

Pikemere Primary School



Peer on Peer Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance

The Peer on Peer Abuse Policy in respect of Pikemere Primary School has been discussed and adopted by the Governing Body.

Chair of Governors

Mrs K Hulson

Head Teacher:

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Ratified at the meeting of Full Governing Body on: 02.03.2022

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Statement of intent

Pikemere Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child, 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 peer-on-peer abuse, ensuring that the wellbeing of children is at the forefront of all action taken. This policy sets out a clear and consistent framework for delivering this promise, in line with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

While it is recommended that Peer on Peer abuse is an integral part of the School Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse we have completed this separate policy.

We are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of peer on peer 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 contextual safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to peer on peer abuse. This policy is preventative in its response to peer on peer 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 applies to governors and members of staff including volunteers.

1. Legal framework

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

- Equality Act 2010
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- DfE (2021) 'Keeping children safe in education 2021'

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'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Online Safety Policy

2. Definitions

Peer abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others.

All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has a duty to:

- Ensure that the school complies with its duties under the above child protection and safeguarding legislation.
- Guarantee that the policies, procedures and training opportunities in the school are effective and comply with the law at all times.
- Ensure that the school contributes to multi-agency working in line with the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.

- Confirm that the school's arrangements for handling peer-on-peer abuse take into account the procedures and practices of the Local Authority as part of the inter-agency safeguarding procedures.
- Appoint a member of staff from the SLT to the role of DSL as an explicit part of the role-holder's job description.
- Appoint a deputy DSL to provide support to the DSL and ensure that they are trained to the same standard as the DSL.
- Make sure that children are taught about peer-on-peer abuse, including online (including when they are online at home), through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Ensure the school has clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible risk of harm to children, including clear routes to escalate concerns and clear referral and accountability systems.
- Ensure there are procedures in place to handle children's allegations against other children.
- Ensure that appropriate disciplinary procedures are in place, as well as policies pertaining to the behaviour of children.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to peer-on-peer abuse.
- Make sure that children's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide to protect individual pupils.
- Ensure that there are systems in place for children to express their views and give feedback.

The headteacher has a duty to:

- Safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.
- Ensure that the policies and procedures adopted by the governing board, particularly concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect, are followed by staff members.
- Provide staff, upon induction, with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, part one and, where appropriate, Annex A of the 'Keeping children safe in education' (KCSIE) guidance, the Behaviour Policy, online safety training, and the identity of the DSL and any deputies.
- Ensure staff receive training on recognising indicators of abuse and handling disclosures or concerns about a child.

The DSL has a duty to:

- Understand and keep up-to-date with local safeguarding arrangements.
- Act as the main point of contact with safeguarding partners.
- Make the necessary child protection referrals to appropriate agencies.

- Understand when they should consider calling the police, in line with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).
- Liaise with the headteacher to inform them of safeguarding issues and ongoing enquiries.
- Liaise with the deputy DSL(s) to ensure effective safeguarding outcomes.
- Act as a source of support for children who have been abused by, or who have abused, other children.
- Leading the school in taking a preventative approach to peer-on-peer abuse.

Other staff members have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties.
- Provide a safe environment in which children can learn.
- Act in accordance with school procedures with the aim of eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to peer-on-peer abuse.
- Maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.
- Be aware of the signs of abuse.
- Be aware of the early help process and understand their role in it.
- Be aware of and understand the procedure to follow in the event that a child confides they are being abused by a peer.
- Be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.
- Support social workers in making decisions about individual children, in collaboration with the DSL.
- Maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality when dealing with individual cases, and always act in the best interest of the child.

4. Abuse and harmful behaviour

It is necessary to consider:

- What abuse is and what it looks like.
- How it can be managed.
- What appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual.
- What preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.
- Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.

- Children can abuse other children. This can include (but is not limited to): abuse within intimate partner relationships; bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals. (KCSIE 2020)

The alleged perpetrator is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. Evidence suggests that such children may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, may have witnessed or been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, may have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and be in need of protection. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the alleged perpetrator must address their needs.

