



## Sheffield Lower school Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

Written by	Reviewed and Ratified by Governors	Shared with Staff	Last Updated	Review Cycle	Next Review due
Polly Ross	November 2024	November 2024	October 2023	Annual	October 2025

### 1.0 Statement of Intent

Sheffield Lower School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every pupil, both inside and outside of the school premises, and is aware that abuse against children can be inflicted by other children. We implement a whole-school preventative approach to managing child-on-child abuse, ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils is at the forefront of all action taken.

This policy sets out a clear and consistent framework for delivering this promise, in line with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

#### 1.1 It will be achieved by:

- Creating a culture of mutual respect amongst all pupils.
- Teaching pupils about behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable.
- Identifying and making provision for any pupil that has been subject to abuse.
- Ensuring that members of the governing body, the headteacher and staff members understand their responsibilities under safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, are alert to the signs of child-on-child abuse, and know to refer concerns to the DSL.
- Ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are transparent, clear and easy to understand for staff, pupils and parents
- setting expectations that violence and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated

All staff need to be aware of these and ensure they are part of their everyday practice. It should be clear that child-on-child abuse will never be accepted or dismissed as 'children being children'. Settings should not wait until an incident of child-on-child abuse happens before taking action. Staff and pupils should know what language and behaviour are acceptable and what to do and who to speak to if they are worried or feel unsafe.

### 2.0 Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- DfE (2018) 'Working together to safeguard children'
- DfE (2023 and 24) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023' (KCSIE)

#### 2.1 The policy also has regard to the following non-statutory guidance:

- DfE (2015) 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'

- DfE (2018) 'Information sharing'
- DSIT, DCMS and UK Council for Internet Safety (2020) 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'
- National Police Chief's Council (2020) 'When to call the police: guidance for schools and colleges'

**2.2** This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct within staff handbook
- Cyber-security Policy
- Children Missing from Education Policy

### **3.0 Roles and responsibilities**

#### **3.1 The governing body has a duty to:**

- Ensure that the school complies with its duties under the above child protection and safeguarding legislation.
- Hold the school to account for its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Guarantee that the policies, procedures and training opportunities in the school are effective and comply with the law at all times.
- Guarantee that the school contributes to multi-agency working in line with the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.
- Confirm that the school's arrangements for handling child-on-child abuse take into account the procedures and practices of the LA as part of the inter-agency safeguarding procedures.
- Appoint a member of staff from the SLT to the role of DSL as an explicit part of the role-holder's job description.
- Appoint one or more deputy DSLs to provide support to the DSL, ensuring that they are trained to the same standard as the DSL, and that the role is explicit in their job description(s).
- Ensure that the DSL has the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post.
- Ensure the DSL is given the additional time, funding, training, resources and support needed to carry out the role effectively.
- Make sure that pupils are taught about child-on-child abuse, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Ensure that staff members are appropriately trained to support pupils to be themselves at school, e.g. if they are LGBTQ+.
- Ensure the school has clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible risk of harm in pupils, including clear routes to escalate concerns and clear referral and accountability systems.
- Guarantee that there are procedures in place to handle pupils' allegations against other pupils.
- Ensure that appropriate disciplinary procedures are in place, as well as policies pertaining to the behaviour of pupils.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to child-on-child abuse.
- Make sure that pupils' wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide to protect individual pupils.
- Guarantee that there are systems in place for pupils to express their views and give feedback.
- Ensure that all governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) training at induction that is regularly updated, in order to equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place are effective and support the delivery of a robust, whole-school approach to safeguarding – this training should include, amongst other things, the expectations and responsibilities on staff in relation to filtering and monitoring.

#### **3.2 The headteacher has a duty to:**

- Safeguard pupils' wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.
- Ensure that the policies and procedures adopted by the governing body, particularly concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect, are followed by staff members.
- Provide staff, upon induction, with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, part one and, where appropriate, Annex A of KCSIE, the Behaviour Policy, the Children Missing from Education Policy, online safety training, and the identity of the DSL and any deputies.
- Ensure staff receive training on recognising indicators of abuse and handling disclosures or concerns about a pupil.

