

Policy Title: Peer on Peer Abuse Policy	Effective Date:	June 2022
SMT Member Responsible: John Rumble	Review Date:	June 2023
Governors' Committee Responsible: Staffing, Care and Guidance		

1. Introduction

- 1.1. 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2021) states that '*governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse*' It sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with'.
- 1.2. Due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse, this separate and more detailed policy has been compiled.
- 1.3. At Sheldon School we are committed to ensuring that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with promptly and consistently, in order to 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.
- 1.4. This policy should be read in conjunction with our Child Protection Policy and our Anti-bullying Policy.

2. Prevention

As a school we will seek to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse by:

- providing a strong and positive PSRE curriculum and tutorial programme which develop pupils' understanding of these issues, including what constitutes acceptable behaviour and how to keep themselves safe.
- working hard to develop an environment and culture where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. All pupils will be clear about the range of people that they can talk to, secure in the knowledge that they will be listened to. Pupils can also report concerns online using the e-praise system.
- having a robust approach to e-safety, which develops pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, to ensure personal safety when using the internet and social media.
- developing appropriate risk assessments and support and advice for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils.

3. Abusive and harmful behaviour

- 3.1. There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as bullying or sexual experimentation etc. This is a matter of professional judgement. 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 intentions of the alleged perpetrator.

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

- 3.2. Abusive behaviour can cause serious harm and should not be tolerated, or passed over as ‘banter’ or part of growing up. At Sheldon, we have a zero tolerance approach to abuse. It should never be passed off as “banter”, or “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up”, or “boys being boys”, as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

4. Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and the following list is not exhaustive.

4.1. Physical abuse e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling, etc.)

Physical abuse may include hitting, kicking, pinching, 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 punishment to be undertaken.

4.2. Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault, etc.)

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or done 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 to send nude or semi-nude images or videos. The school follows Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021) and the DfE guidance on “Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges” (September 2021)

4.3. Bullying (physical, name calling, homophobic etc.)

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.

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

4.4. Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram 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.

4.5. Consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images/videos

This 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 these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. The school follows Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021) and the DfE guidance on "Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges" (September 2021)

4.6. Emotional Abuse

This 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 wellbeing of the victim and can lead to self-harm.

4.7. 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.

4.8. 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.

4.9 Sexual Violence and Harassment

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are extremely complex to manage. It is essential that victims are protected, offered appropriate support and every effort is made to ensure their education is not disrupted. It is also important that other children, adult students and school and college staff are supported and protected as appropriate. The school follows Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021) and

the DfE guidance on “Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges” (September 2021)

4.10 Initiation/hazing type of violence and rituals

Any form of initiation will not be tolerated and will be dealt with under the school’s behaviour policy

4.11 Upskirting

This is a criminal offence and 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 harm.

5. Procedure for dealing with allegations of peer on peer abuse

- 5.1. All allegations made by a pupil against another pupil will be taken seriously and fully investigated.
- 5.2. If it is established that such abuse has taken place, the perpetrator should receive a sanction in line with the school’s behaviour policy. It is important that they receive support and education on what constitutes acceptable behaviour and the potential impact of abusive behaviours. The victim will be supported in managing the incident and in knowing how to cope with any similar incident in the future.
- 5.3. If it is decided that the complaint raises a safeguarding concern the matter should be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) using the CPOMS system. If it proves to be a significant safeguarding concern the DSL will make a referral to social care and where a crime has been committed, the police should also be informed. Following advice from these external agencies, the parents should be informed. An individual risk assessment will be completed if it is felt that the young person may continue to pose a risk to others.
- 5.4. Where sexual violence or harassment are involved, the school will follow the DfE guidelines on sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (September 2021)