



# **Peer on Peer Abuse Policy**

September 2021

(To run alongside Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)



## **Section 1**

### **1.1 Aims of the Policy**

Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021 states that 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2020 states that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection **policy** includes procedures to minimise the risk of **peer on peer abuse** and sets out how allegations of **peer on peer abuse** will be investigated and dealt with'

It also emphasises that the voice of the child must be heard 'Governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure that systems are in place for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously'.

While it is recommended that Peer on Peer abuse is associated with the School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse this separate policy has been completed as an addition to Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

### **Framework and Legislation**

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document is Working Together, 2018, highlighting that every assessment of a child, 'must be informed by the views of the child'. (Working Together, 2018:21) This is echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

At Woodlands Academy of Learning, we are committed to ensure that any form of peer on peer abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently. This will reduce the extent of harm to the young person and minimise the potential impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

## **1.2 Rationale**

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as bullying, sexual experimentation etc. This is a matter of professional judgement.

If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse: bullying, fighting and harassment between children are not generally seen as child protection issues. However, it may be appropriate to regard a young person's behaviour as abusive if:

- There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned; or
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged young person.

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

## **Section 2**

### **2.1 Prevention**

As a school we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:

- Providing an appropriate PSHE curriculum which develops pupils understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe
- Having a robust approach to Internet Safety which develops pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, to ensure personal safety and self-protection when using the internet and social networking
- Having robust monitoring and filtering systems in place to ensure pupils are safe and act appropriately when using information technology in school
- Having systems in place for any pupil to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued
- Providing support and advice on assertiveness and keeping safe to those pupils identified as being at risk
- Developing robust risk assessments and support and advice for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils

### **2.2 Allegations against other pupils which are safeguarding issues**

Occasionally, allegations may be made against pupils by other young people in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, teenage relationship abuse and sexual exploitation, bullying, cyber bullying and sexting. It should be considered as a safeguarding allegation against a pupil if some of the following features are present.

The allegation:-

- Is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger pupil or a 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 student
- Indicates that young people outside the school may be affected by this student

Examples of safeguarding issues against a pupil could include:

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. 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 accidentally, before considering the action or sanctions to be undertaken.

### **Bullying**

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

Woodlands Academy of Learning makes students and staff aware that bullying may involve:

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e. g. size, hair colour, race, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

### **Online bullying**

Cyber bullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could be deemed to be criminal behaviour. If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

## **Sexting**

Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, regardless of their age, gender or sexual preference. However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

## **Emotional Abuse**

Can include blackmail or extortion and may also include threats and intimidation. This harmful behaviour can have a significant impact on the mental health and emotional well-being of the victim and can lead to self-harm.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse. It can also include indecent exposure, indecent touching /serious sexual assaults or forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting.

## **Teenage Relationship Abuse**

Teenage relationship abuse is defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner.

## **Sexual Exploitation**

This can include encouraging other young people to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour or grooming and recruiting members of the peer group into being sexually exploited by other young people or adults. It can also include photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts.

## **Section 3**

### **3.1 Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Peer on Peer Abuse**

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern.

1. If there is a safeguarding concern the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) should be informed immediately, both verbally and subsequently via CPOMs.
2. A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances.
3. The DSL or the DDSL should meet with the Headteacher to discuss the case.
4. The DSL or the DDSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a referral where appropriate.
5. If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police will be involved.
6. Parents, of both the student/s being complained about and the alleged victim/s, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral.
7. The DSL or the DDSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in the Secure Safeguarding records/ Cpoms.
8. If the allegation highlights a potential risk to the school and the pupil, the school will follow the school's behaviour policy and procedures and take appropriate action.
9. In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan.
10. The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.

Woodlands Academy of Learning believes it is very important that policies relating to safeguarding students are read in conjunction with one another to quickly identify and take any necessary and appropriate action to help prevent children and young people up to 18 years of age being at risk of harm

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is up-dated annually or as necessary depending on new statutory guidance or legislation, and this Peer on Peer Abuse Policy will be reviewed and updated as part of the same cycle.

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