5. Types of peer-on-peer abuse

Staff will familiarise themselves with the forms that peer-on-peer abuse can take, including:

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which may involve actions such as hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, throwing, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another child. 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

A form of abuse involving sexual activity between children. This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. 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.

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the 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 to the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may include:

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching.
- Physical behaviour, e.g deliberately brushing against someone.
- sexual assault/abuse.
- Upskirting*

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- Making it clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
- challenging behaviours such as, grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

***Upskirting:** where someone takes a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.

The “sharing of sexualised imagery” can also constitute sexual harassment – this refers to the consensual and non-consensual sharing between pupils of sexually explicit content, including that which depicts:

- Another child posing nude or semi-nude
- Another child touching themselves in a sexual way
- Any sexual activity involving another child
- Someone hurting another child sexually

Staff will be aware that children creating, possessing, and distributing indecent imagery of other children is a criminal offence, even where the imagery is created, possessed, and distributed with the permission of the child depicted, or by the child themselves. Incidents of sharing sexualised imagery will be handled in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged 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 others may have serious, lasting problems.

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

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Young people who bully use their 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 e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Online abuse

Online Bullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, e-mail, chat rooms etc.) to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. Instances of online abuse will be managed in line with this policy, the Online Safety Policy and the Anti-bullying Policy.

Online bullying can take many forms:

- Abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites
- Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- Stealing someone's online identity
- Spreading rumours online
- Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms or games
- Developing hate sites about another person
- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Encouraging a young person to self-harm
- Pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of 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. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

Prejudiced behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying 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 – for example 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. All cases will be handled in line with this policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Intimate partner abuse

This involves a romantic partnership between children in which one or both partners are emotionally, physically or sexually abusive to the other. This could include:

- Repetitive insults
- Controlling behaviour, e.g. preventing a child from socialising with others or deliberately isolating them from sources of support.
- Sexual harassment.
- Threats of physical or sexual abuse.

The school will manage intimate partner abuse in the same way as a case of abuse between any other children.

6. A whole-school approach to peer-on-peer abuse

The school will continue to involve all members of the school community, including the governing board, staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders, in creating a whole-school approach to peer-on-peer abuse.

The governing board will ensure that keeping children safe and protected from harm, including peer-on-peer abuse, is central to all policies and procedures implemented across the school. The school will ensure that procedures for handling peer-on-peer abuse are transparent, clear and understandable, and are readily accessible to any member of the school community who wishes to access them.

The school will implement a contextual approach to safeguarding pupils against peer-on-peer abuse, and will ensure that all procedures take into account incidents of peer-on-peer abuse that occur outside of school or online.

The head teacher will ensure that all staff receive adequate training on handling peer-on-peer abuse.

School culture

The school prioritises cultivating a safe and respectful environment amongst pupils, and ensures that all pupils are aware that the school adopts a zero-tolerance stance on peer-on-peer abuse of any kind.

The school promotes respectful interactions amongst pupils, and all staff model appropriate and respectful behaviour. Staff will take care to avoid normalising harmful behaviour, particularly harmful sexual behaviour, e.g. by refraining from the use of phrases such as 'boys will be boys' or describing such behaviour as 'just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up'.

The school will ensure that wider societal factors that exacerbate the problem of peer-on-peer abuse are reflected in its approach to creating a preventative culture. This means that

individuals who are more likely to be abused, e.g. girls or LGBTQ+ pupils, or who are at increased risk of acting as a perpetrator in abusive situations, e.g. due to abusive home situations or anger management issues, are given additional support from an early stage.

The school manages all early help and intervention for pupils showing early signs of harmful behaviour, or early signs of being the victim of harmful behaviour, in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Curriculum

The school maintains the position that education surrounding respectful and healthy attitudes and behaviour towards others is the best way to combat peer-on-peer abuse in the school. All staff, not just teaching staff, are responsible for passing this knowledge on to pupils.

