



**Treales CE Primary School**  
**Child on Child Abuse Policy**

Last Updated	<b>Oct 2024</b>
Updated by	<b>L Hill</b>
Approved by Governing Board	<b>7.11.24</b>
Date to Review	<b>Oct 2025</b>

## **Child on Child Abuse Policy**

### **Introduction**

Child on Child Abuse is defined as a serious form of abuse between persons of a similar age and as such has wider safeguarding implications.

Treales CE Primary School recognises that children are vulnerable and capable of abusing their peers. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. This includes verbal as well as physical abuse. Child on Child abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as part of "banter" or "growing up".

Child on Child abuse, Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex or a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of Child on Child abuse within our school and beyond. In cases where Child on Child abuse is identified we will follow our child protection procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation. As set out in Part one of Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE), all staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'.

### **Aims**

The aims of this section of our policy are: -

To set out our strategies for preventing, identifying and managing Child on Child abuse  
To take a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved.  
Acknowledging that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable and may have been abused by peer, parents or adults in the community.

### **Context**

At Treales CE, we recognise that all behaviour takes place on a spectrum and understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it in a Primary School. In this policy we recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour (Harmful Sexual Behaviour HSB). We are adopting the NSPCC definition of HSB as: - "Sexual behaviours expressed by children that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child or adult."

Staff at Treales CE Primary School are trained in using the Hackett Sexual Behaviour Continuum (2010) to assess an incident of sexual behavior. The Continuum describes sexual behaviours across a range identified as normal, inappropriate, problematic and abusive. As appropriate a full assessment of an incident will be carried out by a Designated Safeguarding Leader in School, alongside another member of staff, using the AIM Project Checklists. AIM (Assessment Intervention and Moving On) provides a consistent and common framework for reporting, assessing and planning for the risks that are posed. The AIM checklists provide designated safeguarding leads with a framework to identify appropriate next steps for all children involved in the incident.

## **Types of abuse**

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Sexting or youth produced digital imagery
- Upskirting
- Initiation/Hazing
- Radicalisation
- Abuse in intimate relationships
- Children who display sexually harmful behaviour
- Gang association and serious violence (County Lines)

Technology can be used for abusive behaviour and can take many forms:

- Abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites
- Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- Stealing someone's online identity
- Spreading rumours online
- Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms or games
- Developing hate sites about another person
- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Encouraging a young person to self-harm
- Pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school such as the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Online Safety Policy.

## **Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment**

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

- Managing internally
- Early Help
- MASH referral
- Reporting to the police

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is intended towards.

Sexually harmful behaviour may include:

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

Upskirting: where someone takes a picture under a person's clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys"; and  
challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts.

### **Vulnerable groups**

We recognise that all children can be at risk however we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable. This can include:

experience of abuse within their family;

living with domestic violence;

young people in care;

children who go missing;

children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities);

children who identify or are perceived as LGBT and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

Whilst research tells us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers and, girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools this is not confined to girls. Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviour such as antisocial behaviour. Boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs.

We recognise that both boys and girls experience Child on Child abuse, but they do so in gendered ways. All staff should be aware of indicators, which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries.

Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

### **Responding to reports**

All reports of Child on Child abuse will be made on a case by case basis with the designated safeguarding lead or their deputy taking a leading role using their professional judgement and supported by other agencies such as social care or the police as required.

The immediate response to a report

The school or college will take all reports seriously and will reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe.

All staff will be trained to manage a report.

Staff will not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead or social care) staff will however only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it.

A written report will be made as soon after the interview as possible recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later.

Where the report includes an online element the school or college will follow advice on searching, screening and confiscation. The staff will not view or forward images unless unavoidable and only if another member of staff (preferably the DSL) is present.

The DSL will be informed as soon as possible in person.

## **Risk Assessment**

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs' assessment should consider:

The victim, especially their protection and support;

The alleged perpetrator; and

All the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school or college, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them;

Risk assessments will be recorded in CPOMS and kept under review. The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will ensure they are engaging with MASH team for advice and guidance.

Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment

Following an incident, we will consider:

The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment;

The nature of the alleged incident(s), including: whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;

The ages of the children involved;

The developmental stages of the children involved;

Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?

If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse;

Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff; and other related issues and wider context?

## **Follow up Actions Children sharing a classroom**

Whilst the school establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police:

The perpetrator will be removed from a class they share with the victim.

We will consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises. These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator.

### **Options to manage the report Manage internally**

In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, we may decide that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising the behaviour and bullying policies and by providing pastoral support. This decision will be made based on the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All decisions, and discussions around making these decisions will be recorded in CPOMS.

