

The South Wolds Academy & Sixth Form

Child-on-child Abuse Policy



Approved by: LGB

Date: November 2024

Next review: November 2026

Introduction

At The South Wolds Academy and Sixth Form we have a **zero-tolerance** approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse including sexual violence, sexual harassment (SVSH) and harmful sexual behaviour (HSB). We believe that child-on-child abuse is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. It will **never** be passed off as “banter,” “just having a laugh,” “a part of growing up” or “boys being boys.” We will **respond to all signs, reports, and concerns** of child-on-child abuse, including those that have happened outside of our school premises, and/or online. We recognise that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers, we take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. We recognise that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported – we understand that certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation. We acknowledge that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable. We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse within our school and beyond.

In cases where child-on-child abuse is suspected or identified we will follow our Child Protection procedures, taking a contextual and trauma-informed approach to support all children who have been affected by the situation including the victim(s) (the child who has been, or the children who have been harmed) and **alleged** perpetrator (the child who has allegedly harmed a child or children).

Policy Development

This policy has been developed to reflect the most recent Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Statutory Guidance (1 September 2024).

This policy is available:

- Online at [Policies and Documents - The South Wolds Academy and Sixth Form](#)
- From the school office

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff working with children maintain an attitude of **‘it could happen here,’** and this is especially important when considering child-on-child abuse.

The Head teacher (Mrs Angus) has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation and liaising with the Governing body, parents/carers, LA (Local Authority), and outside agencies.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility – however, all staff, parents/carers and pupils need to be aware of who to report to and how to report any safeguarding concerns. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Leads (DSL) and their Deputy/Deputies in our school is/are:

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – Mrs Sarah Brooks

Operational Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – Mr Jake Murphy

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) – Mrs Lucy Danson

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) – Mrs Kate Dawson

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL and SENCO) – Miss Chloe Fox

The nominated Governor with responsibility for child-on-child abuse is Mrs Annette Beaumont.

Definitions

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudiced-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children, (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- 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 or semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Upskirting (which is a criminal offence), 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
- 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). This may also be an indicator of wider exploitation such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and/or Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and/or County Lines.

Staff are aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. Children are at risk of abuse and other risks online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse and other risks will take place concurrently both online and offline. Children can also abuse other children online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography to those who do not want to receive such content.

Recognising:

At The South Wolds Academy we recognise that behaviours associated with child-on-child abuse take place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on this spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

We recognise that all children grow and develop at their own pace. We will use our professional judgement and knowledge of child development when responding to child-on-child abuse.

Reporting and Responding:

At The South Wolds Academy we want children, parents/carers, staff, and visitors to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously. We recognise that our school's initial response to a report of child-on-child abuse is incredibly important - how we respond to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims to report or come forward. As a school we will also respond to reports of alleged child-on-child abuse that have occurred online or outside of school. These reports will be treated seriously, and the school remains committed to supporting and safeguarding all parties including the victim(s) (the child who has been, or the children who have been harmed), **alleged** perpetrator (the child who has allegedly harmed a child or children), and any other child(ren) who may be affected.

We will make decisions on a case-by-case basis, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) taking the leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as the Local Authority, Children's Social Care, and the Police as appropriate. We will ensure that we reference and follow other school policies and procedures as appropriate. We have clear reporting systems for each group of our school community: the effectiveness of these reporting systems is reviewed throughout the academic year and may be expanded to meet the needs of all members of our community.

Children (including bystanders):

It is important to understand that a victim (a child who has been harmed) may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally - some children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. In some

cases, the victim (a child who has been harmed) may not make a direct report. We recognise that in some instances another child may report on another child's behalf. All children will know how to report concerns or incidents of child-on-child abuse.

We ask that all children report any concerning behaviour to a member of school staff – this can be any member of teaching or non-teaching staff, including a class teacher, form tutor, Head of Year, a member of the office team, or any other member of staff. We talk about trusted adults regularly to remind our children of who they can report concerns to.

