

HEATHFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

PEER ON PEER ABUSE POLICY

- Draft -

Date reviewed : October 2021
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Reviewers : Nic Patmore with Safeguarding and Pastoral Teams

Document Control		
Edition	Issued	Changes to previous
1	Sept 2021	Please see highlighted in yellow

Policies / Documents referred to in this policy	Post Holders / Persons named in this policy
This policy links to other school policies on :	Safeguarding Child Protection Policy Anti-Bullying Policy Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy

The following article was published in the school newsletter w/c 5/10/21

Peer-on-Peer Abuse

There has long been a recognition of the impact of bullying between children. Recently this has been termed Peer-on-Peer abuse. The concept of bullying as a type of abuse is further recognition of the damage that can be done to an individual who experiences bullying, sexual harassment or sexual violence at the hands of another child.

The government document, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021¹ defines Peer-on-Peer abuse as the following:

Peer on peer abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- *bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);*
- *abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers;*
- *physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse);*
- *sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);*
- *sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;*
- *causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;*
- *consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);*
- *upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; and*
- *initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).*

At Heathfield, we have a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and we understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers 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. This is why all reports are taken seriously and students are supported by our pastoral, mental health and safeguarding teams.

Our PHSE program covers topics such as friendships, anti-bullying, healthy relationships and consent in order to help our young people navigate this important part of growing up.

[Sexual Harrassment and Violence in Schools and Colleges](#)

You may have seen the media coverage of the Everyone's Invited campaign last year which highlighted the widespread nature of sexual harrassment and sexual violence in schools and colleges. This campaign led OFSTED to complete a thematic review of schools and colleges, the results of which were published in June 2021². The findings of the nationwide review showed that this worrying behaviour is very prevalent between young people, but isn't always reported. At Heathfield we want to ensure that students know where to get support if something has happened to them, and to reassure them that it will be taken seriously.

The review also highlights the importance of children having a trusting and positive relationship with an individual staff member. This could be your child's tutor or year head or another adult in school they feel comfortable with. In PSHE and assemblies we highlight previous positive experiences of school responses and the availability of staff from the Safeguarding Team, who have a specialist role, not linked to teaching or behaviour. We hope that our students feel that teachers show respect to students, and that they listen and respond appropriately to all worries and concerns so that a trust is developed to be able to share the big things. The NSPCC highlights good practice that can be used in school and at home which includes

- demonstrating to a child that you are listening
- putting a child in charge of the conversation
- reassuring a child and showing empathy

[Where to Get Help](#)

If your child or another child you know is affected by these issues please contact us.

All peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

In school you can contact:

Your child's tutor or Head of Year

Year 7 – Mrs Draper - zdraper@heathfieldcommunityschool.co.uk

Year 8 – Mrs White - hwhite@heathfieldcommunityschool.co.uk

Year 9 – Mrs Farbus - jfarbus@heathfieldcommunityschool.co.uk

Year 10 – Mr Tinkler - mtinkler@heathfieldcommunityschool.co.uk

Year 11 – Mr Hill - ahill@heathfieldcommunityschool.co.uk

Our Safeguarding Team (identifiable by a blue lanyard)

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mrs Patmore -
npatmore@heathfieldcommunityschool.co.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mrs Berryman -
kberryman@heathfieldcommunityschool.co.uk

Safeguarding Officer – Mrs Smith - tsmith@heathfieldcommunityschool.co.uk

Safeguarding Administrator – Mrs Barge - sbarge@heathfieldcommunityschool.co.uk

Find us on the school website at [Safeguarding Team | Heathfield Community \(heathfieldcommunityschool.com\)](#)

Other places to get help

[Anti-Bullying Alliance.org.uk](http://Anti-BullyingAlliance.org.uk)

Childline on 0800 1111 or at www.childline.org.uk.

SomersetPhoenixProject.org.uk supporting children, young people and families affected by sexual abuse.