### **3.3 The DSL has a duty to:**

- Understand and keep up-to-date with local safeguarding arrangements.
- Act as the main point of contact with the three safeguarding partners and the child death review partner.
- Make the necessary child protection referrals to appropriate agencies.
- Understand when they should consider calling the police, in line with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) guidance.
- Liaise with the headteacher to inform them of safeguarding issues and ongoing enquiries.
- Liaise with the deputy DSL(s) to ensure effective safeguarding outcomes.
- Act as a source of support for pupils who have been abused by, or who have abused, other pupils.
- Lead the school in taking a preventative approach to child-on-child abuse.

### **3.4 Other staff members have a responsibility to:**

- Safeguard pupils' wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.
- Provide a safe environment in which pupils can learn.
- Act in accordance with school procedures with the aim of eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to child-on-child abuse.
- Maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.
- Be aware of the signs of abuse and understand that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school, inside and outside the home, and online.
- Adhere to the early help process and understand their role in it.
- Understand and adhere to the procedure to follow in the event that a child confides they are being abused by a peer.
- Understand that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful.
- Understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding issues.
- Support social workers in making decisions about individual children, in collaboration with the DSL.
- Maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality when dealing with individual cases, and always act in the best interest of the child.
- Understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature.
- Build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.

### **4.0 What is Child-on-child Abuse?**

Unfortunately, child-on-child abuse can and does happen in a whole range of settings that children attend, however it often goes unseen. It might take place online, for example, or away from the school or setting. Therefore, training for professionals to help them recognise the signs, and know what to do, is essential. All children are capable of abusing their peers, and this is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyber bullying);
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;
- 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, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery; and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school such as the behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, child protection policy and online safety policy. This policy concentrates on child-on-child abuse in the context of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023) and should be read in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LSCB) Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

#### 4.1 Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2023 and 24 states that -

*'All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children at any age (often referred to as child-on-child abuse). And that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports'*

*'All staff should be clear as to the school's or college's policy and procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse'*

In cases where child-on-child abuse or bullying is identified we will follow our child protection procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation.

#### 5.0 Policy Development

The policy has been developed in consultation with Senior leaders, governors, staff and parents.

#### 6.0 Vulnerable groups

6.1 We recognise that all children can be at risk, however we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable. This can include children or young people who:

- have experience of abuse within their family.
- are living with domestic violence.
- are young people in care.
- are children who go missing.
- are children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities).
- are children who identify or are perceived as LGBT and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

6.2 All staff should be aware of indicators, which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include:

- increased absence from school,
- a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups,
- a significant decline in performance,
- signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing,
- signs of assault or unexplained injuries.
- unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

#### 7.0 The importance of context

Staff will consider risks to other children; If there's an incident in a school, has this put other children at risk? Have other children witnessed the incident? Could any siblings of the child alleged to have caused harm be at risk? There may well be a need for a range of assessments and interventions for different children. A multi-agency approach is needed. In addition, staff will consider the potential vulnerabilities of the victims and any risks to them, including their potential abuse by others. Extra consideration should be given for pupils who may have additional vulnerabilities due to protected characteristics. The school considers how they are supporting their pupils with regard to their sex, sexuality, and if relevant, gender reassignment. Shefford Lower School assesses any potentially unsafe spaces on the premises, based on where incidents have occurred, and consider what can be done to make that environment safer. The school considers children's safety outside of the school gates and any extra-familial risks including –

- Unsafe spaces in their local area
- Clubs or activities outside of school
- Incidents of sexual harassment or violence involving children in the local park or other places where young people congregate

Contextual information like this needs to be assessed and shared in a multiagency forum so risks can be fully assessed outside of the school

## **8.0 Prevention**

Shefford Lower School supports pupils to foster healthy and respectful relationships including through Relationship Education and Personal Social Health and Economic education. There is a whole-school approach that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. The school has a clear set of values and standards, and these are upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life. This is underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, and by a planned programme of evidence-based content delivered through the whole curriculum which tackles issues such as

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- What respectful behaviour looks like
- Consent
- Gender roles, stereotyping, and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong; and
- Addressing cultures of sexual harassment.

