



# Old Park Primary School & Nursery

## Child-on-Child Policy

**Reviewed:** Autumn 2024

**Next Planned Review:** Autumn 2025

**Person responsible:** J Foster

## **Statement of intent**

Old Park Primary is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every pupil, both inside and outside of the school premises, and is aware that abuse against children can be inflicted by other children. We implement a whole-school preventative approach to managing child-on-child abuse, ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils is at the forefront of all action taken.

The school takes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, and we recognise that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported. We will never pass off abuse as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys”, as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

This policy sets out a clear and consistent framework for delivering this promise, in line with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

It will be achieved by:

- Creating a culture of mutual respect amongst all pupils.
- Teaching pupils about behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable.
- Identifying and making provision for any pupil that has been subject to abuse.
- Ensuring that members of the governing board, the headteacher and staff members understand their responsibilities under safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, are alert to the signs of child-on-child abuse and know to refer concerns to a DSL.
- Ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are transparent, clear and easy to understand for staff, pupils and parents.

The Designated safeguarding leads are James Foster, Andy Parton and Kelly Ryder.



Mr Foster  
Headteacher



Mr Parton  
Assistant  
Headteacher



Mrs Ryder  
Pupil welfare  
manager

At Old Park Primary School, we are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of Child-on-Child abuse and ensure that any form of Child-on-Child abuse is dealt with immediately and consistently. This will reduce the extent of harm to the young person and minimise the potential impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

All staff will be trained in our settings policy and procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse and the important role they must play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

### **Legal framework**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- DfE (2018) 'Working together to safeguard children'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024'

The policy also has regard to the following non-statutory guidance:

- DfE (2015) 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'
- DfE (2018) 'Information sharing'
- DfE (2021) 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges'
- DfE (2020) 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'
- National Police Chief's Council (2020) 'When to call the police: guidance for schools and colleges'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies/guidance:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- E-safety policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

## **Definition**

“Child-on-child abuse” is defined, for the purposes of this policy, **as any form of abuse intending to inflict harm by one child or a group of children.**

This policy covers child-on-child abuse both inside and outside of school and both in person and online.

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as bullying, sexual experimentation etc. This is a matter of professional judgement. If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse. However, it may be appropriate to regard a young person’s behaviour as abusive if:

- There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned; or
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged young person.

If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

## **Types of child-on-child abuse**

**Physical Abuse:** May include, hitting, kicking, nipping, 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 or sanctions to be undertaken.

**Sexual violence:** Encompasses the definitions provided in the Sexual Offences Act 2003, including rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, i.e. non-consensual sexual touching, and causing another child to engage in sexual activity without consent, e.g. forcing someone to touch themselves sexually.

**Sexual Harassment:** Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that can occur online and offline. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child’s dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

### **Sexual harassment can include:**

**Sexual comments:** Telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names; sexual “jokes” or taunting.

Physical behaviour: Deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes.

Online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos; sexualised online bullying; unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media; and sexual exploitation; coercion and threats.

**Sexting**: When someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, regardless of their age, gender or sexual preference. However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. **This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.**

**Upskirting**: The Voyeurism (Offences) Act, which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019. This typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their buttocks or genitals to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or harm.

**Harmful sexual behaviour**: Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected too inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. We use the term "harmful sexual behaviour" (HSB). HSB can occur online and/or face to face and can also occur simultaneously between the two. We will consider HSB in a child protection context.

We will follow the specialist support and advice on HSB available from the specialist sexual violence sector. Our DSL will undertake training in HSB and incorporate this into our approach to managing sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Addressing inappropriate behaviour can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future. Children displaying HSB have often experienced their own abuse and trauma. We understand it is important that they are offered appropriate support.

**Initiation/hazing**: Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation. There are several different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies. The ceremony welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse and harassment.

**Bullying:** Unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school age children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully may have serious, lasting problems. In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- An imbalance of power: for example, physical strength, using embarrassing information, popularity to control or harm others.
- Repetition where bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

### **Preventative strategies**

We will undertake pre-planning, training for staff and implement an effective child-on-child abuse policy to help us develop the foundation for a calm, considered and appropriate response to any reports. We will review these regularly. The DSL (or a deputy) will engage with the local response to child-on-child abuse.

We understand the best responses to child-on-child abuse are based on a whole setting approach to safeguarding and child protection and we will involve our whole community in this.

**Systems are in place, well promoted throughout our setting, and understandable and accessible for our pupils to confidently report abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment**, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and that they can safely express their views and give feedback.

As part of our commitment to our pupils, we have identified the following deputy DSL's, who are not part of our senior leadership team, as staff in our setting that pupils can report child-on-child abuse to if they choose not to report directly to a member of the senior leadership team.

- Kelly Ryder

All staff in our setting undertake training in how to respond to child-on-child abuse, including reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment. Our DSL will undertake training to manage a report.

