St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
Diocesan Multi Academy Trust

Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership

St Mary's C of E Primary School, Hadleigh

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

Prepared by:	*Andrew Frolish (Headteacher; Designated Safeguarding Lead)*
Approved by:	*(Local Governing body/Committee)*
Status & review cycle	Statutory Annual
Date approved:	*8/10/2024*
Review date:	*Autumn 2025*

The Trustees of the St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust have delegated responsibility for approving and implementing the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy to the Local Governing Body of St Mary's C of E Primary School, Hadleigh (see Scheme of Delegation).

Introduction

The Local Governing Body recognises the need to ensure that it complies with its duties under legislation and this policy has regard to statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), Working Together to Safeguard Children and locally agreed inter-agency procedures put in place by Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership Board.

This policy is for all school staff (including volunteers) and governors. It forms part of the child protection and safeguarding arrangements for our school and is one of a suite of policies and procedures which encompass the safeguarding responsibilities of the school. In particular, this policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Child Protection and Online Safety Policies.

It is the duty of all adults in school to promote the safety and welfare of all children in our care. This includes the need for all staff to be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse) and that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

All staff should understand, that even if there no reports in school it does not mean it's not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such, it is important if staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse they should report these concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in line with the school's Child Protection Policy.

Strategies and practices to prevent child-on-child abuse taking place are crucial. Similarly, it is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature. In this way, the school will create a culture in which pupils and staff members feel that they can report abuse or concerns safely and that their voice will be heard.

Vision

The school's Child on Child Abuse Policy reflects our Christian vision:
"Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34
Unconditional love underpins all we do at St Mary's Church of England Primary School. We value and embrace the individuality of every child as they discover, learn and flourish in a place of security and love. We are an inclusive school, welcoming all children with respect, understanding and dignity. We have a duty of care to the children and will demonstrate the compassion and understanding that allows all children to flourish. In the context of this policy, this means that we aim to provide a safe and welcoming environment, in which children can learn, underpinned by a culture of openness where both children and adults feel secure, are able to raise concerns and believe they are being listened to, and that appropriate action will be taken to keep them safe. We recognise the moral and statutory responsibility placed on all staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. Through the explicit teaching of our Christian vision and values, we aim to ensure that pupils learn to show respect and compassion for one another.

Aims

Through this policy, we strive to:

- overcome professional disbelief that such issues will not happen here;
- ensure that we work alongside other professional bodies and agencies to ensure that our pupils are safe from harm;
- promote an awareness and understanding that child-on-child abuse can take place and the nature of such abuse;
- prevent child-on-child abuse taking place through delivery of our PHSE curriculum, whilst encouraging pupils to develop strategies and practices that promote respect and enhance their individual safety;
- respond appropriately to child-on-child abuse, including providing the necessary support for victims and perpetrators.

Key roles and responsibilities

In line with the school's Child Protection Policy, key roles and responsibilities are set out below.

Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body has a strategic leadership responsibility for the school's safeguarding arrangements and must ensure that they comply with their duties under legislation. The Local Governing Body has a legal responsibility to make sure that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place, which have regard to statutory guidance, in order for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children and young people's welfare. The Local Governing Body will also ensure that the policy is made available to parents and carers by publishing this on the school website or in writing if requested.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL will take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety). This will be made explicit in the role-holder's job description. (The broad areas of responsibility and activities related to the role of the DSL are set out in Annex C of KCSiE).

The DSL will have the appropriate status, authority, time, funding, training, resources and support they need to carry out the duties of the post effectively.

The DSL and any alternate DSLs will provide advice and support to staff in school and will liaise with the local authority and work with other agencies in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children.

It is the responsibility of the DSL to ensure that all safeguarding issues raised in school are effectively responded to, recorded and referred to the appropriate agency. If the DSL is not available to make appropriate referrals, this responsibility is undertaken by the Alternate DSLs.

Headteacher

The headteacher will ensure that the policies and procedures adopted by the governing body are fully implemented and that sufficient resources, time and training

are provided to enable staff members to discharge their safeguarding responsibilities and contribute effectively to a whole school approach to safeguarding.

The headteacher will be responsible for ensuring a culture of safety and ongoing vigilance that fosters the belief that 'it could happen here'.

All staff

All staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn. All staff must ensure they are familiar with the systems within school which support safeguarding, including the Child Protection, this policy and the role of the DSL (including the identity of the DSL and any deputies). These will be explained to all staff on induction.