The member of staff will listen to the child and make an initial note of their concerns, they will then discuss next steps with them and reassure them that they will be supported. In line with the statutory guidance provided in Keeping children safe in education 2024, we will never promise a child that we will not tell anyone about a report of any form of abuse, as this may not be in the best interests of the child. The member of staff will make a formal record of the concern/report on the school's recording system and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The member of staff will directly alert the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead if the report is deemed urgent or if a child is considered at risk.

We understand that some children may find it difficult to tell a member of staff about their concerns verbally, we therefore have an additional reporting mechanism in place. Our school has an online reporting system, the [Sharp system](#) which a child can use if they feel unable to tell a member of staff about their concerns verbally. This report will be followed up by the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Parents/carers

We understand that parents and carers may well struggle to cope with making or receiving a report that their child has been the victim of (has been harmed) or is an alleged perpetrator (has allegedly harmed a child or children) of child-on-child abuse.

In line with the statutory guidance provided in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 (Part 5, page 111-142), we will seek advice and support from other services as decided on a case-by-case basis. All decisions and actions taken by the school will consider the needs of the individual children involved, and the wider school community.

We ask that if parents/carers have concerns about their child experiencing or allegedly perpetrating child-on-child abuse, that they contact the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy (in person/via telephone call/via email) to explain their concerns. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will take an initial note of the concerns but may ask to schedule a meeting to allow for more time to discuss the concerns in detail. Following the report and/or the meeting, the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will make a formal record of the report

on the school's recording system and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will seek advice from Statutory Services if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

We ask that parents/carers speak directly to the school with their concerns rather than discussing them with other members of the school community in person or online.

Our school remains committed to supporting pupils and their families in all instances of child-on-child abuse. We will endeavour to ensure that all parties are kept informed of progress and any developments, but we will also need to show due regard to GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and ongoing investigations by statutory services. This may mean, at times, that we are not able to provide or share information or updates.

If a parent/carer is not satisfied with our school's actions, we ask that they follow our school's complaint policy and procedures. This is available online from our school website and on request from the school office.

Staff

Our staff work closely with our children and therefore may notice a change in a child's behaviour or attitude that might indicate that something is wrong before receiving a report from a child or a member of the school community. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare or are concerned that a child is displaying behaviours that may show they have been the victim of (are being harmed/has been harmed) or that they are perpetrating (are harming/have harmed a child or children) child-on-child abuse, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.

The member of staff will make a formal record of the concern/report on the school's recording system and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The member of staff will directly alert the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead if the report is deemed urgent or if a child is considered at risk. The Designated/Deputy Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will seek advice from Statutory Services if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

Visitors

We ensure that all visitors to our school are aware of our Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures and which staff member they should report any concerns to (the member of staff may differ depending on the purpose of the visit e.g., supply teacher, governor, external agency etc.). Upon arrival, visitors are provided with lanyards that contain information regarding the method for reporting concerns to the safeguarding team at the earliest opportunity.

The member of staff receiving the report will take an initial note of the concerns and will then make a formal record of the concerns on the school's recording system and other relevant staff members will be alerted. The Designated/Deputy Safeguarding Lead will seek advice from Statutory Services if the report is deemed urgent or if a child is considered at risk.

Recording and evaluating:

We will ensure a written report is made on the school's safeguarding system as soon after the disclosure as possible, recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated. We will ensure that details of decisions made and reasons for decisions are recorded as well as any outcomes.

We will ensure that any 'safety plans' are recorded (paper or electronic), shared with staff as appropriate, copies kept on the school's safeguarding system and kept under review.

