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**Grange Primary School ‘Child on Child Abuse Policy’ Sept 2023**

**Introduction**

The Governors, Senior Leadership Team, and all staff and volunteers at Grange Primary School are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the school.

We believe that to protect children, all schools should:

(a) be aware of the level and nature of risk to which their pupils are or may be exposed and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context.

(b) take a contextual whole-school approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse.

(c) regard the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure, and do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to child-on-child abuse in response to alleged incidents of it;

(d) recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to ensure that our pupils are safe; and

(e) encourage parents to hold us to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers, they should inform the school so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

This policy:

* sets out our strategy for preventing, identifying and appropriately managing child on child abuse. It is the product of a comprehensive consultation - which has involved pupils, staff and parents, and a risk assessment.
* applies to all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff, volunteers, contractors etc.
* It is reviewed annually, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which pupils are or may be exposed. A number of staff and pupils will be involved in each annual review, which involves and is informed by an assessment of the impact and effectiveness of this policy over the previous year.
* is the school’s overarching policy for any issue that could constitute child on child abuse. It relates to, and should be read alongside, the school’s child protection policy and any other relevant policies including, but not limited to our Anti-bullying (including cyber-bullying), Online safety, children absent from education, and our behaviour policy.
* does not use the term ‘victim’ and/or ‘perpetrator’. This is because our school takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in allegations of concerns about child-on-child abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused and those who are alleged to have abused their peers, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter. Research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers.
* uses the terms 'child' and 'children', which is defined for the purposes of this policy as a person aged under 18.
* is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)
* should be read in conjunction with the Derby City and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children partnership Child on child abuse strategy (May 2022).

**Understanding child on child abuse**

What is child on child abuse?

For these purposes, child on child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate).

Child on child abuse can take various forms, including serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or gender-based violence.

These types of abuse rarely take place in isolation and often indicate wider safeguarding concerns. Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives and spaces in which they spend their time. Any response to child-on-child abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of child-on-child abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's experiences. This can be done by adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that our response to incidents of child-on-child abuse takes into account any potential complexity.

What is Contextual Safeguarding?

This policy encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which:

• is an approach to safeguarding children that recognises their experiences of significant harm in extra-familial contexts, and seeks to include these contexts within prevention, identification, assessment and intervention safeguarding activities;

• recognises that as children enter adolescence they spend increasing amounts of time outside of the home in public environments (including on the internet) within which they may experience abuse; and

• considers interventions to change the systems or social conditions of the environments in which abuse has occurred. For example, rather than move a child from a school, professionals could work with the school leadership and student body to challenge harmful, gendered school cultures, thus improving the pre-existing school environment.

How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?

All staff should be alert to the well-being of pupils and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the ways in which children will disclose or present with behaviour as a result of their experiences will differ.

Where the behaviour which is the subject of the concern/allegation is considered or suspected by the DSL to constitute child on child abuse, the school will follow the procedures set out below.

Signs that a child may be suffering from child on child abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse (please see our Safeguarding and Child protection policy for indicators of abuse) and can include:

(a) failing to attend school, disengaging from classes or struggling to carry out school related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected.

(b) physical injuries;

(c) experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing;

(d) becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much;

(e) broader changes in behaviour including alcohol or substance misuse;

(f) changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age;

(g) abusive behaviour towards others.

Abuse affects children very differently. The above list is by no means exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse. The behaviour that children present with will depend on their particular circumstances. Rather than checking behaviour against a list, staff are trained to be alert to behaviour that might cause concerns, to think about what the behaviour might signify, to encourage children to share with them any underlying reasons for their behaviour, and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents/carers so that the cause of their behaviour can be investigated. Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for their age, staff should always consider whether an underlying concern is contributing to their behaviour (for example, whether the child is being harmed or abused by their peers) and, if so, what the concern is and how the child can be supported going forwards.

**A whole school approach**

How can the school raise awareness of and prevent child on child abuse?

**School environment**

The school actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

* Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, pupils, and parents about this issue.
* This includes:

(a) Contextual Safeguarding.

(b) the identification and classification of specific behaviours; and

(c) the importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing.

* educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum. For example, by addressing gender inequality in a statistics class, or by reviewing literature in an English class which addresses bullying and its effect on mental health. Pupils are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse. They are regularly informed about the school’s approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse.
* ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the school’s safeguarding lead so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who may be in need of additional support.
* challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom)
* working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, pupils and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the school community;
* creating conditions in which our pupils can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships.
* creating a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to; and
* responding to cases of child on child abuse promptly and appropriately.

Engaging parents on this issue is crucial and Grange Primary School will do this by:

(a) talking about it with parents.

(b) involving parents in the review of school policies.

(c) encouraging parents to hold the school to account on this issue.

Multi-agency working

The school actively engages with its local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse, and works closely with, for example, DDSCP, the Erewash MAT, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies, and other schools.

The relationships the school has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the school is able to prevent, identify early and appropriately handle cases of child-on-child abuse. They help the school:

(a) to develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in its local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist.

(b) to ensure that our pupils are able to access the range of services and support they need quickly;

(c) to support and help inform our local community's response to child-on-child abuse;

(d) to increase our awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in our local area to enable us to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by our pupils.

**Responding to concerns or allegations about child on child abuse**

It is essential that all concerns/allegations of child on child abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our school environment.

Any response should:

* include a thorough investigation of the concerns/allegations and the wider context in which they may have occurred (as appropriate);
* treat all children involved as being at potential risk - while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, they may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. Schools should ensure a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter.
* take into account:

1. that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved, and consider and address the effect of wider socio-cultural contexts - such as the child's/children's peer group (both within and outside the School); family; the School environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence. Consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child's/children's needs and to mitigate risk; and
2. the potential complexity of child on child and of children´s experiences and consider the interplay between power, choice, and consent. While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited, they are not consenting.
3. the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/children and their parents and obtain consent to any referral before it is made. The school should manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so.

**What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peers?**

If a pupil is in immediate danger or at risk of significant harm then a referral into Children’s Social Care (Starting Point) and/or the police should be made immediately.

Anyone can make a referral. When referrals are not made by the DSL then the DSL should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made. (Following normal procedures as stated in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay so that a course of action can be agreed.

If a child speaks to a member of staff about peer-on-peer abuse that they have witnessed or are a part of, the member of staff should listen to the child and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement.

**Individual risk and needs assessment.**

Where there is an incident of child on child abuse, the school will carry out a robust risk and needs assessment in respect of each child affected by the abuse. These risk assessments will:

i. assess and address the nature and level of risks that are posed and/or faced by the child;

ii. engage the child's parents and draw upon local services and agencies to ensure that the child's needs are met in the long-term. Consider whether any targeted interventions are needed to address the underlying attitudes or behaviour of any child; and

iii. be reviewed at regular intervals in light of the child's on-going needs to ensure that real progress is being made which benefits the child.

If at any stage the child's needs escalate, the DSL should contact Starting Point/Erewash Early Help Team to determine the appropriate course of action.

**Disciplinary action**

The school will consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it.

Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including

(a) to ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;

(b) to demonstrate to the child/children and others that child on child abuse can never be tolerated; and

(c) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

However, these considerations must be balanced against the child's/children's own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action the School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the peer-on-peer abuse and the causes of it.

The school will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed moves or exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognising that even if this is ultimately deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this policy may still be required. Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the school. Engaging in Fair Access Panel Processes to assist with decision-making associated to managed moves and exclusions can also be beneficial.

Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of child-on-child abuse, and the school will always consider the wider actions that may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards, as set out below.

(a) what protective factors and influences exist within the school (such as positive peer influences, examples where child on child abuse has been challenged etc.) and how can the school bolster these?

(b) how (if at all) did the school's physical environment contribute to the abuse, and how can the school address this going forwards, for example by improving the school's safety, security and supervision?

(c) did wider gender norms, equality issues and/or societal attitudes contribute to the abuse?