All staff should be aware of indicators of child-on-child abuse. All staff should maintain a belief that 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned and if staff have any concerns about a child's welfare they must act on them immediately.

All staff should be able to reassure victims 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 abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

All staff must be familiar with information about child-on-child abuse in the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Awareness of Child-on-Child Abuse

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse). And that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

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

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children, many of which are listed below, 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.

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

- bullying (including cyberbullying, 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 stand-alone 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 nudes and semi nudes images and or videos[1] (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)

All staff should be clear about the school's policy and procedures with regards 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.

Preventing Child-on-Child Abuse

We will minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse by:

- Promoting staff understanding and awareness of child-on-child abuse, so that they are:
    - Vigilant;
    - Able to identify early signs and indicators that it may be taking place;
    - Quick to challenge potentially harmful behaviours at an early stage;
- Refresh and remind staff members abut child-on-child abuse through regular updates and policy reviews;
- Challenging any form of derogatory or sexualised language or behaviour, including requesting or sending sexual images;
- Being vigilant to issues that particularly affect different groups or genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing type violence;
- Ensuring our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent, including age-appropriate education to keep children safe from sexual abuse, e.g. using NSPCC Pants materials (https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/);

[1] UKCIS guidance: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes advice for education settings.

- Strongly promoting the school's Christian values, including the value of 'respect';
- Providing a forum, in the form of a School Council, through which pupils can share and discuss safeguarding issues;
- Ensuring pupils know they can communicate with staff confidentially;
- Ensuring staff are trained to understand that a pupil harming another child could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves, and that this would fall under the scope of this policy.

Curriculum

Through Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), pupils are taught about a range of safety issues and respectful relationships. School leaders, including the PSHE leader, ensure that the PSHE curriculum covers appropriate content over time, including:

- Healthy and respectful relationships;
- Friendships and peer pressure;
- Stereotyping, prejudice and equality;
- Personal safety and local safety issues;
- Forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety.

Older pupils participate in work to identify safety issues and risks in school and the local community.

The wider curriculum is also designed to promote tolerance, understanding and respect. The core concepts or 'Big Ideas' within each subject have been identified within the school's curriculum. Certain 'Big Ideas' are directly relevant to the development of positive relationships, including the 'Big Ideas' of 'Diversity' in geography and 'equality' in history.

The school makes use of partner agencies' resources and support to deliver an appropriate curriculum. For example, the school uses NSPCC Pants materials (https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/) and introduce safety at an age-appropriate level.

Christian Values

The school promotes Christian values, which are intended to help pupils develop respectful relationships and behaviours. Of these values, 'respect', 'compassion' and 'friendship' are key. These values are promoted through displays in the entrance hall, main hall and every classroom, as well as on the school website.

We refer to these values as Christian values because we illustrate them through Bible stories. However, they are universal values, relevant to all children as members of the school, local, national and global communities. We relate the values to children's everyday lives and lived experiences, rewarding them for displaying the values in their conduct and relationships. Children are rewarded through immediate responses in the classroom, such as the award of Dojo points and merits or by

adding a note about the positive behaviour to the class values display. Christian values certificates are also given out in a celebration assembly each week to children who have shown the values through their behaviour.

Contextual Safeguarding

Staff members must be aware of extra-familial risk factors that may make pupils more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse. Through regular updates and discussion, staff members must develop an awareness of local safeguarding concerns. For example, staff members must have an understanding of Child Criminal Exploitation linked to 'county lines'. This is an identified local issue that could impact on children within our school community.

Staff members working with pupils in upper Key Stage 2 involve the pupils in identifying safety issues and risk factors in school and in the locality. This is done through discussion and 'safety mapping' of the school and local area in PSHE lessons.

Communication Between Pupils and Adults

It is of particular importance that children must know how and when to communicate confidentially with staff if they have a problem. This message is enforced through the curriculum and assemblies and pupils must be made aware of this *before* any problems are known to have occurred. Teachers must establish age-appropriate systems at the beginning of the school year and then refresh pupils' knowledge and understanding regularly. Whole-class systems, such as a 'worry box', should be age appropriate and understood by the pupils. Where there are known to be concerns about a child's wellbeing or welfare, individualised systems are implemented, such as the use of a 'worry book', time to talk with a key staff member, methods for self-evaluating break times or the use of a 'token' or sign that the child needs to talk to a trusted adult. Individualised systems should be agreed with the child concerned.

