

## Addendum to Behaviour for Learning Policy, September 2021

This is an addendum to the school's current Behaviour for Learning Policy which is available <http://www.st-hildas.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Behaviour-for-Learning-Policy-Jan-2020.pdf>

### Aim

The aim of this update is to:

- understand the ways in which peer on peer abuse including Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence can take place
- ensure that students are aware of the consequences of this behaviour and that different approaches may be taken depending on the nature of the behaviour

### Background

Staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers, and that not all children will find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward, and that they will be supported and kept safe. Victims will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting an incident and they will never be made to feel ashamed or their experience minimised.

*The DFE states 'The school's or college's initial response to a report from a child is incredibly important. How the school or college responds to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward.'*

Staff must act on the assumption that children may be experiencing sexual violence or harassment, even if there are no specific reports of such behaviour. Staff must ensure that they challenge any form of derogatory and sexualised language or behaviour. Staff should be vigilant to sexualised/aggressive touching/grabbing, particularly towards girls or other vulnerable groups of children. Behaviours by children should never be passed off as 'banter', 'having a laugh' or 'part of growing up' as this can lead to an unsafe culture which normalises abuse and inappropriate behaviours and can lead to children accepting it as normal and therefore not reporting such issues. Our school will prevent sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence through a carefully planned and sequenced relationships, sex and health education curriculum alongside effective challenge and response to specific issues when they arise. All staff will reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.

All concerns must be reported and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead or senior member of staff. Behaviours can happen in school, online or in the community and are most likely to include, but not limited to:

- abuse within intimate personal relationships between peers;
- bullying (including cyber bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);

- serious violence;
- 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;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images or videos;
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission;
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; and
- sexting and 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 many also include an online element).

Children with special educational needs and disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual violence and harassment and staff should be aware that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse in these children. Children who are LGBT+ or perceived to be, may also be targeted by their peers and harassed or assaulted.

Victims of peer on peer harm will be supported by the school's pastoral system and referred to specialist agencies including, as examples, 'CAMHS', 'Brook' and 'Barnardo's'. A risk assessment may need to be in place. The school curriculum will support young people to become more resilient to inappropriate behaviours towards them, risk taking behaviours and behaviours that children may be coerced into including 'sexting' or 'initiation/hazing' behaviours.

Additional guidance is available on the NSPCC website:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/online-abuse>

If staff observe peer on peer abuse or receive a report of peer on peer abuse, they will report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or if unavailable, a deputy. This should always be followed up by the incident being logged on the school reporting system, CPOMS. Staff should reassure the victim at all times however, they should not promise confidentiality. It is important that the victim understands the next steps and who the report will be passed to.

**Students will be encouraged to report all incidents of abuse to any member of staff or using the SHARP system.**

There are four likely scenarios that will be considered when managing any report of peer on peer abuse (including sexual harassment and/or sexual violence).

These are:

- manage internally
- early Help
- referrals to children's social care
- reporting to the police

Any report to the police will usually be in parallel with a referral to children's social care. When a report of rape or sexual assault is made, the starting point is that it should be reported to the police. Where a report has been made to the police, the school or college should consult the police and agree

what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular the alleged perpetrator(s) and their parents or carers.

## **Addressing incidents of Peer on Peer abuse including sexual harassment and sexual violence:**

In each case, the following will be carefully considered:

- the wishes of the victim and how they wish to proceed. This will always be balanced with the school's duty and responsibilities to protect other children
- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether harmful sexual behaviour has been displayed
- 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(s) 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
- that sexual violence can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers
- are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school staff?
- other related issues and wider context, including links to child criminal and/or sexual exploitation

Where there has been a report of sexual violence, an immediate risk and needs assessment will be made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case by case basis. Risk assessments should be recorded and kept under review. At all times, the school will actively consider the risks posed to all their students (and possibly staff) and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe.

Professional risk assessments should be carried out by social workers and specialists in the case of sexual violence.

Action may include:

- referrals to specialist agencies e.g. CAMHS, NSPCC, Specialist Sexual Violence advisors
- Police and Social Care agencies
- sanctions issued by the school may include
- mediation between students
- school detentions
- meetings with the link safer schools police officer
- reflection time.
- internal exclusion, fixed term exclusion, permanent exclusion,