Barnwell School

Child-on-child abuse Policy

Reviewed – September 2026
To be reviewed – September 2027

INTRODUCTION

All cases of child-on-child abuse are serious, whether physical, emotional or psychological. Child-on-child abuse can take various forms and include serious bullying, relationship abuse, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or gender-based violence. Child-on-child abuse can also take place both on and offline.

This form of abuse occurs when there is any kind of physical, sexual, emotional, or financial abuse or coercive control exercised between children. This can include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; 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, upskirting, sexting, sharing nude and semi-nude images, and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals, violence against women and girls. (KCSIE, 2026)

All staff should be clear as to the school's policy and procedures with regards to child-on child abuse. It should be recognised that the behaviour in question is harmful to both the perpetrator (who is a child) and the victim.

The aim of the policy is to prevent child-on-child abuse of any sort and to have an educational community which promotes and provides excellence in teaching, learning, relationships, and opportunities, through high expectations. Therefore, all members of our school have a right to feel welcome, secure, and happy. Students should expect to learn in a supportive and caring environment without fear. There is a zero-tolerance approach to child-on-child abuse.

It is also to help members of the school community to deal with child-on-child abuse if and when it may occur and, even more importantly, to prevent it.

Child-on-child abuse can affect everyone; it is unacceptable, and it will not be tolerated. Everyone in the community has a responsibility to report any incident of child-on-child abuse that comes to their attention, and these reports will always be taken seriously.

A safe and secure environment is essential for effective learning, and every student has a right to a positive school experience.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibility for the implementation of this policy and provision rests with the Headteacher. On an operational basis, the management, responsibility, and evaluation of this policy is undertaken by the Assistant Headteacher for Safeguarding.

It is important to note that every member of staff is responsible for ensuring that this policy is fully implemented and that in situations not covered by this policy, staff must act in the best interests of the student, as any responsible parent would act.

Any concerns should be reported and logged onto CPOMS.

RELATED POLICIES

This policy complies with the Equality Act 2010 and is part of a suite of policies which should also be referred to:

• Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

• Behaviour Policy

• Safer Recruitment and Procedures Policy

• Complaints Procedure

• Equality and Diversity Policy

• Health and Safety Policy

• ICT Policy and Procedures

AIMS

• To create an environment where child-on-child abuse is not tolerated, where every student is recognised, welcomed, and valued

• To ensure that all students are aware of their rights and responsibilities and know how to seek help if those rights are infringed

• To encourage our students to work collaboratively together, develop positive relationships and offer each other mutual support and respect

• To encourage our students to always act respectfully and considerately

• To raise awareness and provide our students with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to deal effectively with all instances of child-on-child abuse, through a co-ordinated programme involving, Barnwell PSHE lessons and assemblies, pastoral support, and peer mentoring approaches.

• To use the processes around Restorative Justice, restorative justice is a theory of justice that focuses on mediation and agreement rather than punishment. Offenders must accept responsibility for harm and make restitution with victims.

• To review and monitor the effectiveness of our child-on-child abuse policy regularly

Child-on-child abuse, in whatever form, detrimentally affects the ability of our students to achieve and progress to the best of their ability, their well-being and will not be tolerated in any form, or to any degree.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the DfE guidance Preventing and tackling bullying advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, (July 2017) This can be found

Preventing bullying - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

We will work hard to ensure that child-on-child abuse plays no part in our community by proactively working with all students, their families and our staff to eradicate it and promptly dealing with all reported incidents.

THE NATURE OF BULLYING

"Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally."

It can be physical, psychological, social, verbal and is repetitive in its nature and causes distress to its victims.

Specific examples of bullying include but the list is not exhaustive:

Physical violence

Sexual violence

Abuse in intimate relationships

Exploitation

Image based abuse

Repeated name calling and teasing

Malicious rumours, text messages, phone calls, cyber bullying or posting information on social websites e.g. Facebook, text messages, You Tube, snapchat etc. (please refer to the Online safety Policy)

Physical or verbal threats and intimidation often over a period of time

Racist, homophobic, sexist language or reference to disability

Extortion or damaging a person's property

Exclusion from social groups Any acts of violence, bullying, racial or sexual harassment are seen as extremely serious offences and will be dealt with accordingly

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Students who are subject to child-on-child abuse may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences, or clinging to adults. There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, lacking concentration or truanting from school.

Members of staff and all members of the community must be alert to the signs of child-on-child abuse; legal responsibilities are known, and community members should act promptly and firmly against it.

How and when does child-on-child abuse happen?

• Anytime – it may be a single isolated incident or over a period of time

• Anywhere might compromise the child's safety or wellbeing.

Recognising the signs of child-on-child abuse?

