KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL
POLICY DOCUMENT

Title: Child on Child Abuse Policy

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Child on Child Abuse Policy

Introduction

This policy is based on the child on child abuse policy produced by the Safeguarding Unit at Farrer & Co, which encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach, in collaboration with Dr Carlene Firmin, MBE. Dr Firmin is a leading expert on child on child abuse, and the driving force behind Contextual Safeguarding in this country. The Safeguarding Unit at Farrer & Co has produced this resource (September 2023 version)[1], led by Adele Eastman (Senior Counsel), in collaboration with Dr Jenny Lloyd (Durham University), Genevieve Woods (Barrister, 3 Raymond Buildings), Professor Andy Phippen (Bournemouth University), and Delyth Lynch (Director of Safeguarding, Wellington College). addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf (farrer.co.uk)

Further information can be found in the following guidance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance (DfE)
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation non-statutory advice (DfE).

Aim

This policy sets out King Edward's School's approach for any issue that could constitute child on child abuse. It relates to, and should be read alongside, the School's child protection policy and any other relevant policies including, but not limited to, bullying (including cyber-bullying), youth produced sexual imagery, online safety, IT use, data protection and retention of records, children missing in education, student behaviour and discipline, exclusions.

It sets out our strategy for improving prevention and identifying and appropriately managing child-on-child abuse.

This policy applies to all governors, the senior leadership team, and staff. It is reviewed annually, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which students are or may be exposed.

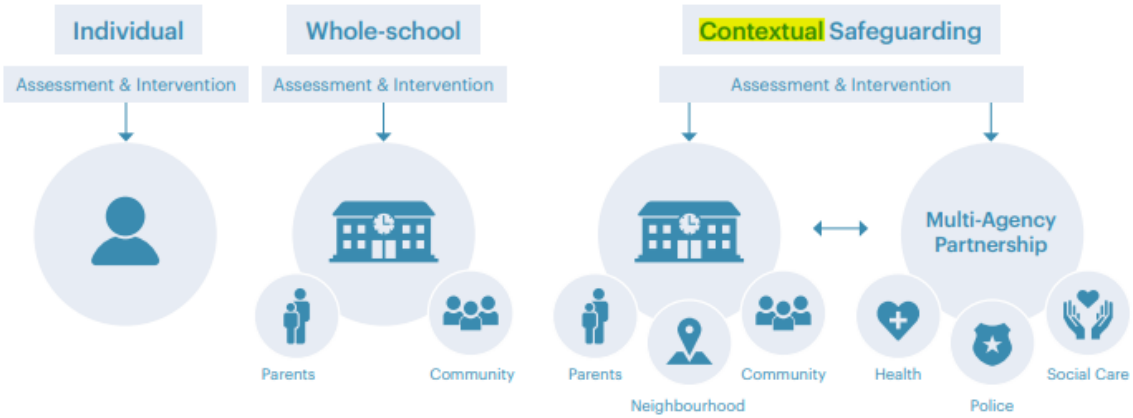
Definitions

Child on child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children, and within children's relationships (both intimate and non- intimate), friendships and wider peer associations. Child on child abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to): serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence and abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or prejudice-based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence.

Examples of online child on child abuse would include sexting, online abuse, child on child grooming, the distribution of youth produced sexualised content, and harassment. (see extract below from September 2023 version)[1]

[1] addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf (farrer.co.uk)

Fig.2 Contextual Safeguarding approach



Definition of Contextual Safeguarding [2]

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to creating safety for children outside of their homes. Taking a Contextual Safeguarding approach means understanding how behaviours like child-on-child abuse take place in different contexts, and can be prevented or driven by wider structural, systemic or cultural factors.

For school/college professionals working contextually has two key elements:

• Creating safe school/college contexts by addressing factors beyond individual students that may undermine safety. For example, school/college notices, policies, staff training, wider school/college culture and prevention of harm etc.

• Ensuring that school/college professionals, and all those within a Local Safeguarding Partnership, work alongside, rather than just refer into, children's social care, to create safe spaces in which children may have encountered child-on-child abuse. This may differ to traditional child protection responses where the focus is on families.