In order to prevent peer-on-peer abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, the school will educate pupils about abuse, its forms and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

The school will also ensure that pupils are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Such content will be age and stage of development specific, and tackle issues such as the following:

- Healthy relationships
- Respectful behaviour
- Stereotyping and equality
- LGBTQ+ identities and relationships
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong

Pupils will be allowed an open forum to talk about concerns and sexual behaviour. They are taught how to raise concerns and make a report, including concerns about their friends or peers, and how a report will be handled.

The curriculum will ensure that pupils of all ages are taught about and understand the concept of consent and its importance in an age-appropriate way.

7. Recognising peer on peer abuse

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:

- Chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved
- Difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability.

- All alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident.
- Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation.
- What was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery.
- The effect on the victim.
- Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret.
- The child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour.
- Whether this was a one-off incident, or longer in duration.

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. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

8. Channels for reporting abuse

Pupils will be able to report incidents of peer-on-peer abuse or concerns about the behaviour of their peers through the following channels:

- Conversations with the class teacher.
- Disclosing to the pastoral lead.
- Disclosing to the headteacher/DSL.

All channels for reporting abuse will be promoted and publicised throughout the school, and all pupils will be made aware of how, and to whom, to report incidents of abuse. The school will also ensure pupils are aware of the type of behaviour that should be reported.

The school will maintain a culture that promotes reporting abuse, whether the individual reporting is the victim, a bystander, or a friend or relative of the victim.

9. Identifying and reporting concerns

Staff will receive safeguarding training as part of their induction, and annual refresher training. This training will include guidance on how to recognise indicators of peer-on-peer abuse of all kinds, and how to distinguish between behaviour, particularly sexual behaviour, that is developmentally appropriate and that which is harmful.

When identifying pupils at risk of potential harm or who have been harmed by their peers, staff members will look out for a number of indicators including, but not limited to, the following:

- Injuries in unusual places, such as bite marks on the neck, that are also inconsistent with their age

- Lack of concentration and acting withdrawn
- Knowledge ahead of their age, e.g. sexual knowledge
- Use of explicit language
- Fear of abandonment
- Depression and low self-esteem
- Changes to their social group, e.g. spending time with older pupils, or social isolation

Where a pupil is displaying signs of being impacted by peer-on-peer abuse, or perpetrating peer-on-peer abuse, staff will report this to the DSL as soon as is reasonably practical.

Staff will challenge all instances of abusive or harmful behaviour displayed by pupils that they witness or are reported to them. Staff will not wait for concerns or situations between pupils to escalate before intervening; minor or singular instances of abusive behaviour will still be brought to the attention of the DSL and the pupil will always be spoken to about their behaviour and disciplined, where appropriate, in line with the Behaviour Policy.

Staff will enforce the school's policy that no known and substantiated incident of abusive or harmful behaviour between pupils will occur without consequences for the perpetrator(s), although these consequences will be decided on a case-by-case basis and will take into account the views of any victims involved, the context of the behaviour and the severity of the incident.

Staff will remain cognisant that downplaying abusive behaviour can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour throughout the school and, as such, will treat all displays or reports of abusive behaviour with the utmost severity and sensitivity in order to reinforce to all pupils that such behaviour will not be tolerated, and to prevent further instances of this behaviour in the future.

Actions to take

- Always take complaints seriously
- Gain a statement of facts from all the children involved separately, using consistent language and open questions for each account.
- Assess needs of victim and alleged perpetrator.
- Consider referral to Police or Social Care.
- Parents of both alleged victim and perpetrator will be informed.
- Record all incidents and all action taken on CPOMS.
- Report incident to the DSL immediately.
- If a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment may be necessary.

Recording incidents

- Be clear, explicit and non-avoidant, and avoid vague statements or euphemisms
- Record as soon as possible
- Follow the prompts on "What to include when recording a concern on CPOMS" document.

- Use proper names for body parts but record exactly any language or vocabulary used by the child. Use the child's exact words in quotation marks.
- Note where and when the incident happened and whether anyone else was around.

