

Oxbridge Lane Primary School

Child on Child

Abuse Policy

Policy Version Control	
Policy Type	Child on Child Abuse
Policy prepared by (name and designation)	Sarah Parker DHT
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Approved by	Governors
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Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

Introduction

Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is the lead policy for ensuring that children are kept safe from harm. This policy sets out Oxbridge Lane Primary School's approach to preventing, recognising and responding to child-on-child abuse, including harassment and violence. It should be read alongside the school's safeguarding and child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, online safety and relationships education policies.

KCSIE 2026 makes clear that child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for both the child who has been harmed and the child who has displayed the harmful behaviour. Child-on-child abuse is preventable, and timely, evidence-based support can help prevent escalation and reduce the risk of further abuse or violence. The school therefore takes a proactive, child-centred and trauma-informed approach while maintaining clear expectations and proportionate consequences for harmful behaviour.

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 must recognise that children can abuse other children, including online, and that this can happen inside or outside school, during the school day, on the journey to and from school, at home, in the community and through digital platforms. All concerns must be reported to the DSL or a deputy, whether staff believe the behaviour took place on or off the school site.

Staff must maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'. The absence of reports does not mean that abuse is not happening. Staff should be professionally curious, identify patterns and 'less safe' situations or times, and challenge inappropriate behaviour at the earliest opportunity.

All staff should understand that child-on-child abuse can be under-reported. Children may not recognise behaviour as abusive, may feel embarrassed or frightened, or may be influenced by peer pressure, coercion or threats. Staff must listen carefully, avoid victim-blaming and report concerns to the DSL/DDSL without delay.

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, harassment and violence between children. Behaviour must never be dismissed as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', 'part of growing up' or 'boys being boys'. Such responses can normalise unacceptable behaviour, contribute to misogyny and create an unsafe environment. All staff are expected to challenge inappropriate, discriminatory, misogynistic or misandrist behaviour and to model respectful relationships.

All staff must reassure children who report abuse that they are being taken seriously, will be supported and will be kept safe. A child should never be made to feel that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse or that they should be ashamed. Staff must not promise confidentiality; information will be shared on a need-to-know basis to safeguard children.

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

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

• discriminatory behaviour, including racism, faith-targeted abuse and other prejudice-based incidents;

• abuse in intimate personal relationships between children;

• physical abuse, including serious physical assault and harm;

• threats of harm with a weapon;

• harmful sexual behaviour, sexual violence and sexual harassment, including misogyny/misandry;

• consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, including AI-generated images;

• causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent;

• upskirting; and

• initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

The school will ensure staff and pupils receive age-appropriate education and guidance on identifying, reporting and preventing child-on-child abuse, including online harms, harmful sexual behaviour, misogyny and the safe and responsible use of technology and AI.

(KCSIE 2026)

At Oxbridge Lane Primary School we are committed to prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse. We will maintain a whole-school safeguarding approach that understands the school's contextual risks and identifies where, when and how children may be most vulnerable.

The school will consider incidents and concerns individually and collectively, looking for patterns, trends, locations, groups, times of day and wider contextual factors. We will particularly consider periods when children may be at heightened risk, including less supervised times and immediately after school.

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.

KCSIE 2026 is clear that downplaying sexual harassment or other harmful behaviours as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', 'part of growing up' or 'boys being boys' can contribute to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, misogyny and an unsafe environment. The school will challenge such behaviour and promote a culture in which children understand that abuse, harassment and violence are never acceptable.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), 2025

All staff and Governors will be expected to read and work within this policy and the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. All staff must read Part One of KCSIE 2026 in full. Parents and carers will have access to this policy.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are changes to statutory guidance, legislation, local safeguarding arrangements or the school's contextual safeguarding risks.

Preventative Strategies for Schools and Settings

Recognition

Child-on-child abuse can occur in any school and may not be reported. Prevention therefore requires active monitoring of safeguarding information, behaviour incidents, attendance, pupil voice and contextual risks. The school will analyse incidents for patterns and trends and identify areas, groups, activities and times where children may be less safe.