At St Mary's, staff members will also refer pupils they are concerned about to a Pastoral Support Worker or Thrive Practitioner, as appropriate, for wellbeing support or ongoing intervention. Through these trusted adults, pupils will also have opportunities for their voice to be heard. Pupils are able to self-refer and can ask class-based adults to see a Pastoral Support Worker. The Pastoral Support Worker will discuss with children ways that they can share worries and seek support.

Responding to Child-on-Child Abuse

In most instances, the conduct of pupils towards each other will be covered by the school's Anti-Bullying and Behaviour Policies. St Mary's Primary School has an agreed Anti-bullying Policy, which is shared with the school community on our website. The implementation of this policy is essential in order to keep children safe. Bullying is not tolerated in any form at St Mary's School. This includes cyber bullying through modern technologies, such as social networking sites and mobile phones. The school has a pro-active approach to dealing with prejudice-related incidents; including a broad curriculum that engages all learners, links with external agencies to support staff training and appropriate education and regular evaluation of the school's practice and procedures. Robust procedures for tackling bullying are an important part of how we safeguard children at St Mary's School.

Staff members recognise that children are capable of abusing other children. Child on child abuse can manifest itself in many ways, such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. At St Mary's, we recognise that child-on-child abuse may be taking place even if it has not been reported.

Staff members do not need to wait for a disclosure from a child before reporting a safeguarding concern. If a staff member is concerned about a child's safety, they must report this to the DSL without delay. Indicators of child-on-child abuse may include:

- A pupils' behaviour;
- The language used by a pupil;
- Conversations between pupils that imply another pupil may be at risk.

It is likely that to be considered a safeguarding allegation against a pupil, some of the following features will be found. The allegation:

- Is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour against a younger or more vulnerable pupil;
- Is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence;
- Raises risk factors for other pupils in the school;
- Indicates that other pupils may have been affected by this pupil;
- Indicates that young people outside school may be affected by this pupil.

Risk factors against children could include:

1. Physical Abuse
    - violence, particularly pre-planned
    - forcing others to use drugs or alcohol
2. Emotional Abuse
    - blackmail or extortion
    - threats and intimidation
3. Sexual Abuse
    - indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assaults
    - forcing others to watch pornography, sexting, revenge-porn
    - upskirting
4. Child Sexual Exploitation
    - encouraging other children to attend inappropriate parties
    - photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts
5. Gang and relationship abuse

    In areas where gangs are prevalent, older pupils may attempt to recruit younger pupils using any or all of the above methods. Young people suffering from sexual exploitation themselves may be forced to recruit other young people under threat of violence.

At St Mary's C o E Primary School, there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence or harassment. Concerns about, or reports of, sexual violence or harassment between children are safeguarding concerns and must be reported and recorded as such, in line with the school's Child Protection Policy. Any concerns must be reported to the DSL without delay. At St Mary's C of E Primary School,

teachers and teaching assistants record concerns on CPOMS, an online recording system. Other staff members, visitors and volunteers may continue to use paper recording forms (see Child Protection Policy) because a lack of knowledge or familiarity with the system due to less frequent use must not be a barrier to recording and reporting concerns. Any concerns recorded on paper forms will be added to CPOMS by the DSL.

When a staff member is concerned about a child's welfare, or an allegation is made by a pupil against another pupil, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern. If there is a safeguarding concern the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed. A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances if potential criminal activity is suspected. Where there are safeguarding concerns, the DSL will seek advice via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) professionals' consultation line (0345 606 1499) and, following advice, may refer to children's social care. It is possible that children's social care are already aware of safeguarding concerns around this young person. The DSL will follow through the outcomes of any discussion / advice and make a social services referral where appropriate. The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in both pupils' files. Where appropriate, the DSL will complete and submit the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership multi agency referral form (MARF) (available on the SSP website) and call Customer First (08088004005) if advised to do so.

When a MARF is submitted, the police and social services may liaise and a police investigation may take place. The school will co-operate in any investigation or welfare check in order to keep children safe from harm. This may involve the sharing of sensitive information. Concerns about data protection should not prevent appropriate information sharing with partner agencies conducting an investigation or seeking to keep children safe.