For a comprehensive list of support agencies, please have a look at the Student Support section of our website at [Student Support | Heathfield Community \(heathfieldcommunityschool.com\)](#)

Further Reading

¹[Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

²[Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The UK Council for Internet Safety

You can find out more about Safeguarding at Heathfield on our website at [Safeguarding | Heathfield Community \(heathfieldcommunityschool.com\)](#)

The following pages are taken directly from the school's Safeguarding Child Protection Policy 2021

Responding to Incidents of Peer-on-Peer Abuse

All staff should recognise that children can abuse their peers, including online abuse. It is important that incidents of abuse and harm are treated in line with the Safeguarding Policy and in conjunction with the Behaviour Policy.

Concerns regarding the welfare of pupils and any subsequent support process will be recorded and kept securely on their safeguarding file.

Examples of peer-on-peer abuse can be found in the Key Safeguarding Areas section of this policy. Peer-on-peer abuse can happen in any environment and is not restricted to school settings.

At Heathfield Community School:

- We have a zero tolerance approach to all types of abuse. Incidents are taken seriously. These will never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up'.
- Banter and teasing should be acknowledged and recognised as bullying behaviour and may require proportionate intervention.
- We aim to mitigate the risk of contributing to a culture of unacceptable behaviours or a culture that normalises abuse through education and reflective learning.
- Peer-on-peer abuse may reflect equality issues in terms of those who may be targeted are more likely to have protected characteristics.
- Early identification of vulnerability to peer-on-peer abuse is made by reviewing attendance, behaviour, attainment and safeguarding records at least on a termly basis.

There are clear systems in place for pupils to report any abuse knowing their concerns will be treated seriously and respectfully.

Heathfield Community School will handle initial reports of abuse by:

- Securing the immediate safety of pupils involved in an incident and sourcing support for other young people affected.
- 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.
- ensuring that victims will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence, or sexual harassment. They will never be made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- Ensuring the child's wishes are taken into consideration in any intervention and any action is taken to ensure safety of the target and other members of the wider peer cohort.
- Not promising confidentiality as it is highly likely that information will need to be shared with others.

A diagram outlining our process for responding to peer-on-peer abuse is available in Appendix A of this policy.

Responding to Incidents of Sexual Violence and Harassment

Reference to Keeping Children Safe In Education (2021, Part 5) and guidance [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges 2021](#) should be made in relation to taking protective action.

Heathfield Community School will take the following actions when responding to incidents of sexual violence and sexual harassment:

- Incidents will be reported immediately to the DSL/Deputy DSL who will undertake further assessment of what action should be taken proportionate to the factors that have been identified.
- [The Brook Tool](#) should be utilised to inform assessment of risk and what actions to subsequently take. This may include seeking specialist advice and guidance from the education psychology team.
- Proportionate action will be taken and consideration given to whether a case can be managed internally or whether support from other support agencies is required.
- When an incident involves an act of sexual violence (rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault):
 - Cases will be reported to the police regardless of the age of criminal responsibility (10 years old)
 - A concurrent referral to Children Social Care must also be made
 - Children Social Care will determine whether an assessment is required under sections 17 or 47 of the Children Act 1989
 - Where the report includes an online element, the setting will follow the following government guidance [Searching, Screening and Confiscation at School](#) and [Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes](#)
- Risk assessments and or safety plans will be developed for individual children who have been involved in an incident. This should be reviewed regularly or every time there is an occurrence of an incident. These should involve the child and parents/carers and address contextual risks.

Contextual Safeguarding Approach to Peer-on-Peer Abuse

Heathfield Community School will minimise the risk of peer-on-peer abuse taking place by adopting a contextual approach to safeguarding. This enables us and other support services to better identify high-risk groups, areas and environments within our community that increase the risk of abuse occurring and take appropriate action.

The DSL/Deputies will review and consider whether any practice or environmental changes can be made in relation to any areas for development. This might include making changes to staffing and supervision, making changes to the physical environment and considering the utilisation and delivery of safeguarding topics on the curriculum.

