



Child on Child Abuse/Sexual Harassment and Violence

Our Shared Vision

Striving for excellence in everything we do

High Quality
Education for
ALL

Effective
home/school
and community
partnerships

Equality Mission Statement

We are committed to ensuring equality of educational opportunity and support for all pupils, parents, carers, staff and visitors irrespective of age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy, gender reassignment, and socio-economic background. We aim to provide a fully inclusive school in which every person feels proud of their identity and is able to participate fully within the school community. We believe that a diverse school community is a strength which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.

Approved by: FGB	Date: 11.12.2025
Signature (Chair of Committee): Signed copy held on file in school	Signature (Headteacher): Signed copy held on file in school

Last reviewed on: December 2025	Next review date: December 2026
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This policy covers many of the articles from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some key ones are listed below.

Article 3

All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.

Article 4

Governments must do all they can by creating systems and passing laws that promote and protect children's rights.

Article 6

Children have the right to live a full life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

Article 12

Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions considered.

Article 16

Children have the right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their family and their home.

Article 17

Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

Article 19

Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 29

Education must encourage the child's respect for human rights...

Article 34

Governments must protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.

Article 39

Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation etc. must receive special support to help them recover...

Article 40

A child accused or guilty of breaking the law must be treated with dignity and respect.

Introduction

Becontree Primary School is 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. We recognise that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers; this includes verbal as well as physical abuse. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult and child-on-child abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as “banter” or as part of “growing up”. In cases where child-on-child abuse is identified we will follow our child protection procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected.

Definitions

Child-on-child abuse is when children abuse other children. This type of abuse can take place inside and outside of school. It can also take place both face-to-face and online, and can occur simultaneously between the two.

Our school has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We recognise that even if there are no reports, that doesn't mean that this kind of abuse isn't happening.

Where children abuse their peers online, this can take the form of, for example, 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 don't want to receive such content.

If staff have any concerns about child-on-child abuse, or a child makes a report to them, they will follow the procedures set out in section 7 of this policy, as appropriate. In particular, section 7.8 and 7.9 set out more detail about our school's approach to this type of abuse.

When considering instances of harmful sexual behaviour between children, we will consider their ages and stages of development. We recognise that children displaying harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced their own abuse and trauma, and will offer them appropriate support.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur:

- Between 2 children of any age and sex
- Through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children
- Online and face to face (both physically and verbally)

Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school.

If a victim reports an incident, it is essential that staff make sure they are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting any form of abuse or neglect. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

When supporting victims, staff will:

- Reassure victims that the law on child-on-child abuse is there to protect them, not criminalise them
- Regularly review decisions and actions, and update policies with lessons learnt
- Look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, and decide on a course of action where we identify any patterns
- Consider if there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled inappropriate behaviour to occur and whether revising policies and/or providing extra staff training could minimise the risk of it happening again

- Remain alert to the possible challenges of detecting signs that a child has experienced sexual violence, and show sensitivity to their needs

Some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows that girls, children with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children are at greater risk.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- Challenging inappropriate behaviours
- Making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- Challenging physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them

Child-on-child abuse can manifest itself in many ways

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

- Bullying (including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (this is 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 and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Up-skirting, 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)

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school such as the Behaviour and Attitudes Strategy, Anti-Bullying policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and Online Safety policy.

This policy focuses on child-on-child abuse. It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025) and should be read in conjunction with Working Together to Safeguard Children, the Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LSCB) Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

The policy:

- Sets out our strategies for preventing, identifying and managing child-on-child abuse.
- Takes a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved. Acknowledging that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable and may have been abused by peer, parents or adults in the community.

Understanding Child-on-Child abuse

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex or a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

The impact of this behaviour on children can be very distressing and have an impact on academic achievement and emotional health and wellbeing.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence may also occur online and offline.

Understanding a child's behaviour is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

The school will use tools, such as the Brooks Traffic Light Tool to increase understanding of healthy and harmful sexual behaviours and assists in assessment and decision making.

Vulnerable Groups

We recognise that all children can be at risk, however, we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable.

This can include:

experience of abuse within their family;

living with domestic violence;

young people in care;

children who go missing;

children with disabilities

children who identify or are perceived as LGBT and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

Whilst research tells us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers and, girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools this is not confined to girls.

Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviour such as antisocial behaviour. Boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs. We recognise that both boys and girls experience child on child abuse, but they do so in gendered ways.

All staff should be aware of indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime.

These may include

- increased absence from school,
- a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups,
- a significant decline in performance,
- signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing,
- signs of assault or unexplained injuries
- unexplained gifts or new possessions that could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

Becontree Primary School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

- Educating all Governors, Strategic Leadership Team, staff and volunteers and parents about this issue.

This includes

(a) Contextual Safeguarding;

- (b) The identification and classification of specific behaviours;
 - (c) The importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing.
- Educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum.
 - Pupils are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse.
 - They are regularly informed about the school's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse.
 - Engaging parents on this issue.
 - Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the school's safeguarding lead.
 - Working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, pupils and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the school community;
 - Creating conditions in which our pupils can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships;
 - Creating a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to;
 - Responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately.