Schools often deliver this currently, through planned, high-quality, Relationship Education (SRE) and Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education.

## **9.0 A Multi-agency Approach**

Shefford Lower School actively engages with its local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse and work closely with Central Bedfordshire Council children's social care, other schools, and/or other relevant agencies. The relationships the school builds 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 can 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.

**9.1** The school actively refers concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse where necessary to Central Bedfordshire Council children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies. Children residing out of county but attending a Central Bedfordshire school/academy are referred to their home authority Social Care team. In cases involving children who are subject to risk, harm and abuse and who have LAC status, the children's social worker is informed and a coordinated approach to address any incidents or concerns will be required. We make sure that the children affected are getting the help they need. A typical response will involve:

- children's social care
- the police
- any specialist services that support children who demonstrate harmful sexual behaviour
- the family
- any other professionals who know or have had contact with the child

**9.2** If the children involved are in the same class, the school will consider carefully whether to separate them while the concerns are being investigated. In situations of alleged rape and assault by penetration, the statutory guidance is clear that the child alleged to have caused harm should always be removed from classes they share with the victim. The school considers how best to keep the victim and child alleged to have caused harm a reasonable distance apart while they are on the same premises, as well as on transport to and from school or college, where appropriate.

## **10.0 Responding to Alleged Incidents**

### **10.1 Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment**

All reports of child-on-child abuse will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead or their deputy taking a leading role using their professional judgement. Support will be sought from other agencies such as social care, or the police as required.

### **10.2 An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:**

- Chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved
- Difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability
- All alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident

- Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
- What was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery?
- The effect on the victim
- Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret
- The child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred
- Whether this was a one-off incident, or longer in duration

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

### **10.3 The immediate response to a report**

- The school or college will take all reports seriously and will reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe.
- All staff will be trained to manage a report.
- Staff will not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead or social care) staff will however only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it.
- It is important to explain that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them, and this should be explained in such a way that avoids alarming or distressing them.
- A written report will be made as soon after the discussion as possible, only recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later.
- Assess the needs of the victim and child alleged to have caused harm.
- Where the report includes an online element the school or college will follow advice on searching, screening and confiscation. The staff will not view or forward images unless unavoidable and only if another member of staff (preferably the Designated Safeguarding Lead) is present.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed as soon as possible and consider a referral to the police and social care.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead must complete a risk assessment where sexual violence has occurred. This must be shared with Children's Social Care.

### **10.4 When recording sexualised behaviour, it is essential that:**

- Record as soon as possible, as you can quickly forget or confuse detail
- Be clear, explicit and non-avoidant, and avoid vague statements or euphemisms
- Follow the prompts on your safeguarding and child protection recording form/system
- Use proper names for body parts but record exactly any language or vocabulary used by the child.
- Use the child's exact words in quotation marks.
- Note where and when the incident happened and whether anyone else was around.

### **10.5 Gather the Facts**

Speak to all the young people involved separately and gain a statement of facts from them. Use consistent language and open questions for each account. Ask the young people to tell you what happened. Use open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?). Do not interrogate or ask leading questions.

### **10.6 Consider the Intent**

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?

### **10.7 Decide on your next course of action**

If you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately; they will follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

If Social Care and the police intend to pursue this further, they may ask to interview the young people in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

### **10.8 Informing parents/carers**

The best way to inform parents/carers is face to face. Although this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents/carers whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

Is the pupil 13+ and does not want to share with parents? Use the 'Gillick' test and the 'Fraser' guidelines.

