# Oxbridge Lane Primary School

# Child on Child

# Abuse Policy

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# Child on Child Abuse Policy

## Introduction

Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (September, 2024) is our lead policy for ensuring that our children are kept safe from harm. Child-on-child abuse, however, is a national (and increasing) concern and we have introduced this policy as a preventative measure in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and child-on-child abuse in our school. We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers (including online) and that child-on-child abuse can manifest in many different ways. We are clear that this type of abuse should always be treated seriously, and our school has a zero tolerance approach to such attitudes and behaviours.

This policy should be read alongside the following policies:
· Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
· Anti-Bullying Policy
· Behaviour Policy
· Online Safety Policy
· Whistleblowing Policy

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (child on child abuse) and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online.  It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of child on child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

All staff should understand that even if there are no reports in their schools or colleges it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported.  As such it is important that if staff have any concerns regarding child on child abuse they should speak to their Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy).

This means that ALL staff will take a 'zero-tolerance' approach to any unacceptable behaviour including 'banter' and will seek to prevent, challenge and take action so that all children understand that any concerns regarding their welfare and safety will be taken seriously.  This will encourage and promote a culture of acceptable behaviour and a safe educational environment for all children.

All staff must ensure that they reassure any victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.  A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

• bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)

• abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')

• physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)

• sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)

• sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse

• causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party

• consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)

• upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm, and

• initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

*Child-on-child abuse can include online abuse such as the sharing of harmful or manipulative content, exposure to misinformation/disinformation, or the misuse of generative AI to cause distress.*

*The school will ensure staff and pupils understand how to identify, report and support children affected by these emerging risks.*


(KCSIE 2025)

At Oxbridge Lane Primary School we are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child on child abuse.

In particular ensuring that our school staff protect our children by, wherever possible being aware of the nature and level of risk that children are exposed to, having a clear and comprehensive strategy specific to that child's safeguarding context and having a whole school safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child on child abuse. This policy is preventative in its response to child on child abuse by raising awareness of issues, supporting staff in identifying them with children, and providing appropriate response and intervention that is followed consistently across the whole school workforce. This policy will also encourage parents to share information about any risk of harm to their child and be clear on the school expectations of how this will be managed. (Farrer and Co. 2019)

At Oxbridge Lane Primary School, we recognise that it is essential for all of our staff to maintain the attitude of 'it could happen here' and to understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, that are abusive in nature.

"Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" can lead to a

culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it."

**Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), 2025**

All staff and Governors have signed to say that they have read, understood and agreed to work within this policy framework and parents have access to this policy.

This policy will be updated annually.

## Preventative Strategies for Schools and Settings

### Recognition

For all schools, colleges and settings, it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of child on child abuse rather than only manage the issues in a reactive way.

Firstly, and most importantly for schools and settings is recognition that /child on child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms and that even if incidents are not being reported it does not mean that they are not happening. In which case 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 to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff. This involves staff analysing any incidents for trends, patterns and identifying any areas around the setting that may appear to be 'less safe'. Staff should also have access to regular CPD and training to ensure a consistent approach to managing child on child issues. All staff should also be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

### School Culture and Ethos and 'Zero-Tolerance' Approach

For all schools, colleges and settings a 'zero-tolerance' approach to abuse, harm or bullying between children should be clearly expressed in the school's ethos and values. It should be made clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and it will not be tolerated and never passed off as 'banter'. This means that all staff must challenge physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them. By not recognising, acknowledging or understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and/or downplaying some behaviours related to abuse it can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe educational environment and a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Therefore a whole school/college/setting approach is needed as part of preventative education. (Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children in schools and colleges, 2021)

## A Safe Environment to Share Concerns Alongside a Positive Curriculum

As stated above it is therefore important that each school/setting has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This can be strengthened through a strong and positive PHSE/SMSC curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced-based and discriminatory behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another.

All staff should be aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and well-being issues. Children are at risk of abuse online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse will take place concurrently via online channels and in daily life. Children can also abuse other children online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who do not want to receive such content.

It is important that a clear Online Safety/Acceptable Use Policy gives clarity and expectations to children about their role in keeping themselves and other children safe in regards to the use of technology both inside and outside of school.


## Involve Parents

Parents need to be informed and included in policy forming, lesson plans and thorough open and frank conversations, training/courses about what child on child abuse is and how the school and setting will be tackling it. This can help to alleviate any concerns and worries and create a joined-up approach. Schools and settings need to ensure open two way communication is available through a variety of platforms so that both parents and staff are working together to deal with any issues. This includes parent's contribution to the school's online and acceptable use policy around the use of technology and agreement to work consistently with the school in addressing issues both inside and outside of school.

## Signposting

Although every effort should be made for children to have a variety of opportunities to seek support and advice, it is also important that signposting is available to young people in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue directly to staff or another child. It is useful to have a resource board with support services on a wide range of issues so young people can seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of child on child abuse. This then encourages a variety of forms or mediums for children to have their voices heard.


## Forums for Children to Make Changes/Have Their Voice Heard

It is useful to ensure young people are part of changing their circumstances and that of the procedures within schools. Having a school council and pupil voice and encouraging young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour' will go far in helping

to create a positive ethos in school and one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.  Children should be able to effectively communicate how to improve their school's culture and ethos around acceptable behaviour so that children can feel confident and empowered to identify unacceptable behaviours so that they can be dealt with accordingly and in the longer term eradicated.

