

Rockcliffe First School



Child on Child Abuse Policy: September 2023

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed by senior leaders, staff and governors on an annual basis.

This policy has been created in line with the following guidance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

and must be read with the following Rockcliffe First School's policies:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
 - Please see the above policy for full details of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy DSLs and Locality Teams contact details.
 - North Tyneside's children's social care Front Door service can be contacted on 0345 2000109 (office hours) or 0330 3337475 (evenings and weekends).

In addition, please see:

- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- PSHE policy, which includes the Relationships Education (RE) Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy
- Social Networking Policy

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 outlines that

"All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse)...All staff should be clear as to the school's...policy and procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse and the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

All staff should understand that even if there are no reports in their school...it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important that if staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy).

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children...that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as..."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."

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 (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);

- *upskirting, 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; 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 may also include an online element).*

Aims / Objectives

- To ensure that staff are able to recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers, what child on child abuse is and the different forms it can take.
- That it is clear that this issue is abuse and will not be tolerated.
- To ensure staff are clear as to the school policy and procedures for managing allegations made against other children/young people.
- To ensure there are clear procedures linked to how all child/ren involved and affected will be supported in school.
- To ensure that safeguarding arrangements in school have in place procedures to minimise the risk of child on child abuse.
- To ensure our children are taught about safeguarding, including child on child abuse, through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum.

Introduction

At Rockcliffe First School, we believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Pupils should be free from harm, which could include harm from other pupils.

As a school, we promote positive behaviour and encourage relationships based on respect, consideration and understanding of the needs of others.

We recognise that children's behaviours can and do exist on a wide continuum from normal and developmentally appropriate to problematic. Behaviour is often a form of communication of need and a child's problematic or inappropriate behaviour is then a sign that s/he is upset and that something is not right.

Sometimes children feel unsafe or out of control, so they take inappropriate action over the things they do control, like being able to hurt or mistreat someone. Problematic behaviours in a child may be non-verbal techniques to try to get their unmet needs resolved.

However, we recognise that individual children's behaviour can have a negative impact on the wellbeing of others. Generally, these incidents can be dealt with under our behaviour management policy and procedures, which, in most cases, impact on and de-escalate incidents of unwanted behaviour. These cases are not generally seen as child on child abuse.

Identifying issues of child on child abuse

Child on child abuse is when problematic behaviours escalate, causing issues for another child or children that are beyond the circumstances mentioned above and can appear to be abusive, violent or potentially breaking the law.

There is not always a clear boundary between incidents that could be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as behaviour issues. This is a matter of professional judgement and the circumstances involved in each case.

However, it may be appropriate to regard a young person's behaviour as abusive and considered as a safeguarding issue if some of the following features are found:

- There is an imbalance in power causing a vulnerability (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned;
- The pupil being complained about has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children;
- There are concerns about the intention of the pupil being complained about;
- The incident/s are of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence;
- The incident/s raise risk factors for other children in the school and beyond.

If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to another child or children, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

The North Tyneside Safeguarding Children's Board (NTSCB) thresholds offer further information and signposting to services to help practitioners distinguish developmentally appropriate and/or harmful behaviours. If at any stage you are worried that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, follow normal procedures in school (see the child protection and safeguarding policy).

Examples of child on child abuse allegations

Examples of child on child abuse allegations could include:

- Physical Abuse
 - violence, particularly pre-planned
 - forcing others to use drugs or alcohol
 - gender based violence
- Emotional Abuse
 - blackmail or extortion
 - threats and intimidation
- Sexual Abuse
 - indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assaults
 - forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting
 - young people suffering from sexual exploitation themselves may be forced to recruit other young people under threat of violence
- Sexual Exploitation
 - encouraging other children to attend inappropriate parties
 - photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts
- Bullying
 - Including cyber bullying
- Radicalisation
 - Older pupils may attempt to recruit younger pupils using any of the above methods

This is not an exhaustive list.

Recognising the risk

At Rockcliffe First School, we take child on child abuse as seriously as abuse by adults and ensure any identified risks and issues are subject to the same child protection procedures.