(d) does the case or any identified trends highlight areas for development in the way in which the School works with children to raise their awareness of and/or prevent peer-on-peer abuse, including by way of the School's PSHE curriculum and lessons that address underlying attitudes or behaviour such as gender and equalities work?;

(e) are there any lessons to be learnt about the way in which the school engages with parents to address child on child abuse issues?;

(f) were there opportunities to intervene earlier or differently and/or to address common themes amongst the behaviour of other children in the school?

Answers to these questions can be developed into an action plan that is reviewed on a regular basis by the School Leadership and DSL.

**9) Links with other school policies and practices**

This Policy links with a number of other school policies, practices and action plans including:

* Behaviour and discipline policy
* Complaints Policy
* Safeguarding and child protection policy.
* Confidentiality Policy
* e-Safety (Online Safety) and Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs)
* Curriculum Policies such as PSHE and citizenship and computing
* Mobile phone and social media policies
* Searching and confiscation

**10) Links to legislation**

There are a number of pieces of legislation which set out measures and actions for schools in response to bullying as well as criminal law. These may include:

* The Education and Inspection Act 2006, 2011
* The Equality Act 2010
* The Children Act 1989
* Protection from Harassment Act 1997
* The Malicious Communications Act 1988
* Public Order Act 1986
* The Computer Misuse Act 1990

**11) Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of:

* School Governors to take a lead role in monitoring and reviewing this policy.
* Governors, the Headteacher, Senior Managers, Teaching and Non-Teaching staff to be aware of this policy and implement it accordingly.
* The Headteacher to communicate the policy to the school community and to ensure that disciplinary measures are applied fairly, consistently, and reasonably.
* Staff to support and uphold the policy.
* Parents/carers to support their children and work in partnership with the school.
* Pupils to abide by the policy.

The named Governor with lead responsibility for this policy is: John Imms

The named member of staff with lead responsibility for this policy is: **Z Buxton**

**12) Monitoring & review, policy into practice**

This policy was approved by the Governing Body on: March 2021

This policy was monitored and reviewed in Sept 2023 and was updated to reflect KCSIE Sept 2023.

The named Governor for bullying will report on a regular basis to the governing body on incidents of bullying and outcomes. The school will ensure that they regularly monitor and evaluate mechanisms to ensure that the policy is being consistently applied. Any issues identified will be incorporated into the school’s action planning.

Signed             Chair of Governors Date

Signed Headteacher Date

**Supporting Organisations and Guidance**

* Anti-Bullying Alliance: [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)
* Childline: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
* DfE: “Preventing and Tackling Bullying. Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies”, and “[Supporting children and young people who are bullied: advice for schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/292505/supporting_bullied_children_advice.pdf)” October 2014: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>
* DfE: “No health without mental health”: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/no-health-without-mental-health-a-cross-government-outcomes-strategy>
* Family Lives: [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)
* Kidscape: [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)
* MindEd: [www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk)
* NSPCC: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
* PSHE Association: [www.pshe-association.org.uk](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk)
* Restorative Justice Council: [www.restorativejustice.org.uk](http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk)
* The Diana Award: [www.diana-award.org.uk](http://www.diana-award.org.uk)
* Victim Support: [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)
* Young Minds: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
* Young Carers: [www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net)

**Cyberbullying**

* Childnet International: [www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)
* Digizen: [www.digizen.org](http://www.digizen.org)
* Internet Watch Foundation: [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)
* Think U Know: [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)
* UK Safer Internet Centre: [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)

**LGBT**

* EACH: [www.eachaction.org.uk](http://www.eachaction.org.uk)
* Pace: [www.pacehealth.org.uk](http://www.pacehealth.org.uk)
* Schools Out: [www.schools-out.org.uk](http://www.schools-out.org.uk)
* Stonewall: [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)

## SEND

## Changing Faces: [www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk)

## Mencap: [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

## DfE: SEND code of practice: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

**Racism and Hate**

* Anne Frank Trust: [www.annefrank.org.uk](http://www.annefrank.org.uk)
* Kick it Out: [www.kickitout.org](http://www.kickitout.org)
* Report it: [www.report-it.org.uk](http://www.report-it.org.uk)
* Stop Hate: [www.stophateuk.org](http://www.stophateuk.org)
* Show Racism the Red Card: [www.srtrc.org/educational](http://www.srtrc.org/educational)