

# Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools



## Peer on Peer/Child on Child Abuse – Policy

This policy has been produced with reference to:

[Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges guidance \(DfE 2021\)](#) and covers the expectations set out in KCSiE 2021

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between children of any age and sex. It can occur through a single child or 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 find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their education attainment as well as their emotional well-being. 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, adults, and school and college staff are supported and protected as appropriate.

### Policy

We believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults and other children in school

We recognise that children are capable of abusing other children and their peers and this will be dealt with under our child protection policy and in line with KCSiE (2021) and following recommendations from the Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges guidance (DfE 2021).

We are clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.



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

## **Prevention**

Taking a whole school approach to safeguarding & child protection

Providing training to staff

Providing a clear set of values and standards, underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support; and by a planned programme of evidence-based content delivered through the curriculum.

Engaging with specialist support and interventions.

## **Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment**

Children making any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment including "upskirting" (The Voyeurism Offences Act 2019) will be taken seriously, kept safe and be well supported.

If the report includes an online element staff will be mindful of the [Searching, Screening and Confiscation: advice for schools 2018](#) guidance.

Staff taking the report will inform the DSL or the Deputy DSL immediately.

Staff taking a report will never promise confidentiality.

Parents or carers should usually be informed (unless this would put the child at greater risk).

If a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a Request for Support will be made to the C-SPA securely email: [cspa@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:cspa@surreycc.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 470 9100, as appropriate.

## **Risk Assessment**

Following a report, the DSL will make an immediate risk and needs assessment on a case-by-case basis.

The risk assessment will consider;

- The victim, especially their protection and support.
- The alleged perpetrator, their support needs and any discipline action.
- All other children at the school.
- The victim and the alleged perpetrator sharing classes and space at school.
- The risk assessment will be recorded and kept under review.

Where there has been other professional intervention and/or other specialist risk assessments, these professional assessments will be used to inform the school's approach to supporting and protecting children.

Support regarding risk assessments can be accessed from the [Education Safeguarding Team](mailto:education.safeguarding@surreycc.gov.uk) – [education.safeguarding@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:education.safeguarding@surreycc.gov.uk)

### **Action: The DSL will consider**

- The wishes of the victim.
- The nature of the incident including whether a crime has been committed and the harm caused.
- Ages of the children involved.
- Developmental stages of the children.
- Any power imbalance between the children.
- Any previous incidents.
- Ongoing risks.
- Other related issues or wider context.

### **Options:**

- Manage internally
- Early Help intervention
- Request for support to the C-SPA
- Report to the Police (generally in parallel with a request for support to the C-SPA)

## **Ongoing Response:**

The DSL will manage each case individually and will ensure the risk assessment is reviewed regularly with relevant partner agencies, for example the Police and Children's Social Care.

Where there is a criminal investigation into a rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, the alleged perpetrator should be removed from any classes they share with the victim.

The DSL will consider how best to keep the victim and perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport where appropriate.

Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, the school will take suitable action. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and may lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially themselves and other children).

Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, the school will, if it has not already, consider any suitable sanctions in light of their behaviour policy, which may include consideration of permanent exclusion. Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school, the Headteacher should continue keeping the victim and perpetrator in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school premises and transport. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.

The victim, alleged perpetrator and any other children & adults affected will receive appropriate support and safeguards on a case-by-case basis.

The school will take any disciplinary action against the alleged perpetrator in accordance with the school behaviour policy.

The school recognises that taking disciplinary action and providing appropriate support are not mutually exclusive actions and will occur at the same time if necessary.

## **Physical Abuse**

While a clear focus of peer on peer/child on child abuse is around sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from children to children can also be abusive.

These are equally not tolerated and if it is believed that a crime has been committed, will be reported to the Police.

The principles from the anti-bullying policy will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any Police investigation will need to take priority.

### *References:*

[DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021](#)

[Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges guidance \(DfE 2021\)](#)