared with people who can help keep them safe
- never promise secrecy or confidentiality
- avoid judgement, confrontation or attempts to establish whether the allegation is true
- not ask the child to write a statement or repeat their account unnecessarily
- record the child's words, wishes and feelings as accurately as possible
- report the concern to the DSL or deputy immediately.

Staff must not investigate the concern themselves or confront the child alleged to have caused harm. The DSL will determine the appropriate safeguarding response.

12. DSL decision-making, referral and escalation

On receiving a report, the DSL will consider the immediate safety and welfare of all children involved and decide what action is required. The response will be proportionate to the circumstances and may involve school-based support, Family Help/Early Help, specialist advice, children's social care and/or the police.

- Where a child is in immediate danger or requires urgent protection, the police will be contacted on 999 and children's social care will be contacted where appropriate.
- Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the DSL will make a referral to Nottinghamshire MASH without delay.
- A Family Help assessment is not required before a safeguarding referral is made where protective action is required.
- In cases of sexual violence, the school will not manage the matter independently and internally; appropriate referrals to children's social care and the police will be made in line with local procedures.
- The school will not conduct a criminal investigation. Where external agencies are involved, the school will agree how safeguarding and behaviour processes should proceed without prejudicing external enquiries.
- If a response from another agency does not adequately address the child's needs or risk remains, the DSL will seek feedback and use Nottinghamshire professional challenge and escalation procedures.

13. Risk and needs assessment

Where appropriate, the DSL will arrange and record an initial risk and needs assessment. This is not a specialist criminal or clinical assessment and does not replace professional assessments by social care, police or specialist services.

- the safety and needs of the child who has experienced harm

- the needs and circumstances of the child who has displayed harmful behaviour
- the safety of other children, including witnesses, friends and siblings
- shared lessons, activities, spaces, transport and social times
- online contact and social-media or messaging activity
- the likelihood of repetition, retaliation, bullying or wider peer-group harm
- environmental and contextual risks
- reasonable adjustments and communication needs
- actions required to reduce risk and provide support.

Risk assessments and safety plans will be reviewed when new information emerges, circumstances change, an external professional assessment is received, or agreed actions are not reducing risk. The child who has experienced harm should not be made responsible for disproportionate disruption to their education.

14. Support for children

We will support all children affected by child-on-child abuse, recognising that different children may need different forms of help.

Child who has experienced harm

- access to a trusted adult and safe reporting route
- an individual safety/support plan where required
- appropriate adjustments to lessons, activities, spaces, transport or social times
- pastoral, therapeutic or specialist support
- regular check-ins and review
- support for attendance, learning and wellbeing
- action to address bullying, retaliation or online fallout.

Child who has displayed harmful behaviour

- an assessment of their needs and circumstances
- support to understand the impact of their behaviour
- pastoral, educational or specialist intervention
- Family Help or other safeguarding support where appropriate
- referral to statutory or specialist services where required
- proportionate consequences under the Behaviour Policy.

Safeguarding support and behaviour consequences may operate alongside one another. Behaviour responses will be fair, proportionate and coordinated with any external safeguarding or police process.

Witnesses and other affected children

Children who witness, facilitate, share information about or are otherwise affected by an incident will be considered in the safeguarding response and offered appropriate support.

15. Parents and carers

Parents and carers will usually be informed and involved in planning support for their child. The DSL will consider communication separately for each child involved.

Parents/carers will not be informed where doing so may increase risk, prejudice an external enquiry, lead to the loss of evidence or otherwise be contrary to the child's best interests. Where statutory or specialist services are involved, communication with families will be agreed with those services.

The school will provide appropriate information and support while respecting confidentiality and data protection. The school may be unable to share information about another child, or information that could prejudice a safeguarding or police investigation.

16. Recording, confidentiality and information sharing

All concerns, disclosures, decisions, referrals, risk assessments, safety plans, support and outcomes will be recorded on CPOMS in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

- Records will be factual, timely and distinguish between what is known, what has been reported and professional judgement.
- Decisions and the reasons for those decisions will be recorded, including where a referral is not made.
- Safeguarding information will be shared only with those who need it to safeguard or support the children involved.
- Staff must not discuss individual cases through social media or inappropriate informal channels.
- Where a child transfers school, safeguarding records will be transferred securely in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy and relevant local procedures.
- Information sharing will follow current statutory guidance and the school's data protection and information-sharing arrangements.

17. Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher / DSL – Mr Pete Wilkes

Has overall responsibility for implementing this policy, leading the safeguarding response, liaising with parents/carers, the Trust, Local Authority, children's social care, police and other agencies, and ensuring that patterns and learning are acted upon.

Deputy DSLs

Ms Anna Hodkin, Mrs Leah Wignell, Mrs Liz Ireland Miss Natasha Williams provide safeguarding cover and may undertake delegated DSL activities. Concerns must continue to be acted upon without delay when the DSL is absent.

All staff

- maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”
- know how to report safeguarding concerns and who the DSL/deputies are
- recognise and challenge inappropriate or harmful behaviour
- listen to children and take concerns seriously
- report concerns without delay
- do not investigate or promise confidentiality
- complete safeguarding training and relevant updates
- follow this policy, the Safeguarding Policy and associated procedures.

Safeguarding Governor – Mr Rob Guyler

Provides strategic oversight and challenge in relation to safeguarding arrangements. This role does not replace the responsibility of the governing body or school leaders.

18. Monitoring, review and learning

The DSL and senior leaders will monitor child-on-child abuse concerns and patterns through safeguarding records, behaviour information, pupil voice and other relevant information. Monitoring will consider whether incidents are concentrated in particular locations, times, groups, online spaces or relationships.

Following significant incidents or identified patterns, the school will consider whether changes are required to:

- supervision and environmental arrangements
- behaviour expectations and responses
- curriculum and preventative education
- online safety, filtering and monitoring
- staff training and confidence
- reporting systems and accessibility
- pastoral support and safety planning
- multi-agency working or contextual safeguarding arrangements.

The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where required by changes to legislation, statutory or local guidance, learning from practice or changes to the school’s safeguarding arrangements.

19. Related policies and guidance

- The Lanes Primary School Safeguarding Policy 2026–2027
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy

- Online Safety Policy
- Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy
- Relationships, Health and Sex Education / RSHE Policy
- Equality Policy
- Attendance and Children Missing Education procedures
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation procedure
- Staff Code of Conduct / Behaviour Policy for Staff
- Allegations and Low-Level Concerns procedures
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection and Information Sharing arrangements.

Key statutory and local sources

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 – Department for Education.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 – Department for Education.
- Nottinghamshire County Council / Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Child Protection Policy Template 2026–2027.
- Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership safeguarding procedures and local referral pathways.
- Nottinghamshire child-on-child abuse and harmful sexual behaviour guidance and resources.

Policy Approval and Review

Approved by Governing Body:	
Date approved:	
Date for review:	September 2027