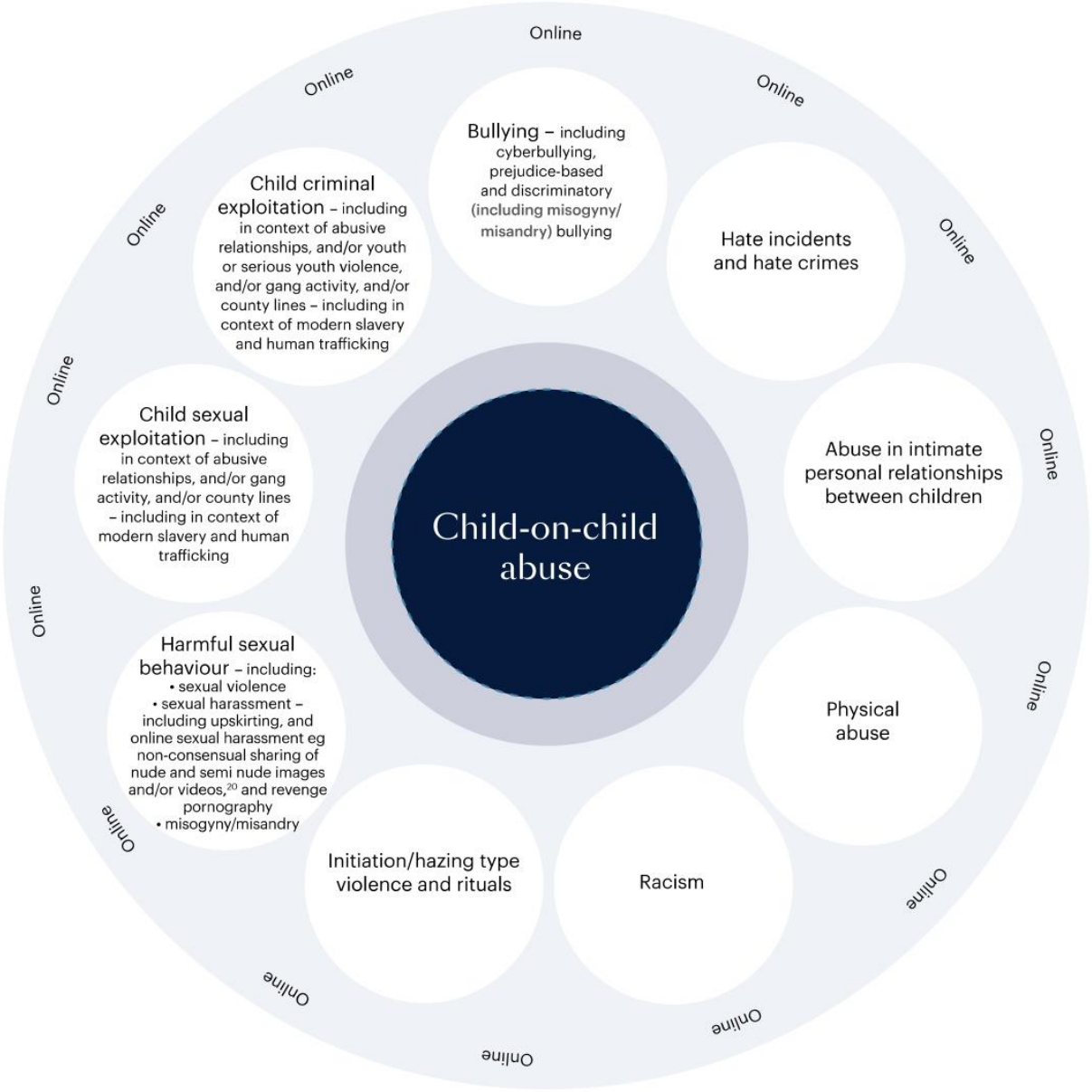
Early help

Safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the School and can occur between children outside School. All staff, but especially the DSL and any deputies, should consider the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. The School will as part of the wider assessment of children, consider whether environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. The School will share as much information with Children's Social Care as possible as part of the referral process to enable consideration of all the available evidence and the full context of any abuse.

Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. In the first instance, staff who consider that a pupil may benefit from early help should discuss this with the School's DSL. The DSL will consider the appropriate action to take in accordance with the B&NES Safeguarding Children Executive referral threshold document. The DSL will support staff in liaising with external agencies and professionals in an inter-agency assessment, as appropriate. If early help is appropriate, the matter will be kept under review and consideration given to a referral to children's social care if the pupil's situation does not appear to be improving.