We accept the most effective preventative education programme will be through a whole setting approach that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. Our setting will have a clear set of values and standards, and these will be upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life. This is underpinned by our behaviour policy and pastoral support system, and by our planned programme of evidence-based content delivered through the whole curriculum. Our programme is developed to be age and stage of development appropriate. The DSL will support teachers in their delivery of this part of our curriculum. We

recognise good practice allows children an open forum to talk through things. Such discussions can lead to increased safeguarding reports. Children will be made aware of the processes to raise their concerns or make a report and how any report will be handled. This will include processes when they have a concern about a friend or peer. All staff are aware of how to support children and how to manage a safeguarding report from a child.

The DSL will consider if external support or intervention is necessary as part of our approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We recognise specialist organisations can offer a different perspective and expert knowledge.

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

1. In line with the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance 2019, providing a developmentally appropriate PSHE syllabus (Character Education) which develops pupils understanding of acceptable behaviour, keeping themselves safe, the nature of Child-on-Child abuse and what is meant by consent.
2. Having a safeguarding curriculum in place with child-on-child abuse being a key theme that is addressed annually with pupils.
3. Having a robust Online and Mobile Technology safety programme which develops pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, to ensure personal safety and self-protection when using the internet and social networking.
4. Having robust monitoring and filtering systems in place to ensure pupils are safe and act appropriately when using information technology in school.
5. Having systems in place for any pupil to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued in a non-judgemental environment.
6. Delivering targeted work on assertiveness and keeping safe to all pupils.
7. When required, developing robust risk assessments & providing targeted work for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils.
8. Creating a safe culture in school where children feel safe and able to speak openly and honestly.

**Safeguarding Issues**

**All** staff are aware that children can abuse other children. This can happen inside or outside of our setting and online.

**All** staff will be trained in our policy and procedures regarding child-on-child abuse and the important role they must play in preventing it and responding to where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

**All** staff understand that even if there are no reports in our setting it does not mean it is not happening, it maybe it is just not being reported. If staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse, even if there are no reports in our setting, they should still speak to the DSL (or deputy).

**All** staff are expected to challenge inappropriate behaviours between peers, many of which are listed, that are actually 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.

We will actively seek to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

- Educating all governors, our senior leadership team, staff, students, and parents about this issue.
- Educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse, positive, responsible and safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts about consent, via the curriculum.
- Engaging parents on these issues.
- Supporting the on-going welfare of the student body by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise student mental health, and by providing in-school pastoral support to address underlying mental health needs.
- Working with governors, senior leadership team, and all staff, students 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 students can aspire to, and realise, safe and healthy relationships fostering a whole-school culture.
- Responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately; and ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the DSL and deputies so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who may be in need of additional support.

We will actively engage with TWSP in relation to child-on-child abuse, and work closely with, for example, children’s social care, the police and other education settings. The relationships our setting has built with these partners is essential to ensuring that we are able to prevent, identify early, and appropriately handle cases of child-on-child abuse. The DSL (or deputy) will regularly review behaviour incident logs which can help to identify any changes in behaviour and/or concerning patterns or trends at an early stage.



We recognise that any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to the strength of peer influence, especially during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers.

We know that research suggests:

- Child-on-child abuse may affect boys differently from girls (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators). However, all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.
- Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers without, and some children may be more likely to experience child-on-child abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs.

### **Vulnerabilities**

As a school we will recognise any child can be vulnerable to Child-on-Child abuse including:

- Individual and situation factors can increase a child's vulnerabilities to abuse by their peers such as the sharing of an image or photograph
- Children who are socially isolated from their peers.
- Children who are questioning or exploring their sexuality may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse.
- Children with certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs.
- Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

### **Our response to child-on-child abuse, including reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment.**

It is our aim to always recognise, acknowledge and understand the scale of harassment and abuse. We aim to never downplay some behaviours related to abuse that can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Where necessary we will work with other professionals, agencies and partners in our response. This may include the TWSP partners, the relevant local authority children's social care departments, the police and other services.

We recognise that children may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react. In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report.

### **The immediate response to a report**

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by another child/ren, or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing another child/ren, they should discuss their concern with the DSL (or deputy) without delay.

Staff should ensure that they talk to children in a calm and consistent manner, and will not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Taking action:

1. Always take the complaint seriously
2. Gain a statement of facts from the pupils(s)
3. Assess needs of the victim and alleged perpetrator
4. Consider referral to Police or Social Care
5. Continue to multi-agency assessments
6. Convene a risk assessment management meeting
7. Record all incidents and all action taken on CPOMS

We will reassure **all** victims that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward and that they will be supported and kept safe. Abuse that occurs online or outside of our setting will not be downplayed and will be treated equally seriously. We will never give a victim the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor will we make a victim feel ashamed for making a report. We will explain that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them, and this will be explained in such a way that avoids alarming or distressing them.

### **Risk assessment and safety planning & support**

We take the view that child-on-child abuse does happen even if it is not reported. Therefore, on the advice of the TWSP we have implemented a risk assessment to help to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse.

