

CHILDER THORNTON PRIMARY

Peer on Peer Abuse



Approved by Governors: Summer Term 2016

Next review: Summer 2017

Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education states that the “*Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with*”. The document also states it is most important to ensure opportunities of seeking the voice of the child are heard, “*Governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child’s wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, any system and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart*”.

While it is recommended that Peer on Peer abuse is part of the Child Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse we have completed this separate policy. At Childer Thornton Primary we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on that individual child’s emotional and mental health and well-being.

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children’s Act, 1989 that the child’s welfare is paramount.

Purpose and Aim

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as peer on peer abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of peer on peer abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Anti Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- E-Safety Policy

Abusive and harmful behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils 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,

Abuse should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter” or “part of growing up”. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be **gender specific**, eg: girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence.

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

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 punishment to be undertaken.

Sexual abuse/sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another person or sexual assault/abuse.

Bullying can be physical, include name calling or displaying homophobic tendencies etc. It is unwanted, aggressive behaviour 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 others may have serious lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- An imbalance of power – such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity – to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition – bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason eg: size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Cyber bullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, email, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 under section 1 which states that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Sexting is 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, whatever 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.

Hazing/Initiation is a form of initiation ceremony that is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as sports team, group etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies. The idea behind this practice is that it welcome newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they have all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse and harassment.

Prejudiced behaviour refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular prejudices to do with disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

Expected action from all staff

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and initiator of the harm, simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding on the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm.

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred as soon after the event the child(ren) may forget. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of the language on both the children and the parents when/if they become involved. For example, do not use the word perpetrator as this can quickly create a "blame" culture and leave a child labelled.

In all cases of peer on peer abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters. All incidents should be documented and all notes made should be handed to the Headteacher or deputy.

Informing Parents

If the decision has been made that parents are to be informed, contact should be made to either discuss the matter with the Headteacher over the phone or if deemed necessary, an appointment made for parents to come into school to meet with the Headteacher.

After Care

It is important that following the incident the pupil(s) involved continue to feel supported and receive help. Pupils will be encouraged to feel safe and share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. School will use PSHE, the curriculum, assemblies etc to discuss such issues as prejudiced behaviour etc.

If necessary, contact details of other agencies who may be able to provide support will be given to parents/carers to help support the pupil.