[2] [2] addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf (farrer.co.uk)

Fig.1 Overview of child-on-child abuse



Responding to concerns or allegations of child on child abuse

General principles

All members of staff (including non-teaching staff) are aware of how to recognise and the need to refer any issue that could constitute child on child abuse. This is covered within staff training and in the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Any direct disclosure by a child or young person will be taken seriously.

It is essential that all concerns and allegations of child on child abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our School environment.

Any response will:

- include a thorough investigation of the concern(s) or allegation(s), and the wider context in which it/they may have occurred (as appropriate) – depending on the nature and seriousness of the alleged incident(s), it may be appropriate for the police and/or children's social care to carry out this investigation;
- treat all children involved as being at potential risk; and
- while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. The School will ensure that a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter.

The School will take into account:

- that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved. The school will consider and address the effect of wider sociocultural contexts – such as the child's/ children's peer group (both within and outside the School); family; the School environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence and consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child/ children's needs and to mitigate risk;
- the potential complexity of child on child abuse and of children´s experiences, and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent. While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited they are not consenting; and
- the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/ children and their parents, and obtain consent to any referral before it is made. The School should manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so. It is particularly important to take into account the wishes of any child who has allegedly been abused, and to give that child as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and how they will be supported.
- Students are also encouraged to use the link to the Lucy Faithfull Foundation'ShoreSpace' (a confidential chat service for young people concerned about their own, or someone else's sexual thoughts and behaviours).

What should you do if you suspect either that a childmay be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s)?

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay.

How will the School respond to concerns or allegations of child on child abuse?

The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the member of staff who has reported it/them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected.

Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL should consider what urgent action can be taken in addition to the actions and referral duties set out in this policy, and in the School's youth produced sexual imagery policy, to seek specialist help in preventing the images spreading further and removing the images from the internet.

DSLs will always use their professional judgement to:

(a) assess the nature and seriousness of the alleged behaviour, and

(b) determine whether it is appropriate for the alleged behaviour to be to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required.

In borderline or complex cases, the DSL may wish to consult with children's social care and/or local safeguarding teams and/or other relevant agencies in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's procedures on a no-names basis (where possible) to determine the most appropriate response.

Where the DSL considers or suspects that the alleged behaviour in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum[3] or where the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question might otherwise require it, the DSL should contact children's social care and/or the police immediately and, in any event, within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of the alleged behaviour. The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the agency and agree on a course of action.

Once a disclosure has been made:

• Refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will hold an initial review meeting with appropriate staff (this may include the staff member(s) who heard the disclosure)

• DSL meets with the young people involved (if appropriate); images will only be viewed if it is necessary to safeguard a pupil

• Parents will be informed at an early stage and involved in the process in order to support the pupil(s) (unless there is good reason to believe that involving them would put the pupil at risk of harm)

• Contact social care or the police where there is any concern the young person is at risk of harm

Once a DSL has enough information, the decision should be made whether to deal with the matter in school, refer it to the police or to social care. The School may decide not to involve the police, for example where an incident can be defined as "bullying" rather than child on child abuse, and there is no evidence of abusive or aggravating elements, but this will be at the discretion of the DSL. The School may choose to escalate the incident at any time if further information/concerns are disclosed at a later date. In dealing with cases, the School's primary concern will be the welfare and protection of the children and young people involved.

Information sharing, data protection and record keeping

When responding to concern(s) or allegation(s) of child on child abuse, the School will:

- always consider carefully, in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies (where they are involved), how to share information about the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the student(s) affected, their parents, staff, and other students and individuals,
- record the information that is necessary for the School and other relevant agencies (where they are involved) to respond to the concern(s) or allegation(s) and safeguard everyone involved.

See poster at the end of the policy for summary of guidance.

[3] Responding to children who display sexualised behaviour (nspcc.org.uk)

On-going proactive work for a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach

The School's response to concerns or allegations of child on child abuse should be part of on-going proactive work by the School to embed best practice and in taking a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach (defined above) to such abuse. As such the School's response can become part of its wider prevention work.