As per the advice of TWSP we refer to safety planning and support which is used for individual children in response to an alleged or actual incident child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence and where appropriate, incidents of sexual harassment.

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the DSL (or a deputy) will implement an immediate safety and support plan to identify risk and need. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a safety and support plan will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but as good practice should be completed.

The risk and needs assessment should consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support
- Whether there may have been other victims
- The alleged perpetrator(s)
- 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 from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms, and the time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer.

If any of the children involved has SEND, the DSL will liaise with the SENDCO to assist in the management of the report. If the report involves an online safety element, the DSL will liaise with the online safety lead if this is not the DSL.

Safety and support plans must be recorded (written or electronic) and will be kept under review. At all times, we will be actively considering the risks posed to all our pupils and students and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe.

The DSL (or a deputy) will engage with children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional safety and support plans by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. Our safety and support plan are not intended to replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals. Any such professional assessments will be used to inform our approach to supporting and protecting our pupils and students and updating our own risk assessment.

### **Action following a report of child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence and/or sexual harassment**

Our DSL (and deputies) have a complete safeguarding picture and they are the most appropriate people to advise on our initial response. Important considerations will include:

- 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. Victims should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. This will however need to be balanced with our duty and responsibilities to protect other children.
- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether HSB has been displayed.
- 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(s) 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 (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature).
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers.
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or; and, other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

As always when concerned about the welfare of a child, all staff will act in the best interests of the child. In all cases, we will follow general safeguarding principles. Immediate consideration will be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) (and any other children involved/impacted).

The starting point regarding any report will always be that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, and it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated.

As a matter of effective safeguarding practice, we will do all we reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, especially where a case is progressing through the criminal justice system.

### **Options to manage the report**

When to inform the alleged perpetrator(s) will be a decision that will be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to children's social care and/or the police, then, as a general rule, we will speak to the relevant agency and discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the allegations. However, as per general safeguarding principles, this does not and will not stop us taking immediate action to safeguard our children, where required.

We will regularly review our decisions and actions, consider our relevant policies and any lessons learnt. We will look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour. Where a pattern is identified, we will decide on a course of action. Consideration will be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within our setting that enabled the inappropriate behaviour to occur and where appropriate extra teaching time and/or staff training could be delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

The DSL (or deputy) will use their professional judgement to: (a) assess the nature and seriousness of the alleged behaviour, and (b) determine whether it is appropriate for the alleged behaviour to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required. The DSL and their deputies will consult the relevant local partnership

threshold guidance to support their decision making and will engage in discussions with the statutory safeguarding partners to agree the levels for the different types of assessment and services to be commissioned and delivered, part of the local arrangements.

In borderline cases the DSL (or deputy) may consult with Family Connect, and/or other relevant agencies on a no-names basis (where possible) to determine the most appropriate response.

Where the DSL (or deputy) considers or suspects that the alleged behaviour in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum or where the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question might otherwise require it, the DSL (or deputy) will contact Family Connect or the local social care team for the child and/or the police immediately and, in any event, within 24 hours of the DSL (or deputy) becoming aware of the alleged behaviour. The DSL (or deputy) will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the agency and agree on a course of action, which may include:

1. Manage internally
2. Early help
3. Reporting to the police
4. Referral to children's social care

**All** concerns, discussions, decisions, and reasons for decisions will be recorded (written or electronic).

If bail conditions are in place, we will consider what additional measures may be necessary to manage any assessed risk of harm that may arise within our setting.

There may be delays in any case that is being progressed through the criminal justice system. We will not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a police investigation before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and other children and adult students in the school or college. The DSL (or a deputy) will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions we take do not jeopardise the police investigation.

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, we will update our risk assessment. We understand it is important that we ensure both the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) remain protected. 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(s).

If a report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the DSL will consider whether the child and/or the person who has made the allegation needs help or may have been abused by someone else and this is a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to Family Connect or the relevant children's social care team may be appropriate. If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, we will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per our own behaviour policy.

## **Ongoing response to child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence or sexual harassment**

We will consider the principles based on effective safeguarding practice and to help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s). We will consider what support is the most appropriate to support all children involved.

Victims may not talk about the whole picture immediately. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged. We will offer victims a designated trusted adult in our setting to talk about their needs.

A victim of sexual violence is likely to be traumatised and, in some cases, may struggle in a normal classroom environment. We will avoid any action that would have the effect of isolating the victim, in particular from supportive peer groups, there may be times when the victim finds it difficult to maintain a full-time timetable and may express a wish to withdraw from lessons and activities. This will be because the victim wants to, not because it makes it easier to manage the situation. If required, we will provide a physical space for victims to withdraw.

Whilst we will give all the necessary support to victims to remain in our setting, if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another setting will be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This will only be at the request of the victim (and following discussion with their parents or carers).

We will always check in with all children involved or alleged to have been involved in child-on-child abuse that are in our school/college. This is to ensure our procedures have been followed and to understand their perception of the effectiveness of our procedures.

### **After care**

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). In which cases, regular reviews with the young people involved following the incident(s) are imperative.