In line with 1 above, we may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to the MASH following LCC protocols. Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy will be working alongside, and cooperating with, the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.

### **Reporting to the Police**

Any report to the police will generally be made through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. The designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) will follow local processes for referrals. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is this will be passed on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains.

The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach. Where a report has been made to the police, the school will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity. Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the relevant agencies to support all children involved (especially potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought in order to assist the process. Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator, we will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the school or college take do not jeopardise the police investigation.

## **The end of the criminal process**

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, we will update our risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all children. We will consider any suitable action following our behaviour policy. If the perpetrator remains in school we will be very clear as to our expectations regarding the perpetrator now they have been convicted or cautioned.

Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other pupils in the school. We will ensure all children involved are protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online). Where cases are classified as "no further action" (NFA'd) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, we will continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. We will continue to support all parties in this instance.

## **Support for Children Affected by Sexual Abuse**

Support for victims of sexual abuse is available from a variety of agencies. We will support the victim of sexual abuse to remain in school but if they are unable to do so we will enable them to continue their education elsewhere. This decision will be made only at the request of the child and their family. If they are moved, we will ensure the new school is aware of the ongoing support they may need. The DSL will support this move.

In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, sexual abuse is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other pupils).

Where a criminal investigation into sexual abuse leads to a conviction or caution, we may, if we have not already done so, consider any suitable sanctions using our behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion.

Reports of sexual abuse will not, in some cases, lead to a report to the police (for a variety of reasons). None of this means the offence did not happen or that the victim lied. The process will have affected both victim and alleged perpetrator. Appropriate support will be provided to both as required and consideration given to sharing classes and potential contact as required on a case-by-case basis.

All the above will be considered with the needs and wishes of the victim at the heart of the process (supported by parents and carers as required). Any arrangements should be kept under review.

## **Online Behaviour**

Many forms of Child on Child abuse have an element of online behaviour including behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting. Policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour also links closely to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **Physical abuse**

While a clear focus of Child on Child abuse is around sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be abusive. These are equally not tolerated and if it is believed that a crime has been committed, will be reported to the police.

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

The principles from the anti-bullying policy will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any police investigation will need to take priority. 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 (Appendix 1) 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

involves a misuse of power

## **Prevention**

Treales CE Primary School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of peer-on-peer abuse by educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers and parents about this issue.

This will include training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it.

This includes:

Contextual Safeguarding

The identification and classification of specific behaviours; and

The importance of taking seriously all forms of peer-on-peer abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of peer-on-peer abuse is ever dismissed as play or teasing.

Educating our children by:

Educating children about the nature and prevalence of bullying through PSHE and the wider curriculum.

Pupils are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse.



They are regularly informed about the School's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of peer-on-peer abuse.

Engaging parents on this issue by:

Talking about it with parents, both in groups and one to one;

Asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the School address those risks;

Involving parents in the review of School policies; and

Encouraging parents to hold the School to account on this issue.

## **Teachers and Support Staff Responsibilities**

Our Teachers and Support Staff are responsible for:

Ensuring that all peer-on-peer abuse issues are fed back to the School's safeguarding lead so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who maybe in need of additional support. This is done through Safeguarding Team meetings in which all concerns about pupils (including peer-on-peer abuse issues) are discussed;

Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom);

Working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, pupils 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 pupils can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships;

Creating a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to; and

Responding to cases of peer-on-peer abuse promptly and appropriately.

## **Multi-Agency working**

At Treales CE Primary School, we actively engage with local partners in relation to peer-on-peer abuse, and works closely with, Lancashire County Council Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Children's Social Care, and/or other relevant agencies, 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. Our external partners support our Safeguarding Team to:

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;

ensure that our pupils can access the range of services and support they need quickly;

support and help inform our local community's response to peer-on-peer abuse;

increase our awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in our local area to enable us to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by our pupils.

In cases involving children who are subject to risk, harm and abuse or Looked After Children, the children's social worker must be informed and a coordinated approach to address any incidents or concerns will be required.

## **Monitoring**

The Head Teacher monitors the effectiveness of this policy on a regular basis. The

Headteacher also reports to the Governing Body on the effectiveness of the policy and, if necessary, makes recommendations for further improvements. All incidents of unacceptable behaviour are reported through CPOMS and monitored by the School SLT and Safeguarding Team. The Head Teacher keeps a record of any pupil who is suspended for a fixed-term, or who is permanently excluded.

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to monitor the rate of suspensions and exclusions, and to ensure that the school policy is administered fairly and consistently.