Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

Introduction

Everybody at St. Mary's C of E Primary Academy is committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse.

Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (September, 2023) is our lead policy for ensuring that our children are kept safe from harm. Child-on-child abuse, however, is a national (and increasing) concern and we have introduced this policy as a preventative measure in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and child-on-child abuse in our school. We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers (including online) and that child-on-child abuse can manifest in many different ways. We are clear that this type of abuse should always be treated seriously, and our school has a zero tolerance approach to such attitudes and behaviours.

This policy should be read alongside the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

At St. Mary's C of E Primary Academy we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently. In dealing with such issues our aim is to reduce the extent of the harm on the child and to minimise the impact it has on the child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

At St. Mary's C of E Primary Academy, we recognise that it is essential for all of our staff to maintain the attitude of 'it could happen here' and to understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, that are 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."

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), 2023

What is Child-on-Child Abuse?

Child-on-child abuse is any form of abuse that intends to hurt others. It could happen within children's relationships, friendships or within wider peer associations.

Types of Abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive.

Physical Abuse: This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person.

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment: Any incident in school of sexual violence or sexual harassment must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL) or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). All staff in school are aware that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up. In responding to such concerns the DSL will always complete an AIM (Assessment, Intervention, Moving On) checklist, contact the Duty and Advice team if appropriate and follow the principles set out in Part 5 of KCSiE and the DfE guidance on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment (2022).

DSL – Jessica Crisp (Deputy Head teacher)

DDSL – Joanne Williamson (Pastoral Leader)

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and gender and sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others.

Sexually harmful behaviour may include:

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse
- upskirting – this is a criminal offence

Bullying: Bulling is repeated and intentional harming of one child by another child, or by a group of children, that involves a power imbalance. Bullying can happen face-to-face or online. Online bullying is the use of technology (e.g. social media, gaming, text messages, e mails) to harass, threaten or intimidate someone. Online bullying can take many forms and can include:

- abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
- posting abusive comments on social media sites
- sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- spreading rumours online
- prank calls or messages, including anonymous messages

Other forms of child-on-child abuse include

- sexting or sharing nude or indecent imagery
- initiation or hazing
- prejudiced behaviour

Responding to Incidents of Child-on-Child Abuse

All concerns around child-on-child abuse will be taken seriously, reported, investigated, recorded and managed in line with the procedures outlined in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Staff will follow guidance in our Behaviour and Relationships Policy (September 2023) to respond to incidents of child-on-child abuse and they will do this immediately and sensitively. Staff will talk to children in a calm and consistent manner; they will not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Staff members responding to such incidents will alert the DSL or DDSL by speaking to them face-to-face. It is the responsibility of the member of staff who is the **first responder** to ensure that a CPOMs log is made to record the incident and to ensure that the class teacher is aware of any incidents which have happened outside of the classroom.

In responding to incidents of child-on-child abuse staff will consider the following:

- age of children involved
- any aspects of power imbalance
- all aspects of the incidents (physical and verbal)
- the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery.
- the effect on the victim
- any attempts to keep the incident a secret
- the motivation or reason for the behaviour
- whether it was a one-off incident or if it is a repeated incident

In recording incidents of child-on-child abuse staff will:

- be clear in their wording and not give an opinion
- speak to the DSL or DDSL face-to-face immediately if they feel a child is at risk of significant harm
- log the incident to CPOMs as soon as possible
- use proper names for body parts, but record exactly what the child said
- note where and when the incident happened

A member of staff will inform parents/carers of any incidents of child-on-child abuse in school. This is best done face-to-face and it should be the class teacher, a member of the Designated Safeguarding Team or a member of the Senior Leadership Team who informs parents/carers.

What Happens after an incident of Child-on-Child Abuse?

It is necessary to ensure that incidents of child-on-child abuse are not repeated and that support or intervention is given to those who need it. (The DSL is responsible for providing support to all children involved in incidents of child-on-child sexual abuse). There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidently, before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

Ms Williamson (Pastoral Leader) can provide 1:1 or group nurture sessions for children who have been harmed or upset by child-on-child abuse. A restorative approach will be used to manage relationships between children.

The Designated Safeguarding Team can refer children to the JESS Cluster or to Children's Social Work Services (CSWS) where appropriate. The DSL or DDSL will follow guidance in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to refer children to CSWS. Any child who has displayed harmful behaviour will receive a consequence for their behaviour. This could be in the form of restorative justice, missing playtimes/lunchtimes, an internal exclusion or a fixed-term suspension from school. Staff will support children who display harmful behaviour to reflect on their behaviour in a developmentally appropriate way.

Further information can be found in section 15 of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on 'what happens next' for incidents of sexual violence and sexual harassment.