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident, the school should encourage the young person to share the information with their parent/carer (they may be scared to tell parents/carers that they are being harmed in any way).

### **10.9 Anonymity**

As a matter of effective safeguarding practice, Shefford Lower School will do all we reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment. Amongst other things, this will mean carefully considering, based on the nature of the report, which staff should know about the report and any support that will be put in place for the child/ren involved.

Following an incident, Shefford Lower School will also consider the potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours and exposing victims' identities. We will follow the principles described in Childnet's cyberbullying guidance when considering this.

### **11.0 Points to consider**

- What is the age of the children involved?
- How old are the young people involved in the incident and 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.
- The wishes of the victim and how they want to proceed.
- Any imbalance of power between the children.
- 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 (regular and repetitive)? Is the version of one young person different from another, and if so, why?
- 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? Has that 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?
- importance of understanding intra familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following incidents.

### **12.0 Repetition**

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

### **13.0 Risk Assessment**

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will make an immediate risk and needs' assessment. This will be shared with Children's Social Care. The risk and needs' assessment should consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support.
- The child alleged to have caused harm; and
- All the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school or college, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them.
- The time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer.

Risk assessments will be recorded electronically on CPOMs and be kept under review.

### **14.0 Follow up Actions**

#### **14.1 Children sharing a classroom:**

Whilst Shefford Lower School establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police:

- The child alleged to have caused harm will be removed from any classes they share with the victim.

- We will consider how best to keep the victim and child alleged to have caused harm a reasonable distance apart on school or college premises and on transport to and from the school or college.

These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the child alleged to have caused harm.

## 15.0 Options to manage the report

### 15.1 Manage internally

1. In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, it may be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising the behaviour and bullying policies and by providing pastoral support via the school's family support worker. This decision is considered on the outcome of contact with Children's Social Care and submission of a completed risk assessment.

This decision will be made based on the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All decisions, and discussions around making these decisions, will be recorded and stored by the DSL or DDSL on CPOMs.

**Details of sanctions for the child alleged to have caused harm will not be shared with any other persons, other than those providing care for them. This is to maintain confidentiality and privacy for the child involved.**

2. In line with point 1 above, we may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will consult the local threshold document when deciding if Early Help is appropriate.
3. Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to Children's Social Care following locally agreed protocols. Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a deputy will be working alongside, and cooperating with, the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the child alleged to have caused harm and any other children that require support.

### 15.2 Reporting to the Police

***Designated Safeguarding Leads have a responsibility to report all alleged crimes to the police.***

#### When to call the Police

Sheffield Lower School will follow local processes for making safeguarding referrals.

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this will be passed on to the police immediately. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the child alleged to have caused harm is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. The police will take a welfare approach, rather than a criminal justice approach.

Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChISVAs) provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence. They are based within the specialist sexual violence sector and will help the victim understand what their options are and how the criminal justice process works if they have reported or are considering reporting to the police. ChISVAs will work in partnership with schools and colleges to ensure the best possible outcomes for the victim.

Where a report has been made to the police, the school or college will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, the child alleged to have caused harm and their parents or carers. They will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the relevant agencies to support all children involved (including potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought in order to help us, such as management of bail conditions.

Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the child alleged to have caused harm, we will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the school or college take do not jeopardise the police investigation.

### 15.3 The end of the criminal process

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, Sheffield Lower School will update our risk assessment, ensuring relevant protections are in place for all children. We will consider any suitable action following our behaviour policy. If the child alleged to have caused harm remains at Sheffield Lower School we will be very clear as to our expectations regarding the child.



alleged to have caused harm now they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions we think are reasonable and proportionate about the child alleged to have caused harm's timetable. Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other pupils in the school or college. We will ensure all children involved are protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online). Where cases are classified as "no further action" (NFA'd) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, we will continue to offer support to the victim and the child alleged to have caused harm for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. We will continue to support all parties in this instance.

