


Moorside Primary School		
Document Name	Child-on-Child Abuse Policy	
Date	Next review September 2024	
Version	1	
Audience	Staff, Governors, Volunteers, Parents, Website	
Approved by	Governing Body, September 14 th 2023	

Background and Context of the Policy

This policy forms part of our approach to safeguarding and child protection. Child-on-child abuse is also outlined in the school’s main Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and referred to in Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies. The aim of this policy is to provide further detail and to ensure that the issue of child-on-child abuse has sufficient status and profile amongst staff who may encounter it.

Child-on-Child abuse is defined as abuse between children under 18 years of age.

Moorside Primary School has a **zero-tolerance approach to abuse**, including child-on-child abuse.

Moorside Primary School will refer to the specific guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education Part five: Child on Child Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment and Lancashire Procedures. [5.31 Peer Abuse \(proceduresonline.com\)](https://www.proceduresonline.com)

Raising Awareness

All staff will be aware that child-on-child abuse can occur between pupils of any age and gender, both inside and outside of school, as well as online. All staff will be aware of the indicators of child-on-child abuse, how to identify it, and how to respond to reports. All staff will also recognise that even if no cases have been reported, this is not an indicator that child-on-child abuse is not occurring. All staff will speak to the DSL if they have any concerns about child-on-child abuse.

All staff will understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviour between peers and will **not tolerate abuse as “banter” or “part of growing up”**.

Child-on-child abuse can be manifested in many different ways, including:

- Bullying, including cyberbullying and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying.
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers.
- Physical abuse – this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse.
- Sexual violence – this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence.
- Sexual harassment, including online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent.
- The consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos.
- Up-skirting.
- Initiation and hazing-type violence and rituals, which can 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 will be clear as to the school’s policy and procedures regarding child-on-child abuse and the role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

Awareness of Vulnerable Groups

All staff will be made aware of the heightened vulnerability of pupils with **SEND**, who evidence suggests are more likely to be abused than their peers. Staff will not assume that possible indicators of abuse relate to the pupil’s SEND and will always explore indicators further.

All staff will be made aware of the heightened vulnerability of **LGBTQ+ pupils**, who evidence suggests are also more likely to be targeted by their peers. In some cases, pupils who are **perceived to be LGBTQ+**, regardless of whether they are LGBTQ+, can be just as vulnerable to abuse as LGBTQ+ pupils. The school’s response to sexual violence and sexual harassment between pupils of the same sex will be equally as robust as it is for incidents between children of the opposite sex.

Pupils will be made aware of how to raise concerns or make a report and how any reports will be handled. This includes the process for reporting concerns about friends or peers. Pupils will also be reassured that they will be taken seriously, be supported, and kept safe. This process will be continually reviewed by the DSL Team and Pastoral Support Team.

The school’s procedures for managing allegations of child-on-child abuse are outlined in the School Behaviour Policy. Staff will follow these procedures, as well as the procedures outlined in the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy.

Moorside Primary School will consider:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed
- the nature of the alleged incident

- the ages of the children involved
- the development stages of the children involved
- any power imbalance between the children
- is the incident a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse?
- are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, school or college staff?
- contextual safeguarding issues

Work with Children who Abuse Others

It is recognised that children who abuse other children may have suffered considerable disruption or trauma in their own lives. At the same time as ensuring that the victim or survivor is supported, the perpetrator may well have been a victim and therefore be in need of support.

Preventative Strategies – creating a culture and putting safeguards in place

It is recognised that child-on-child abuse can and does occur even with the most stringent policies and procedures in place. However, every step must be taken to minimise the possibility of child-on-child abuse taking place and there should be a culture and steps in place to respond when it does occur.

Moorside Primary School attempts through its curriculum, resources and opportunities to **minimise prejudice**. Through PSHE, we explore with children what positive friendship looks like and what is not acceptable. We also seek to **develop respect** and an open culture where children and staff feel confident to **speak out** about possible harmful or unacceptable behaviours. Where appropriate, children are involved in controlling change through their class and school council meetings and they are encouraged to share thoughts about aspects of school life.

Children are actively **taught about safeguarding** through Kidsafe and lessons about online safety. To ensure that **key messages** are retained and applied, each classroom displays reminders and photographs of **trusted adults** are displayed around school.

Expected Action to Be Taken By staff

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and initiator of the harm, Moorside Primary School has identified a number of simple steps for staff to follow.

-try and gather accurate information as quickly as possible, being sure to act with sensitivity so that all parties are free to talk openly and without fear of intimidation - this would normally mean talking to the different parties separately

-listen calmly and avoid making judgement or dismissing the issue as banter or unimportant

-use open questions ie ask a child to tell you what has happened, only interrupting them to gain clarity, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?)

-risk assess the behaviour; has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a child to be able to harm another? Is there a wider risk to others?

Important Factors for Staff to Consider

What is the age of the children involved?

Is there any age difference between those involved? (In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following)

- Where did the incident or incidents take place?
- Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?
- What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred? Can each of the young people give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive?
- What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?
- Do the young people know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the young person's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the young person have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

It is not always clear at the outset when dealing with a disclosure or incident, the nature or level of the concern, therefore staff must be mindful of the need to contact DSLs or a member of the SLT for advice for how the concern should be handled.

Where a child may be at risk of significant harm, it will be necessary to make a referral to social care and where a crime has been committed, there may need to be police involvement.

In most cases, the school will consider it important to contact both the parents of perpetrator and the victim. The aim being:

- to acknowledge that a concern has been raised
- to gather background information eg are they aware whether this happened before?
- to provide re-assurance
- to seek support for planned lines of action
- to seek permission to put in place further support
- to inform parents / carers about any sanctions which might be appropriate

Next Steps (the victim/survivor)

Appropriate support will be considered. This could be any one or a combination of the following strategies:

- work with a class or cohort or addressed through strengthening a particular area of the curriculum for that year group
- work with the victim in the context of a group
- one-to-one work with a learning mentor or counselor

Monitoring is always put in place and clear lines of communication established so that a child knows that concerns can be shared easily. Regular calls to parents/carers are also made until such a time all parties are confident that there has been no re-occurrence of the behaviour.

Next Steps (the perpetrator)

It is always important to consider why a child has behaved in a certain way for it may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases, support such as one-to-one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through a CAF/strengthening families/early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

In addition to providing support for the perpetrator it is important that young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. The school may also choose a sanction as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion/seclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour, it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one-to-one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation the behaviour that the young person has displayed, may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multiagency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour. The protection of the victim must always be paramount.

Monitoring

The school's team of DSLs meet six times a year to review incidents, disclosures and referrals. Individual cases are reviewed and the information is analysed to identify possible patterns.