## Partnership Working

Multi agency working can consolidate in house procedures in schools/settings.  By accessing advice, support and guidance, effective decisions can be made in collaboration to improve outcomes for children who may be at risk of harm.  Seeking advice and guidance can act as a preventative measure so that the right course of action is taken at the earliest opportunity. It is also necessary that the school/setting actively refers concerns/allegations of child on child abuse where necessary to front door services/children's social care and the police where appropriate. This is particularly important because child on child 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 incident cannot be managed internally) to try to address the issue alone – it requires effective partnership working (Farrer and Co. 2019).

Schools which excel at tackling bullying (and child on child abuse) have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. That culture extends beyond the classroom to the corridors, the dining hall, the playground, and beyond the school gates including travel to and from school. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest. (Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017).

## What is Child on Child Abuse?

### What is Child-on-Child Abuse?
Child-on-child abuse is any form of abuse that intends to hurt others. It could happen within children's relationships, friendships or within wider peer associations.

### Types of Abuse
There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive.
**Physical Abuse:** This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person.
**Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment:** Any incident in school of sexual violence or sexual harassment must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL) or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). All staff in school are aware that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up. In responding to such concerns the DSL will always complete an investigation, contact the Duty and Advice team if appropriate and follow the principles set out in Part 5 of KCSiE and the DfE guidance on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment (2024).

**DSL – Sarah Parker DHT**
**DDSL – Lauren Amerigo HT**
Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and gender and sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others.
Sexually harmful behaviour may include:
· inappropriate sexual language
· inappropriate role play
· sexual touching
· sexual assault/abuse
· upskirting – this is a criminal offence

**Bullying:** Bulling is repeated and intentional harming of one child by another child, or by a group of children, that involves a power imbalance. Bullying can happen face-to-face or online. Online bullying is the use of technology (e.g. social media, gaming, text messages, e mails) to harass, threaten or intimidate someone. Online bullying can take many forms and can include:
· abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
· posting abusive comments on social media sites
· sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
· spreading rumours online
· prank calls or messages, including anonymous messages

Other forms of child-on-child abuse include
· sexting or sharing nude or indecent imagery
· initiation or hazing
· prejudiced behaviour

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.

This means adopting a **whole school community approach** by ensuring all staff: are aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school or college and/or can occur between children outside of these environments, understand how a child's wider context may have impact on them; contribute to creating a strong safeguarding culture in school by following policies that address child on child abuse and harmful attitudes; promote healthy relationships and attitudes to gender/sexuality; support the school by identifying 'less safe' areas in school; access training on bias and stereotyped assumptions; be alert to changes in children's behaviour and seek appropriate responses to concerns shared. (Farrer and Co, 2019)

It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

## Children with Special Educational Needs

Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children;
- the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

To address these additional challenges, schools and colleges should consider extra pastoral support for children with SEND or certain medical conditions particularly when investigating any form of child on child abuse**.**

### Responding to Incidents of Child-on-Child Abuse

All concerns around child-on-child abuse will be taken seriously, reported, investigated, recorded and managed in line with the procedures outlined in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Staff will follow guidance in our Behaviour Policy (September 2024) to respond to incidents of child-on-child abuse and they will do this immediately and sensitively. Staff will talk to children in a calm and consistent manner; they will not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Staff members responding to such incidents will alert the DSL or DDSL by speaking to them face-to-face. It is the responsibility of the member of staff who is the **first responder** to ensure that a CPOMs log is made to record the incident and to ensure that the class teacher is aware of any incidents which have happened outside of the classroom.

In responding to incidents of child-on-child abuse staff will consider the following:
- age of children involved
- any aspects of power imbalance
- all aspects of the incidents (physical and verbal)
- the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery.
- the effect on the victim
- any attempts to keep the incident a secret
- the motivation or reason for the behaviour
- whether it was a one-off incident or if it is a repeated incident

In recording incidents of child-on-child abuse staff will:
- be clear in their wording and not give an opinion
- speak to the DSL or DDSL face-to-face immediately if they feel a child is at risk of significant harm
- log the incident to CPOMs as soon as possible
- use proper names for body parts, but record exactly what the child said
- note where and when the incident happened

A member of staff will inform parents/carers of any incidents of child-on-child abuse in school. This is best done face-to-face and it should be the class teacher, a member of the Designated Safeguarding Team or a member of the Senior Leadership Team who informs parents/carers.

### What Happens after an incident of Child-on-Child Abuse?

It is necessary to ensure that incidents of child-on-child abuse are not repeated and that support or intervention is given to those who need it. (The DSL is responsible for providing support to all children involved in incidents of child-on-child sexual abuse). 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.

Ms Williamson (Pastoral Leader) can provide 1:1 or group nurture sessions for children who have been harmed or upset by child-on-child abuse. A restorative approach will be used to manage relationships between children.

The Designated Safeguarding Team can refer children to the Children's Social Work Services (CSWS) where appropriate. The DSL or DDSL will follow guidance in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to refer children to CSWS. Any child who has displayed harmful behaviour will receive a consequence for their behaviour. This could be in the form of restorative justice, missing playtimes/lunchtimes, an internal exclusion or a fixed-term suspension from school. Staff will support children who display harmful behaviour to reflect on their behaviour in a developmentally appropriate way.

Further information can be found in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.