Staff will suspect child-on-child abuse is occurring if a student:

• Becomes withdrawn and anxious

• Shows deterioration in his/her work

• Starts to attend erratically

• Has a 'fake' illness

• Persistently arrives late

• Prefers to stay with adults

Other Signs may be that the student:

• Does not want to walk to and from the school

• Does not want to use public transport or the school bus

• Insists that they are driven to and from school

• Changes their normal routine

• Begins to truant for no apparent reason

• Becomes withdrawn or displays a sudden lack of confidence

• Is reluctant to speak to other peers or teachers

• Attempts or threatens to commit suicide

• Runs away from home

Truancy

• Decrease in attendance

• Is upset at night and has displayed a disruptive sleep pattern linked with increasing nightmares

• Is continuously complaining of feeling unwell in the morning and at school

• Displays a downturn in their academic standards

• Possessions and clothes torn or damaged or go missing

• Asks for money or steals money (to pay bully)

• Loses dinner money on a regular basis

• Has a sudden increase in bruises or cuts which the pupil finds difficult or are unwilling to explain

• Comes home hungry (money or lunch has been stolen)

• Stops eating

• Suddenly displays unusual aggressive and disruptive behaviour

• Starts to bully other peers or family siblings

• Is reluctant or unwilling to talk about what is going wrong

Any student who has knowledge of an incident of bullying must tell someone about it. This could be:

• A member of staff

• The people who the student lives with

• A friend

STAFF GUIDELINES

Research shows quite clearly that many children do not report child-on-child abuse. It is therefore essential that we do our best to recognise possible victims. The result of child-on-child abuse can be that the victim feels isolated, frightened, humiliated and/or physically hurt.

• All staff must be vigilant and proactively responsive to any child-on-child abuse behaviour.

• They must take seriously all complaints and respond appropriately, effectively, and consistently to all incidents of child-on-child abuse

• Report incidents on CPOMS

• All staff should be consistent in their expectations of behaviour

• Students will be made aware of what constitutes child-on-child abuse through this policy

• When an incident of child-on-child abuse occurs, an appropriate and time limited response should be made

• Students are able to log incidents of child-on-child abuse in confidence, Students can also do this in school online when needed.

• The benefits of taking a stand against child-on-child abuse needs to be recognised by the student as well as the staff

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE

• All incidents should be reported (victim and perpetrator), using appropriate academy procedures and logged on CPOMS

• However, minor the incident appears to be, staff should intervene and report the incident using appropriate School procedures and logged on CPOMS

• Follow up actions should be taken in line with the CP Policy and parents/carers informed

• Staff should ensure a common approach and reinforce that aggressive, violent, or cruel behaviour is unacceptable

• If this is an obvious one-off incident deal with it as such, there and then. Fall outs or occurrences of students being unkind or unpleasant to one another may happen in your classroom – it is your responsibility to draw attention to the fact that it is not appropriate behaviour, and it will not be tolerated.

• Restorative approaches will only be considered where appropriate and never where they may place a victim at risk or minimise the seriousness of abuse.

• The perpetrator should be made aware that his/her behaviour is totally unacceptable

• It is essential to follow-up after an incident to check that the child-on-child abuse has not started again. Immediately after intervention the issue is likely to stop but child-on-child abuse is often persistent and may re-occur. If students expect follow-up, they are unlikely to start repeating the behaviour again.

• The behaviour characteristics of certain students can contribute to child-on-child abuse, for example certain SEND needs, but this in no way justifies it. If the victim is behaving in such a way as to irritate or annoy other students, then the issue should be addressed with them in a manner appropriate with their SEND needs.

Students should be made aware of:

• Places they can go to where they will feel safe

• Who they can contact for support

• How they can make staff aware of their problem even if they are too shy or frightened e.g. sympathetic teacher or friend who will help

Students must accept they have an important role to play in dealing with bullying. They are encouraged to:

• Have the self-confidence to challenge child-on-child abuse

• Support victims of peer-on-peer abuse

• Report any incidents of child-on-child abuse without guilt or fear

Parents are encouraged to:

• Identify early signs of child-on-child abuse noticed at home

• Contact your child's Form Tutor/HOY

• Reassure their child that the school will deal with the issue.

• Encourage their Child to report all child-on-child abuse issues using appropriate procedures.

Teachers and school staff:

1. Never ignore suspected child-on-child abuse

2. Don't make premature assumptions about students

3. Listen carefully to all accounts

4. Adopt a problem-solving approach

Consequences

• When an incident is reported the appropriate member of the pastoral team in conversation with SLT will determine the appropriate consequence

• Appropriate discipline will be determined case-by-case alongside the appropriate support given to victim and perpetrator

• Any incident of child-on-child abuse could result in the student being suspended. Behaviours and next steps will then be discussed with the parent/carer

• Continued incidents of child-on-child abuse could result in the student being permanently excluded

• Where appropriate outside agencies such as Educational Psychologist, Social Services and Police will be involved.

TYPES OF PEER-ON-PEER ABUSE

Cyber-Bullying

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 give teachers stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones.

Homophobic-Bullying

Homophobic bullying is behaviour or language that makes a young person feel unwelcome or marginalised because of a perceived or actual sexual orientation. Homophobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Barnwell School is fully inclusive and takes an active approach to tackling all forms of bullying linked to both sexual orientation and gender identity

Homophobic bullying can be hard to identify because it may be going on in secret. Sometimes, students may not want to tell anyone about it because of perceived

judgements from others. Generally, homophobic bullying looks like other sorts of bullying, but in particular it can include:

• Verbal abuse – including spreading rumours that someone is gay, suggesting that something or someone is inferior

• Physical abuse – including hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault, and threatening behaviour.