Strategies for Prevention:

The South Wolds Academy actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

- **Staff training:**
 - All forms of abuse, neglect, or exploitation
 - Contextual safeguarding ('harms outside the home' or extra-familial harm)
 - Identification and classification of specific behaviours – SVSH, HSB etc.
 - Making it clear there is a **zero-tolerance approach** to child-on-child abuse (especially in relation to SVSH) that it is **never** acceptable and will not be tolerated. Ensuring it is **never** passed off as "banter," "just having a laugh," "a part of growing up" or "boys being boys."
 - Recognising, acknowledging, and understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported.
 - Challenging physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts, and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts
 - Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside of the classroom)
 - Ensuring that the Governing body is aware of its statutory safeguarding responsibility (effective child protection policy – child-on-child abuse policy)
 - Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the safeguarding and pastoral team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify those children who may need additional support

- o Training and regular updates regarding online risk and appropriate signposting of further support and advice in relation to online safety.
- **Information for students:**
 - o Creating an ethos and culture in which all children feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgemental environment, and have them listened to
 - o Gathering student voice so children can share their experiences of school and any areas or times in which they do not feel safe
 - o They are regularly informed about the school's approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse, including the school's zero-tolerance approach towards all forms of child-on-child abuse, the process for reporting their concerns of child-on-child abuse and where to go for further help, support, and advice
 - o Educating all children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via a well embedded RSHE curriculum, PD curriculum or specific drop-down days such as those provided by Equation
 - o Teaching of age-appropriate information regarding online risks and appropriate signposting of further support and advice in relation to online safety.
- **Information for parents/carers**
 - o Sharing information with parents
 - o Challenging the attitudes that underlie child-on-child abuse – in school and/or the wider community
 - o Ensuring parents /carers are aware of the ethos and culture of the school
 - o Sharing of regular information regarding online risks and appropriate signposting of further support and advice in relation to online safety.
- **RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education) / PD curriculum**
 - o Our RHE/PD programme is fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and/or other vulnerabilities
 - o We will, through our RSHE/PD programme promote:
 - Healthy and respectful relationships
 - Boundaries and consent
 - Equality and raise awareness of stereotyping and prejudice
 - Body confidence and self-esteem
 - How to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour

- The concepts of, and laws relating to – sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, teenage relationship abuse (intimate personal relationships between children), and how to access support, and
- What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable

Breaches / Complaints:

Breaches to this policy will be dealt with in the same way that breaches of other school policies are dealt with, as determined by the Head teacher and Governing Body.

If a parent/carer is not satisfied with our school’s actions, we ask that they follow our school’s complaint policy and procedures. This is available online from our school website, and on request from the school office.

Links with other policies:

You may find it helpful to read this child-on-child abuse policy alongside the other following school policies:

Policy	How it may link
EMET Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy	Includes information about child protection procedures and contextualised safeguarding
Behaviour Management Policy	Includes details about the school’s behaviour system including potential sanctions for pupils
Anti-Bullying policy	Includes information about bullying behaviours and details about online bullying/cyberbullying and vulnerable groups
EMET Online Safety policy	Includes information about children’s online behaviour
EMET Equality Policy	Includes information about our school’s approach to tackling prejudice and celebrating differences. Links to prejudice-related language and crime and the protected characteristics
EMET RSE, Health and Mental Wellbeing policy	Includes information about our school’s RSHE programme and how we teach about healthy relationships, friendships, and bullying
EMET Complaints Policy	Includes information about how to make a complaint if you are not satisfied with the school’s response

Further information and support can be found through the following links:

- Part 5: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment (pages 111-142) of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) - [Keeping children safe in education 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118111/keeping-children-safe-in-education-2024.pdf)
- Simon Hackett (2010) Continuum model of sexual behaviours -
 - [Sexual development and behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)
 - [NSPCC Learning Understanding sexualised behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)

Support for young people: Local and National

Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChiIVAs) provided by IMARA provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence. They are based within the specialist sexual violence sector and will help the victim understand what their options are and how the criminal justice process works if they have reported or are considering reporting to the police. ChiSVAs will work in partnership with schools and colleges to ensure the best possible outcomes for the victim.

<https://www.imara.org.uk/>

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)

www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/cahms

Rape Crisis Centres can provide therapeutic support for children over 13 who have experienced sexual violence.

www.nottsstvss.org.uk

CEOP provides guidance for those worried about online sexual abuse or the way someone has been communicating online <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>

Early Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Support Service for young people (and parents) in Nottinghamshire <https://www.beusupport.co.uk>