The school will follow MASH advice with regard to police involvement. If the allegation indicates a potential criminal offence has taken place and the allegation is found to not be malicious rumour, the police should be contacted at the earliest opportunity and parents informed (of both the pupil being complained about and the alleged victim) unless the police advise against this.

As necessary, and following MASH advice, the DSL may consider the seriousness of the allegation by consulting the Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool.

It may be appropriate to suspend the pupil being complained about for a period of time according to the school's behaviour policy and procedures. The relevant school staff members are informed when a young person raises safeguarding concerns, for example, if they are coming back into school following a period in custody or they have experienced serious abuse themselves. These pupils will need an individual risk assessment plan to ensure that other pupils are kept safe and they themselves are not laid open to malicious allegations. The school, in these cases, also has a duty to protect the privacy rights of any pupils for whom the allegation is made against or to.

Where neither social care nor the police accept the complaint, a thorough school investigation should take place into the matter using the school's usual disciplinary procedures.

In summary, if there are concerns about a child's welfare or a pupil makes an allegation of abuse against another pupil in relation to sexual violence or harassment or potential criminal activity:

- Staff members must record the allegation and report to the DSL, but not investigate it.
- The DSL will contact the MASH Professionals Consultation line / Customer First and follow advice, as well as the police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence.
- If necessary, 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 DSL will contact external services for support as appropriate, e.g. the Emotional Wellbeing Hub or School Nursing Team.

At St Mary's, the delivery of support and the liaison with external agencies may be delegated to a Pastoral Support Worker.

Providing Reassurance and Support

As with any safeguarding disclosure, the initial response from a staff member is crucial. Any victim must feel reassured and feel that they are being taken seriously. Staff members must not respond in a way that indicates that reporting a concern, especially in relation to sexual violence or harassment, is causing a problem.

Staff members should be mindful NSPCC advice to 'Let Children Know You're Listening'. Staff members should:

- Show you care and help them open up (be compassionate, encouraging, understanding and reassuring; give full attention; consider body language);
- Take your time and slow down (respect pauses and don't interrupt; allow the child to dictate the pace of the disclosure – they may not share everything straightaway);
- Show you understand and reflect back (show interest; reflect back what has been said to show understanding).

Staff members should respond to any disclosure in line with the school's Child Protection Policy. If a child makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse against an adult or other child or young person, it is important that you:

- Stay calm and listen carefully;
- Accept what is being said;
- Allow the child/young person to talk freely – do not interrupt or put words in the child/young person's mouth;
- Only ask questions when necessary to clarify, do not investigate or ask leading questions;

- Reassure the child, but don't make promises which it might not be possible to keep;
- Do not promise confidentiality;
- Emphasise that it was the right thing to tell someone;
- Reassure them that what has happened is not their fault;
- Do not criticise the perpetrator;
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told;
- Record the concern on CPOMS (teachers; teaching assistants) or make a written record, which should be signed and include the time, date and your position in school (other staff members; volunteers; visitors);
- Do not include your opinion without stating it is your opinion;
- Pass the information to the DSL or alternate without delay
- Consider seeking support for yourself and discuss this with the DSL as dealing with a disclosure can be distressing.

The alleged victim is likely to need emotional and social support. At St Mary's, this support may be provided by class-based staff. However, the child may be referred internally for support from a Pastoral Support Worker. It may be appropriate to give regular opportunities for the child to share their feelings or talk about their worries, being mindful of the fact that they may not disclose everything at once. Therefore, support may be an ongoing dialogue, e.g. through regularly 'checking in'. Support must involve discussions with the alleged victim about how to share concerns and seek support in the future. The support offered will depend on a number of factors, including:

- The nature, seriousness and frequency of the alleged behaviour;
- The wishes of the alleged victim;
- The age and understanding of the alleged victim;
- Any ongoing risk or perceived risk.

As well as giving help to the alleged victim, staff members recognise that the perpetrator may need appropriate support and education as well. Support and sanctions should be considered on a case-by-case basis, in line with the school's Anti-Bullying and Behaviour Policies and advice from the MASH.
The nature of this will depend upon:

- The seriousness of the allegation;
- The persistence and frequency of the alleged behaviour;
- The age and understanding of the alleged perpetrator.

It is important to acknowledge that behaviours identified as child-on-child abuse may be indicators of the alleged perpetrator's own unmet needs, trauma or abuse.

Policy Review

The Child-on-Child Abuse Policy will be reviewed annually as part of the overall Child Protection and Safeguarding policy review process.