This response may involve the School working with the local authority to undertake, for example, a Contextual Safeguarding school assessment which would fit into a systems approach to Contextual Safeguarding. The response could also include the School asking itself a series of questions about the context in which an incident of child on child abuse occurred in the School, the local community in which the School is based, and the wider physical and online environment – such as:

- What protective factors and influences exist within the School (such as positive peer influences, examples where child on child abuse has been challenged, etc.) and how can the School bolster these?
- How (if at all) did the School's physical environment or the students' routes to and from the School contribute to the abuse, and how can the School address this going forwards, for example by improving the School's safety, security and supervision, or by working with local safeguarding partners to mitigate the risks to students' safety whilst travelling to and from the School?
- How (if at all) did the online environment contribute to the abuse, and how can the School address this going forwards, for example by strengthening the way in which the School encourages positive and safe use of the internet by students?
- Did wider gender norms, equality issues, and/or societal attitudes contribute to the abuse?
- What was the relationship between the abuse and the cultural norms between staff and students, and how can these be addressed going forward?
- Does the abuse indicate a need for staff training on, for example, underlying attitudes, a particular issue or the handling of particular types of abuse, or to address any victim-blaming narratives from staff?
- How have similar cases been managed in the past and what effect has this had?
- Does the case or any identified trends highlight areas for development in the way in which the School works with children to raise their awareness of and/prevent child on child abuse, including by way of the School's PSHE curriculum and lessons that address underlying attitudes or behaviour such as gender and equalities work, respect, boundaries, consent, children's rights and critical thinking and/or avoiding victim-blaming narratives?
- Are there any lessons to be learnt about the way in which the School engages with parents to address child on child abuse issues?
- Are there underlying issues that affect other schools in the area and is there a need for a multi-agency response?
- Does this case highlight a need to work with certain children to build their confidence, and teach them how to identify and manage abusive behaviour?
- Were there opportunities to intervene earlier or differently and/or to address common themes amongst the behaviour of other children in the School?

Answers to these questions can be developed into an action plan where necessary, to be reviewed on a regular basis by the School's leadership and the DSL. The School will, where possible and appropriate, work with the local authority and wider partners to deliver on this plan, possibly as part of a wider Contextual Safeguarding school assessment led by or with input from the local authority.

Child on Child abuse : how to respond to an incident

This document provides a brief overview for frontline staff on how to respond to an incident of child on child abuse.

All such incidents should be immediately reported to the DSL and managed in line with the School's Child Protection Policy.

The appropriate safeguarding lead will be familiar with the DfE's advice on how to deal with sexual violence and sexual harassment.

What do we mean by child on child abuse?

For these purposes, child on child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children, and within children's relationships (both intimate and non- intimate), friendships and wider peer associations. Child on Child abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to): serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), relationship abuse domestic violence and abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence harmful sexual behaviour, and/or prejudice-based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence.

Examples of online child on child abuse would include sexting, online abuse, child on child grooming, the distribution of youth produced sexualised content, and harassment.

What to do if an incident comes to your attention

Report it to your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or equivalent immediately. The School's 'Child on Child Abuse Policy' contains more detail.

- Refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will hold an initial review meeting with appropriate staff (this may include the staff member(s) who heard the disclosure)
- DSL meets with the young people involved (if appropriate); images will only be viewed if it is necessary to safeguard a pupil
- Parents will be informed at an early stage and involved in the process in order to support the pupil(s) (unless there is good reason to believe that involving them would put the pupil at risk of harm)
- Contact social care or the police where there is any concern the young person is at risk of harm
- Do not share information about the incident with other members of staff, the young person(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers.
- Do not say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved.
- Do explain to them that you need to report it and reassure them that they will receive support and help from the DSL (or equivalent).

Once a DSL has enough information, the decision should be made whether to deal with the matter in school, refer it to the police or to social care. The School may decide not to involve the police, for example where an incident can be defined as "bullying" rather than child on child abuse, and there is no evidence of abusive or aggravating elements, but this will be at the discretion of the DSL The School may choose to escalate the incident at any time if further information/concerns are disclosed at a later date.
In dealing with cases, the School's primary concern will be the welfare and protection of the children and young people involved.

Data Sharing to Safeguard children

The UK Information Commissioner has made it clear that people and organisations will not get in trouble with the ICO for trying to prevent or lessen a serious risk or threat to a child's mental and physical wellbeing.

So, remember to:

- Think; have you seen or learned of something that makes you concerned for the safety of a child or young person? Could sharing this information help protect them from harm?

- Check who is the most appropriate person to share that information with and that you are doing so safely.

- Share the information with whoever needs to know so the child can be protected from harm.

Contact the School's Data Protection lead (DPL) at dataprotection@kesbath.com for help/advice on issues around personal data