- Peer-on-peer abuse:
 - Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
 - Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers.
 - Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse).
 - Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;(this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence).
 - Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
 - Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
 - Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery).
 - Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm; and
 - Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).
- Preventing Radicalisation (The Prevent Duty)
- Serious Youth Violence
- Substance Misuse
- Private Fostering
- Young Carers

Additional information about key safeguarding areas can also be found in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021, Annex B) and on the [NSPCC website - Types of Abuse.](#)

Local safeguarding resources are also available via the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership website.

What is Child on Child Sexual Abuse?

NSPCC Protecting children from peer-on-peer sexual abuse – **Last updated : 16 April 2021**

[Protecting children from peer-on-peer sexual abuse | NSPCC Learning](#)

Introduction

- Peer-on-peer sexual abuse is sexual abuse that happens between children of a similar age or stage of development. It can happen between any number of children and can affect any age group (Department for Education (DfE), 2018).
- It can be harmful to the children who display it as well as those who experience it.
- Children can experience peer-on-peer sexual abuse in a wide range of settings, including:
 - At school.
 - At home or in someone else's home.
 - In public spaces.
 - Online.

(NSPCC, 2018)

It can take place in spaces which are supervised or unsupervised. Within a school context, for example, peer-on-peer sexual abuse might take place in spaces such as toilets, the playground, corridors and when children are walking home (Contextual Safeguarding Network, 2020).

As children develop healthily, it's normal for them to display certain types of sexualised behaviour. It's important that adults who work or volunteer with children can identify if any sexualised behaviour has become harmful or abusive and respond proportionally to keep all the children involved safe.

We've put together some principles of best practice to help you recognise and respond to peer-on-peer sexual abuse. It includes information on:

- what peer-on-peer sexual abuse looks like.
- how to respond appropriately and proportionately to concerns or instances of peer-on-peer sexual abuse.
- how you can help prevent peer-on-peer sexual abuse occurring.
- an overview of the legislation and guidance to help practitioners recognise and respond to peer-on-peer sexual abuse across the UK.

This information will be helpful for anyone who works or volunteers with children and young people - including in schools, healthcare, youth clubs, community groups and childcare

Protecting Children from Child on Child Sexual Abuse

[Protecting children from peer-on-peer sexual abuse | NSPCC Learning](#)

Children's understanding of peer-on-peer sexual abuse

Children may not always understand that they have experienced or carried out peer-on-peer sexual abuse. This might be because:

- they don't understand what constitutes appropriate, inappropriate, problematic or abusive sexualised behaviour.
- they have experienced sexual abuse themselves and don't realise that what happened to them was wrong.

- they don't know whether consent was given.
- the abuse happened between friends or partners.
- the abuse took place online.
- they blame themselves for the abuse they received.
- younger children lack knowledge of sex and sexuality as they are less likely to have received any relationships and sex education.

Protecting all the children involved

You should balance the duty to safeguard the child who has experienced abuse with the need to support the child who has displayed harmful sexual behaviour.

Children who witnessed the abuse or are friends of those involved may also be affected and need support. Each incident of or concern about peer-on-peer abuse will be different: you should gather all the facts, assess any risks and make decisions on a case-by-case basis. This will help you understand who needs to be involved to make sure all children are appropriately protected and supported.

Any child who has experienced or been involved in sexual abuse in a school setting can contact our [Report Abuse in Education Helpline](#) on [0800 136 663](tel:0800136663) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk.

> [Read our information about best practice on managing allegations made against a child](#)

Preventing Child on Child Sexual Abuse

Organisations and individuals that work with children have a responsibility to keep them safe. It's important to create a healthy and safe environment for all children and young people and challenge societal norms that may allow peer-on-peer sexual abuse to take place.

Policies, procedures and codes of conduct

Your safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures should include information about peer-on-peer sexual abuse. You should share these with everyone in your organisation, as well as parents and carers. This will help adults understand what they need to do to prevent and tackle peer-on-peer sexual abuse.

You might find it helpful to create a version of your policies and procedures that are suitable for children and young people.