School staff should never dismiss child to child abusive behaviour as normal between young people or develop high thresholds before taking action. We recognise that although all children are potentially vulnerable to abuse by their peers, some children are more vulnerable such as those children:

- receiving statutory care/support or known to have experienced harm, abuse or exploitation;
- with a disability, ill-health or developmental difficulties – including mental ill health and special educational needs;
- in households or families with characteristics that may indicate higher levels of risk such as poverty, young carers or domestic violence;
- who are vulnerable or of concern by virtue of their identity or nationality – including LGBTQ+ children and young people and refugees. For more information see:

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/vulnerable-children/>

It is also recognised that the abuse between children may happen beyond the school environment and information technology can often be used for abusive behaviour between young people. This is known as contextual safeguarding.

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

<https://safeguarding.network/content/contextual-safeguarding/>

Evidence suggests that such children displaying harmful behaviours may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, may have witnessed or been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, may have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences.

Our school will always consider that the pupil being complained about is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and may be in need of protection themselves. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the pupil being complained about must also address their individual and specific needs.

Prevention

It is not enough to respond to incidents as they arise. At Rockcliffe First School, we strive to create an environment that actively discourages abuse and challenges the attitudes which

underlie it. In our school this includes:

- Using the Rockcliffe Learning Superpowers to develop “soft skills”;
- Encouraging children to understand and respect differences;
- Encouraging children to talk about their feelings, and about how their behaviour has had an impact on other children;
- Working with colleagues in partner organisations such as Operation Encompass, Barnardo’s and Show Racism the Red Card, to help develop healthy, caring and respectful relationships with others, and promote self-respect and self-confidence.

Action/s to be taken

As mentioned, child to child incidents are usually managed through our behaviour management policies and procedures. However, when allegations against other pupils are of such a serious nature they raise safeguarding concerns, it could be considered as potential child to child abuse and normal safeguarding procedures should apply.

- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL.
- The DSL will contact the Front Door to discuss the case including all children involved. The DSL will follow through any actions and outcomes of the discussion and will make any appropriate referrals to children’s social care which could be for the child/ren affected *and/or* the pupil being complained about. (As outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, if the DSL or Deputy DSL are not available consider speaking to another member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from the Front Door. If this happens, any action taken should be shared with DSL or deputy as soon as is practically possible).
- The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussions and any actions/outcome and will keep a copy in the pupil files (all pupils involved in the allegation).
- If the allegations indicate a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police should be contacted at the earliest opportunity. However, in school we are mindful that the age of [criminal responsibility in England](#) is 10 years old, meaning that children under 10 can’t be arrested or charged with a crime. There are other punishments that can be given to children under 10 who break the law. Further advice can be sought regarding this from agencies involved.
- Parents, of both the pupil being complained about and the child/ren affected, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of any referrals, actions and/or interventions. Further advice can be sought regarding this from agencies involved.
- If the case does not meet thresholds for other services to be involved, the school will continue to deal with the matter using our usual disciplinary procedures.
- The needs and wishes of the affected child/ren should be taken in to account as much as is reasonably possible but the DSL and deputy DSLs will also need to consider if they have suffered significant harm and also consider the need to protect others. Affected pupils should be offered support from specialist services.
- In situations where the school considers an ongoing safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative supervision plan. The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow up evaluation with everyone concerned.
- If the incident/s is/are of a sexual nature, school staff will follow the advice in Keeping Children Safe In Education 2023 and additional guidance can be found on sexting or youth produced imagery in the document <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

The guiding principles for dealing with these situations are outlined below:

- Basic safeguarding principles should apply throughout.
- The needs of the child/ren affected *and* the needs of the pupil being complained about must be considered separately.
- The pupil being complained about is likely to have considerable unmet needs and actions must include addressing this person’s behaviour and its causes.
- All agencies involved must consider whether the pupil being complained about poses a risk to other children including, but not limited to, at school, in the community or online.
- There should be a co-ordinated approach by children’s social care, education and health agencies. No agency should start a course of action that has implications for any other agency without appropriate consultation.
- School will only engage staff and agencies who are required to support the children involved and/or be involved in any investigations.