Staff training will support a consistent response. Staff should understand that safeguarding issues often overlap and that a child displaying harmful behaviour may themselves have experienced abuse, trauma or other vulnerabilities. This does not excuse harmful behaviour, but it informs proportionate safeguarding support and intervention.

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

The school will promote a culture of respect, dignity and healthy relationships. Sexual harassment, sexual violence, harmful sexual behaviour, discriminatory behaviour, misogyny and misandry will never be normalised or passed off as 'banter'.

Staff will challenge behaviours such as unwanted sexual comments, sexualised jokes, unwanted touching, grabbing, pulling down clothing, lifting skirts or similar conduct. The response will consider the age and developmental stage of the children involved, the impact on the child who has been harmed, any power imbalance, coercion, vulnerability and the potential for escalation.

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

Children must have clear, well-promoted and accessible ways to report concerns and must know that they will be taken seriously. Preventative education through Relationships Education, Health Education, PSHE and wider safeguarding work will address respectful relationships, consent and boundaries in age-appropriate ways, online safety, discriminatory behaviour, stereotypes and harmful attitudes.

The school will ensure that online safety education reflects current risks, including AI-generated content, deepfakes, harmful online communities, misogynistic content and the non-consensual sharing of images.

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

The school will work with parents and carers as partners in safeguarding. Information about incidents will normally be shared with parents/carers in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures, unless the DSL considers that doing so could place a child at further risk, prejudice a police or social care investigation, or otherwise be contrary to the child's best interests. The DSL will determine the appropriate timing and method of communication.

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

Children will be provided with age-appropriate opportunities to seek help and support. The school will signpost or refer to appropriate internal and external services where required. The DSL will maintain awareness of local specialist support for children affected by harmful sexual behaviour and other forms of child-on-child abuse.

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

The school will seek and act upon pupil voice to understand children's experiences of safety,

relationships, bullying, harassment and online risks. Children will be supported to contribute to the development of a respectful school culture and to identify areas or situations in which they feel less safe.

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

The school will work with parents/carers, the local authority, children's social care, police and other relevant agencies where appropriate. The DSL will seek advice where the seriousness, complexity or context of an incident means that it cannot safely be managed internally. Concerns will be referred in accordance with local safeguarding arrangements and statutory guidance, including Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

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?

Child-on-child abuse is behaviour by a child or group of children that causes harm to another child. It can occur face-to-face, online or across both environments and may include bullying, discriminatory behaviour, physical abuse, serious physical assault, threats with weapons, harmful

sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual violence, image-based abuse, coercion, exploitation and initiation or hazing rituals.

Child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding concern for both the child who has been harmed and the child who has displayed the harmful behaviour.

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, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm. KCSIE 2026 also specifically identifies serious physical assault and harm, or threats of harm with a weapon, as forms of child-on-child abuse. Any such concern must be referred immediately to the DSL/DDSL and assessed in line with safeguarding procedures.

Sexual Violence, Sexual Harassment and Harmful Sexual Behaviour

All incidents or concerns involving harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), sexual harassment or sexual violence must be reported immediately to the DSL/DDSL. This applies whether the behaviour occurs in school, outside school or online.

KCSIE 2026 recognises that HSB exists on a continuum from developmentally expected behaviour through inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent behaviour. It may escalate, and early intervention is important. Staff must consider the age and developmental stage of the children involved, any significant age or developmental difference, power imbalance, coercion, exploitation, disability or other vulnerability.

The DSL/DDSL will coordinate the safeguarding response, seek specialist advice where appropriate and follow Part Five of KCSIE 2026 and local safeguarding procedures. Children who display HSB may themselves have experienced abuse or trauma and should receive appropriate support alongside proportionate consequences.

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.

Harmful sexual behaviour may include inappropriate sexual language, sexualised role play, unwanted sexual touching, coercion, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sharing unwanted sexual content, upskirting and making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes, including AI-generated images. The school will not assume that behaviour is harmless because of a child's age or because it is described as a joke.

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse
- upskirting – this is a criminal offence

Bullying: Bullying is repeated and intentional behaviour that causes harm and involves a real or perceived power imbalance. It may be face-to-face or online and can include cyberbullying, discriminatory bullying, threats, harassment, humiliation, spreading rumours, sharing images or videos and abusive messages. Incidents will be addressed under the Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies and considered within safeguarding procedures where appropriate.