Sharing this information may:

- help children and young people understand that any incidents of peer-on-peer sexual abuse will be taken seriously and responded to effectively.
- help them know how to report anything upsetting that may happen.
- encourage them to speak out if they are worried about their own or someone else's behaviour.

You should also have codes of conduct which clearly set out what behaviour is and is not appropriate for adults and children. This will help make sure young people know what behaviour is suitable for your setting and what the consequences will be if they breach the rules.

Helping children speak out

Children might not feel able to talk to adults about peer-on-peer sexual abuse. But there are things you can do to make it easier.

- Children may feel more confident speaking out if they have a positive, trusting relationship with a trusted adult. This can be done by encouraging them to share their thoughts and opinions, responding to their concerns, and respecting and listening to them.
- If children can see a culture within your organisation that challenges inappropriate behaviour, they may feel more confident that any concerns they raise will be responded to appropriately.
- Having specialist staff in pastoral care or counselling roles can make it easier for children to share their concern.

Safe environments

(Contextual Safeguarding Network, 2020)

You should think about how you can make your organisation's environment safe for children and young people. To start with, you could identify any locations where there are concerns about peer-on-peer sexual abuse taking place. This might include toilets, unsupervised corridors and areas that are poorly lit or hidden from adult view. Think about what you can do to make these places safer – for example, increasing supervision levels in certain areas or improving lighting.

[> Find out about creating safer environments for children and young people](#)

Talking with children about abuse and harassment

It's important to talk with children and young people about peer-on-peer sexual abuse. It's good practice for all organisations that work with children to have discussions about sex and healthy relationships. In schools, lessons on relationships, sex and sexuality are a good way of helping children learn about topics such as appropriate sexual behaviour, trust, consent, boundaries and responsibility.

Topics you can discuss include:

- what healthy sexual activity and respectful relationships look like (both online and offline).
- gender stereotypes and perceptions of gender roles.
- pornography and how it presents sexual behaviour.
- consent and withdrawing consent.

(Department for Education (DfE), 2018; DfE, 2020).

Explain what peer-on-peer sexual abuse is and what it may look like. This may help children understand if they have seen or experienced abuse. Make sure they know who they can talk to if they are concerned about anything or have experienced something upsetting.

Childline has produced age-appropriate information and advice for children and young people about sexual abuse, which includes information about peer-on-peer sexual abuse. You may want to signpost children to Childline for support or use some of these examples to help start a conversation.

[> Childline's information about sexual abuse for children and young people](#)

[> Read our advice on how to have difficult conversations with children](#)

[> Find out more about how to promote healthy relationships, from early years through to older children](#)

Training

Make sure all the adults in your organisation are trained to recognise and respond to peer-on-peer sexual abuse. This will help them understand what is normal, inappropriate or abusive sexual behaviour and what action to take.

Support resources for students		
Resources for student victims Support from specialist sexual violence sector organisation	Recommended by DfE via Document - Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges. May 2018	Home Rape Crisis England & Wales The Survivors Trust
Resources for student victims Support from specialist sexual violence sector organisation		NSPCC helpline* can be contacted on 0800 136 663, or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk . Helpline for people who have experienced sexual abuse in education settings launched 2021 – on school website
Resources for school staff Support from specialist sexual violence sector organisation	Recommended by DfE via Document - Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges. May 2018	The Anti-Bullying Alliance has developed guidance for schools about preventing and responding to sexual bullying. Preventing sexual bullying Anti-Bullying Alliance -
Resources for student victims		SARSAS 0808 801 0456* HOPELINEUK is a confidential support and advice service for children and young people under the age of 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, or anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide. or 0808 801 0456 0808 801 0464 Email: support@sarsas.org.uk Providing support to anyone who has experienced rape or any kind of sexual assault or abuse at any time in their lives.
Resources for student victims		Papyrus Trust Call: 0800 068 4141 Text: 07860 039 967 Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org Papyrus Trust runs HOPELINEUK which is a confidential support and advice service for children and young people under the age of 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, or anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide.

Appendix B – Reporting Concerns (2)