• Cyberbullying – using on-line spaces to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. Can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging.

• 'Being outed' (the threat of being exposed to your friends and family by them being told that you are gay, lesbian or bisexual even if you are not)

• Indirect bullying / social exclusion (being ignored or left out)

• Sexual harassment (inappropriate sexual gestures)

Incidents of casual homophobic language will be appropriately challenged by staff, and it is made clear to all members of the school community that this language will not be tolerated.

Transphobic-Bullying

Transphobic bullying is bullying based on prejudice or negative attitudes, views or beliefs about trans people. Transphobic bullying affects young people who are trans but can also affect those questioning their gender identity as well as students who are not trans but do not conform to gender stereotypes.

Transphobic bullying is not the same as homophobic bullying. Homophobic bullying targets someone's sexuality (whether they are, or are perceived to be gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, heterosexual or other), whereas transphobic bullying targets someone because of their gender identity (whether they identify as male, female or something different, regardless of the gender they were assigned at birth) or because they do not 'conform' to traditional gender stereotypes.

Incidents of casual derogatory or discriminatory language linked to gender will be appropriately challenged by staff, and it is made clear to all members of the academy community that this language will not be tolerated.

Xenophobic or racially motivated -Bullying

'A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.' We nurture an ethos and environment where all are valued and where views are taken into consideration. All staff are committed to dealing with incidents involving racism (including prejudice and stereotyping), racial harassment, and racist name calling whenever they occur.

Barnwell school is an anti-racist establishment and is committed to:

• addressing racism

• ensuring action to support victims of racism

• ensuring existing policies address inappropriate behaviour around racism and other discriminatory practices

• recording and reporting racist incidents

Incidents of casual xenophobic or racially derogatory language will be appropriately challenged by staff, and it is made clear to all members of the school community that this language will not be tolerated.

HATE CRIME

The term 'hate crime' can be used to describe a range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, or transgender identity.

There is no legal definition of hostility so we use the everyday understanding of the word which includes ill-will, spite, contempt, prejudice, unfriendliness, antagonism, resentment and dislike. These aspects of a person's identity are known as 'protected characteristics'.

A hate crime can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property, but the list is not exhaustive. The perpetrator can also be a friend, carer or acquaintance who exploits their relationship with the victim for financial gain or some other criminal purpose.

Targeting someone because of their protected characteristics is totally unacceptable.

The police will be important partners where a crime might have been committed. Where a hate crime may have been committed, the starting principle is that this must be referred on to the police.

Child-on Child ABUSE OUTSIDE SCHOOL PREMISES

Headteachers have the power to discipline pupils for misbehaving outside the school premises “to such an extent as is reasonable”. This can relate to any child-on-child abuse incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre or online.

Where child-on-child abuse outside school is reported to school staff, it will be investigated and acted on, this includes online. We will also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police will always be informed.

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and any sex or through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children

Sexual violence and sexual harassment will not be tolerated or dismissed as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”.

All unacceptable behaviours that fall within this category will be robustly challenged and dealt with. Where an incident or sexual violence or sexual harassment may have been committed, the starting principle is that this must be referred on to the police.

For this policy, when referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment. Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

• sexual comments, such as telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, and calling someone sexualised names.

• sexual "jokes" or taunting.

• physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence - it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature; and

• online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

It may include:

- non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos.
- sexualised online bullying
- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media
- sexual exploitation; coercion and threats
- AI created images

Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates an atmosphere that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

All reported incidents will be dealt with case-by-case with appropriate discipline determined.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

The term has been widely adopted in child protection and is used in this advice. Harmful sexual behaviour can occur online and/or offline and can also occur simultaneously between the two. Harmful sexual behaviour should be considered in a child protection context. See Child protection Policy and Keeping Children Safe In Education.

Staff will report any examples of harmful sexual behaviour as a Safeguarding concern through CPOMs

Violence Against Women and Girls

Barnwell recognises that violence against women and girls, misogyny, sexism and harmful gender stereotypes can be precursors to harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual violence both on and offline. Such behaviours will be treated as a safeguarding concern and responded to promptly and proportionately.

This can include but not limited to;

- Misogyny
- Sexism
- Harmful gender stereotypes
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual violence
- Online abuse directed at girls
- Image-based abuse and AI-generated sexual images
- Abuse within relationships
- 'Banter' that is sexist or degrading
- Sexualised language
- Rating or objectifying peers
- Gender-based insults
- Sharing inappropriate content
- Online misogyny and influencer-related harmful narratives
- AI-generated nude images
- Sharing manipulated images
- Online misogynistic content
- Sexual harassment through social media
- Coercive or controlling online/offline behaviour

Barnwell maintains a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, harassment, sexism and misogyny, recognising that seemingly low-level incidents can contribute to an unsafe culture if left unchallenged. Staff will report all safeguarding concerns through CPOMs.

Examples of the above could possibly lead to further services being contacted such as the police and social care services.