10. Managing allegations of abuse

Staff will always, when handling an incident of alleged abuse, take the report of the victim seriously, reassure them, support them and work to keep them safe. Victims will never be made to feel like they are causing a problem, be made to feel ashamed, or have their experience minimised by staff at the school. Staff will be aware of the importance of not downplaying any reports of abuse; however, will ensure that they remain sympathetic, and observant of the duty of care, to both the alleged perpetrator(s) and victim(s).

All staff will be trained to handle disclosures. Effective safeguarding practice includes:

- Never promising confidentiality at the initial stage.
- Only sharing the report with those necessary for its progression.
- Explaining to the victim what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to.
- Recognising that the person the child chose to disclose the information to is in a position of trust.
- Being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed.
- Not asking leading questions and only prompting the pupil with open questions.
- Waiting until the end of the disclosure to immediately write a thorough summary. If notes must be taken during the disclosure, it is important to still remain engaged and not appear distracted.
- Only recording the facts as the child presents them.
- Where the report includes an online element, being aware of searching, screening and confiscation advice.
- Wherever possible, managing disclosures with two staff members present (preferably with the DSL or a deputy).
- Informing the DSL or deputy as soon as possible after the disclosure if they could not be involved in the disclosure.

The DSL will be informed of any allegations of abuse against pupils with SEND. They will record the incident in writing and, working with the SENCO, decide what course of action is necessary, with the best interests of the pupil in mind at all times.

11. Next Steps

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

For the child who has been harmed

This will be agreed on an individual basis and may include the following:

- counselling or one to one support via a mentor.
- Conversations with parents
- If the incidents are of a bullying nature, a record sheet will be completed as per Anti-bullying policy.
- Restorative intervention
- Whole class intervention – circle time, targeted PSHE teaching.

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

It is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that the young person receives a consequence for their behaviour in line with the behaviour policy.

Further monitoring

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 child/children do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). For this reason, regular reviews following the incident(s) are imperative.

12. Protecting pupils with increased vulnerability to peer-on-peer abuse

The school is aware that, while peer-on-peer abuse can be perpetrated by, and against, anyone, there are certain groups of pupils who are at an increased risk of being on the receiving end of peer-on-peer abuse.

Staff will be careful to acknowledge the increased risk certain pupils face while refraining from making assumptions about the nature of any reported, witnessed or suspected abuse. Staff will be aware that pupils who are generally at increased risk of abuse can also be perpetrators of abuse.

Girls

Staff will be aware that girls are more likely to be on the receiving end of peer-on-peer sexual abuse than their male counterparts, and that sexual violence and harassment against girls is very common and accounts for the majority of cases.

Taking into account that sexual harassment against girls is widespread in society, and largely based in gender inequality, the school will aim to encourage gender equality in all aspects of its operations. The school will aim to promote and nurture healthy attitudes and relationships amongst pupils of all genders, e.g. by challenging and working to deconstruct gender stereotypes in school.

LGBTQ+ pupils

Staff will be aware that pupils who are LGBTQ+, or are perceived to be LGBTQ+ whether they are or not, are more likely to be targeted by their peers, e.g. for discriminatory bullying.

The school holds a zero-tolerance policy towards pupils using homophobic, biphobic or transphobic language, regardless of whether or not the language is being directed at another individual. Every staff member is individually responsible for challenging such behaviour and making clear to all pupils that any abuse towards pupils who are LGBTQ+, or who are perceived to be, is unacceptable.

Pupils with SEND

Staff will be aware that pupils with SEND are at increased risk of peer-on-peer abuse. The school will ensure that there are mechanisms in place to support pupils with SEND in reporting abuse, with due regard paid to the fact that these pupils may face additional barriers to reporting abuse and that spotting signs of abuse in these pupils may be harder.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) pupils

Staff will be aware that minority ethnic pupils, particularly black pupils, may be less likely to report abuse committed against them, and may be more likely to be misidentified as perpetrators of abuse.

The school holds a zero-tolerance policy towards pupils using racist language, regardless of whether the language is being directed at another individual. Every staff member is individually responsible for challenging such behaviour and making clear to all pupils that any abuse towards pupils from BAME backgrounds is unacceptable.

13. Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the DSL and the headteacher. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.