

Child on Child Abuse Policy

Weaverham High School



Approved by: Governing Body

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Aim

This policy has been developed to ensure that all adults in Weaverham High School are working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in accordance with Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, it reflects the policies of Cheshire West's Safeguarding Children Partnership, <https://www.cheshirewestscp.co.uk/> and is in line with:

"Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2023) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2> (Particular focus on Part 5 "Child on Child Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment")

[Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681111/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges.pdf) May 2018

Rationale

At Weaverham High School we believe that all our pupils have the right to a safe and healthy lifestyle. We recognise our responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and prevent Child on child abuse and young people by establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop. The policy applies to all children 11-16 whose care and education comes within the remit of Weaverham High School.

'There are three main elements to our Child on Child Abuse Policy'.

- (a) Prevention: (eg positive school atmosphere, teaching and pastoral support to pupils).
- (b) Protection: (By following agreed procedures, ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to Child Protection concerns).
- (c) Support: (To pupils and school staff and to children who may have been abused).

Context

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.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support.

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are extremely complex to manage. It is essential that victims are protected, offered appropriate support and every effort is made to ensure their education is not disrupted. It is also important that other children, adult students and school and college staff are supported and protected as appropriate.

Responding to allegations of child on child abuse

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are likely to be complex and require difficult professional decisions to be made, often quickly and under pressure. Pre-planning, effective training and effective policies will ensure our response is timely, calm, considered and appropriate.

Our response to allegations will be made on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking a leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as children's social care and the police as required. The decision to escalate a concern to LA safeguarding team / social care will be recorded on CPOMS.

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up".

We also recognise the gendered nature of child-on-child abuse. However, all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Most cases of pupils hurting other pupils will be supported and managed under our school's behaviour policy, but this policy and our safeguarding policy will apply to any allegations that raise safeguarding concerns. This might include where the alleged behaviour:

- Is serious, and potentially a criminal offence
- Could put pupils in the school at risk
- Is violent
- Involves pupils being forced to use drugs or alcohol
- Involves sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment, such as indecent exposure, sexual assault, up-skirting or sexually inappropriate pictures or videos (including sexting)

If a pupil makes an allegation of abuse against another pupil, staff will:

- Our initial response to a report from a child is important. It is essential that all victims are reassured 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 sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

➤ all staff are trained to manage a report. All concerns should be logged on CPOMS. Staff are also trained to speak to the DSL, DDSL or Headteacher if they have immediate concern for a child's safety.

➤ Safeguarding practice includes:

not promising confidentiality at this initial stage as it is very likely a concern will have to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead or children's social care) to discuss next steps. Staff should only share the report with those people who are necessary in order to progress it. It is important that the victim understands what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to;

- recognising a child is likely to disclose to someone they trust: this could be anyone on the school staff. It is important that the person to whom the child discloses recognises that the child has placed them in a position of trust. They should be supportive and respectful of the child;
- listening carefully to the child, being non-judgmental, being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed, not asking leading questions and only prompting the child where necessary with open questions – where, when, what, etc;
- considering the best way to make a record of the report. Best practice is to wait until the end of the report and immediately write up a thorough summary. This allows the staff member to devote their full attention to the child and to listen to what they are saying. It may be appropriate to make notes during the report (especially if a second member of staff is present). However, if making notes, staff should be conscious of the need to remain engaged with the child and not appear distracted by the note taking. Either way, it is essential a written record is made;

only recording the facts as the child presents them. The notes should not reflect the personal opinion of the note taker. All staff should be aware that notes of such reports could become part of a statutory assessment by children's social care and/or part of a criminal investigation;

➤ Record the allegation via CPOMS which informs the DSL and Head of Year / PSM.

➤ Staff responsible for investigating the concern will follow the school's Consistent Practice Expectations.

➤ Where necessary, the DSL will contact the local authority Safeguarding Children in Education team and follow its advice, as well as the police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence. This will be recorded factually on CPOMS.

➤ Where necessary, the DSL will put a risk assessment and support plan into place for all children involved (including the victim(s), the child(ren) against whom the allegation has been made and any others affected) with a named person they can talk to if needed

➤ The DSL will contact the children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), if appropriate.

Referrals to Social Care

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, school will make a referral to local children's social care which will be recorded on CPOMS.

- At the referral to children's social care stage, Pastoral staff will inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk). Any such decision should be made with the support of children's social care.

- If a referral is made, children's social care will then make enquiries to determine whether any of the children involved are in need of protection or other services.
- Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the school or college (especially the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy) will work alongside, and cooperate 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.
- All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

Reporting to the Police

Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to children's social care (as above).

- Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is this should 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.
- At this stage, schools will inform parents or carers unless there are compelling reasons not to, for example, if informing a parent or carer is likely to put a child at additional risk. In circumstances where parents or carers have not been informed, it will be especially important that the school is supporting the child in any decision they take. This should be with the support of children's social care and any appropriate specialist agencies.
- Where a report has been made to the police, the school should consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They should also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

Safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator:

- The school will have a difficult balancing act to consider. On one hand, they need to safeguard the victim (and the wider pupil/student body) and on the other hand provide the alleged perpetrator with an education, safeguarding support as appropriate and implement any disciplinary sanctions.
- Consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator and nature of the allegations. Any child will likely experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.
- Consider the proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case-by-case basis. An alleged perpetrator may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviours in young children may be (and often are) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and or materials. Advice should be taken, as appropriate, from children's social care, specialist sexual violence services and the police. The DSL will speak to the SCiE team for advice. The SCiE officer is Jess Hardy and Pam Beech.

Minimising Risk

We will minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse by:

- Challenging any form of derogatory or sexualised language or behaviour, including requesting or sending sexual images

- Being vigilant to issues that particularly affect different genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing type violence with respect to boys
- Ensuring our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent
- Ensuring pupils know they can talk to staff confidentially by regular and timely signposting to Pastoral Support Managers and school counsellors.
- Ensuring staff are trained to understand that a pupil harming a child could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves, and that this would fall under the scope of this policy

Planned Curriculum as part of a whole school approach

The most effective preventative education programme will be through a whole school approach that our pupils for life in modern Britain. We 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 the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, and by a planned programme of evidence-based content delivered through the whole curriculum as well as our PHSCE (LIFE) and Health Education lesson. Our LIFE curriculum tackles such issues as:

- healthy and respectful relationships;
- what respectful behaviour looks like;
- consent;
- gender roles, stereotyping, equality;
- body confidence and self-esteem;
- prejudiced behaviour;
- that sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong; and
- addressing cultures of sexual harassment.

Link with other policies

Child Protection Policy

Behaviour and Relationships Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Sex and Relationship Policy

PHSCE Curriculum Intent