- 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 discriminatory behaviour (including racism and faith-targeted abuse), harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and violence, serious physical assault, threats with weapons, consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes including AI-generated images, coercion, exploitation, initiation/hazing and abuse within intimate personal relationships.

- sexting or sharing nude or indecent imagery
- initiation or hazing
- prejudiced behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen to children in school, online, in the community, during travel to and from school and in other environments. The school will consider the child's wider context and any extra-familial harm. Child-on-child abuse may overlap with bullying, exploitation, serious violence, domestic abuse, criminal or sexual exploitation, mental health concerns and online harms.

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 and Disabilities (SEND)

Children with SEND or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. Staff must avoid assuming that changes in behaviour, mood or injury are solely related to a child's disability or condition. Children with SEND may be more vulnerable to isolation, bullying, exploitation and abuse and may experience communication barriers.

When responding to child-on-child abuse, the school will consider the child's communication

needs, developmental stage, cognitive and social understanding, disability, additional vulnerabilities and access to appropriate support. This must not reduce expectations around safety or excuse harmful behaviour.

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 will be taken seriously, reported to the DSL/DDSL, recorded and managed in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Staff must not attempt to conduct a detailed investigation themselves. Their role is to make the situation safe, listen carefully, record the child's account accurately and pass the concern to the DSL/DDSL.

The DSL will determine the appropriate safeguarding response, including whether advice or referral to children's social care, police or other agencies is required. The response will be proportionate, child-centred and informed by the circumstances of the incident.
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 the Behaviour Policy when responding to incidents, while recognising that child-on-child abuse is also a safeguarding matter. Staff will respond calmly and sensitively and will avoid prejudice, judgement, victim-blaming or dismissive language.

The first responder should ensure the DSL/DDSL is informed immediately where there is a safeguarding concern and that an accurate safeguarding record is made in accordance with school procedures.
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 the school will consider:
• the age and developmental stage of all children involved;
• any power imbalance or significant age/developmental difference;
• whether the behaviour forms part of a pattern or continuum;
• the nature and seriousness of the behaviour, including physical injury or threats involving

a weapon;
• coercion, intimidation, bribery, threats or attempts to keep the behaviour secret;
• the impact on the child who has been harmed;
• any disability, additional need, vulnerability or communication need;
• whether the behaviour occurred online, offline or both;
• the context and wider safeguarding concerns; and
• the support and intervention required for both the child harmed and the child who displayed the harmful behaviour.

- 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:
• record facts clearly and avoid opinion or speculation;
• use the child's own words where relevant;
• use appropriate anatomical terminology while accurately recording what the child said;
• record where, when and how the concern arose;
• record the immediate action taken;
• inform the DSL/DDSL immediately where there is a safeguarding concern; and
• make the safeguarding record as soon as possible in accordance with school procedures.

- 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

Parents/carers will normally be informed in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures. The DSL will decide who should make contact, when and how. Parents/carers will not be informed where this could place a child at increased risk of harm, prejudice a police or social care investigation, or otherwise be contrary to the child's best interests.

What Happens after an Incident of Child-on-Child Abuse?

The school will consider both immediate safety and longer-term support. The DSL will assess ongoing risk and determine what protective measures, supervision, pastoral support, education, specialist intervention or multi-agency referral may be required.

The child who has been harmed will be reassured, supported and kept safe. The child who displayed harmful behaviour will also be assessed for safeguarding needs and offered timely, evidence-based support where appropriate. This may include work around emotional regulation, healthy relationships, boundaries, empathy, trauma or harmful attitudes. Consequences under the Behaviour Policy may also be applied and will be proportionate to the behaviour and circumstances.

A restorative approach may be used where appropriate and safe, but it will not be used in a way that pressures a child who has been harmed to meet, reconcile with or forgive another child.

The school will monitor incidents for patterns and review whether further preventative action, curriculum work, supervision or environmental changes are required.
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.

Key statutory and guidance references

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, particularly Part Two and Part Five.**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.**
- **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance, effective from 1 September 2026.**
- **UKCIS: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people.**

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