Creating a supportive environment in school and minimising the risk of child-on-child abuse

We recognise the importance of taking proactive action to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse, and of creating a supportive environment where victims feel confident in reporting incidents.

To achieve this, we will:

- Challenge any form of derogatory or sexualised language or inappropriate behaviour between peers, including requesting or sending sexual images
- Be vigilant to issues that particularly affect different genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing type violence with respect to boys
- Ensure our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent
- Ensure pupils are able to easily and confidently report abuse using our reporting systems (as outlined in our Safeguarding policy)
- Ensure staff reassure victims that they are being taken seriously
- Be alert to reports of sexual violence and/or harassment that may point to environmental or systemic problems that could be addressed by updating policies, processes and the curriculum, or could reflect wider issues in the local area that should be shared with safeguarding partners
- Support children who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape or assault by penetration. We will do all we can to make sure the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and any witnesses are not bullied or harassed
- Consider intra-familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following a report of sexual violence and/or harassment
- Ensure staff are trained to understand:
 - How to recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse, and know how to identify it and respond to reports
 - That even if there are no reports of child-on-child abuse in school, it does not mean it is not happening – staff should maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”
 - That if they have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told, and that victims may not always make a direct report. For example:
 - Children can show signs or act in ways they hope adults will notice and react to

- A friend may make a report
- A member of staff may overhear a conversation
- A child's behaviour might indicate that something is wrong
- That certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, gender, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation
- That a pupil harming a peer could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves, and that this would fall under the scope of this policy
- The important role they have to play in preventing child-on-child abuse and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it
- That they should speak to the DSL if they have any concerns
- That social media is likely to play a role in the fall-out from any incident or alleged incident, including for potential contact between the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and friends from either side

The DSL will take the lead role in any disciplining of the alleged perpetrator(s). We will provide support at the same time as taking any disciplinary action.

Disciplinary action can be taken while other investigations are going on, e.g. by the police. The fact that another body is investigating or has investigated an incident doesn't (in itself) prevent our school from coming to its own conclusion about what happened and imposing a penalty accordingly. We will consider these matters on a case-by-case basis, taking into account whether:

- Taking action would prejudice an investigation and/or subsequent prosecution – we will liaise with the police and/or local authority children's social care to determine this
- There are circumstances that make it unreasonable or irrational for us to reach our own view about what happened while an independent investigation is ongoing

Risk Assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will make an immediate risk and needs' assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The DSL will contact the local authority children's social care team and follow its advice, as well as the police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence

The DSL will put a risk assessment and support plan into place for all children involved (including the victim(s), the child(ren) against whom the allegation has been made and any others affected) with a named person they can talk to if needed

The risk and needs' assessment should consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support;
- The alleged perpetrator; and
- All the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them;

The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will ensure they are engaging with MASH.

The DSL will contact the children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), if appropriate

Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment

Following an incident, we will consider

- The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including: whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;
- The ages of the children involved;
- The developmental stages of the children involved;
- Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse;
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff; and other related issues and wider context?

Follow up actions

Children sharing a classroom:

Whilst the school establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police:

- The perpetrator will be removed from any classes they share with the victim.
- We will consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart at school.

These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator.

Options to manage the report

Manage internally

In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, we may decide that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising the behaviour and bullying policies and by providing pastoral support.

This decision will be made based on the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

All decisions, and discussions around making these decisions will be recorded in CPOMS and shared with the head teacher.

Early Help

We may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help.

Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life.

Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later.

Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.

Further Referral

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to the MASH following locally agreed protocols.

Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy will be working alongside, and cooperating with, the relevant lead social worker.

Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.

Reporting to the Police

Any report to the police will generally be made through the MASH as above. The designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) will follow local processes for referrals.

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is this will be passed on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.

Where a report has been made to the police, the school or college will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers.

They will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the relevant agencies to support all children involved (especially potential witnesses).

Where required, advice from the police will be sought in order to help us. Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator, we will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the school or college take do not jeopardise the police investigation.

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the school will update its risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all children.

We will consider any suitable action following our behaviour policy.

Physical Abuse

While a clear focus of child-on-child abuse is around sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults from child to child 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 police will decide if it constitutes a criminal offence.

The principles from the anti-bullying policy will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any police investigation will need to take priority. When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can assess how to respond.

This could include, for example, whether it:

- is socially acceptable
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time
- is socially acceptable within the peer group
- is problematic and concerning
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination, e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability

- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning
- involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour
- involves a misuse of power

Online Behaviour

Many forms of child-on-child abuse have an element of online behaviour including behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting.

Policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour can be found on the website, via the Online Safety policy, Anti-bullying policy and the Child Protection policy.

These policies have all been updated in line with changes to KCSIE 2025.

Multi-agency working

The school actively engages with its local partners and will actively refer concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse where necessary to the MASH team, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies. In cases involving children who are subject to risk, harm and abuse and who have LAC status, the children's social worker must be informed and a coordinated approach to address any incidents or concerns will be required.