***It is also important to note that by law, every child has the right to an education.***

### **16.0 Support for Children Affected by Sexual Assault**

What support children require depends on the individual. It may be that children wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends; in which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people, or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required. Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group. For example, a speaker on online bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of Relationship and Sex Education (from 2020), PSHE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently. If the young person feels particularly vulnerable, it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

Shefford Lower School understand that sexual assault can result in a range of health needs, including physical, mental, and sexual health problems and unwanted pregnancy. Any child or young person that has a health need arising from sexual assault or abuse can access specialist NHS support from a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). SARCs offer confidential and non-judgemental support to victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse. They provide medical, practical, and emotional care and advice to all children and adults, regardless of when the incident occurred.

We will support the victim of sexual assault to remain in school but if they are unable to do so we will enable them to continue their education elsewhere. This decision will be made only at the request of the child and their family. If the child moves to another school, Shefford Lower School will ensure the new school is aware of the ongoing support they may need. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will support this move.

Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, we may take suitable action, if we have not already done so. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the child alleged to have caused harm to remain in the same school or college would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other pupils). Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, we may, if we have not already done so, consider any suitable sanctions using our behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion.

Where the child alleged to have caused harm is going to remain at Shefford Lower School, we will aim to continue keeping the victim and child alleged to have caused harm in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school premises and transport. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed. All the above will be considered with the needs and wishes of the victim at the heart of the process (supported by parents and carers as required). Any arrangements will be kept under review.

### **16.1 For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour**

It is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. 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. Specific support from identified services may be necessary through an early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that the young person receives a consequence for their behaviour, in line with the behaviour policy. 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. 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 elsewhere.

It may be that 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 multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all 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.

Sheffield Lower School may also deem a sanction is appropriate 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. We are aware that school can be a significant protective factor for children who have displayed harmful behaviour, and continued access to school, with a comprehensive safeguarding management plan in place, is an important factor to consider before final decisions are made.

## **16.2 After care**

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help, even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). For this reason, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

Sheffield Lower School will consider the support that children (and adult students) who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape and assault by penetration, may require. Witnessing such an event is likely to be traumatic and support may be required. Following any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, it is likely that some children will take "sides". We will do all we can to ensure all involved, including any witnesses, are not bullied or harassed.

## **17.0 Online Behaviour**

Many forms of child-on-child abuse have an element of online behaviour including behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting. Policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour can be found in the school's anti-bullying policy, online safety policy, and safeguarding policy.

## **18.0 Prevention**

Sheffield Lower School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

- Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff, volunteers, pupils, and parents about this issue. This will include training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes:
  - Contextual Safeguarding.
  - The identification and classification of specific behaviours.
  - 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.
  - Pupils are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience 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.
  - Engaging parents on this issue by:
    - (a) talking about it with parents, both in groups and one to one;
    - (b) asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the School address those risks; and
    - (c) involving parents in the review of School policies and lesson plans; and (d) Encouraging parents to hold the School to account on this issue.
  - Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the School's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who maybe in need of additional support. This is done by way of a weekly meeting at which all concerns about pupils including child-on-child abuse issues are discussed.
  - 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.
- Responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately.

## Appendix 1

Simon Hackett (2010) has proposed a continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant:

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
Developmentally expected	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour	• Problematic and concerning behaviours	• Victimising intent or outcome	• Physically violent sexual abuse
Socially acceptable	• Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group	• Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected	• Includes misuse of power	• Highly intrusive
Consensual, mutual, reciprocal	• Context for behaviour may be inappropriate	• No overt elements of victimisation	• Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance	• Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator
Shared decision making	• Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Consent issues may be unclear	• Intrusive	• Sadism
		• May lack reciprocity or equal power	• Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim	
		• May include levels of compulsivity	• May include elements of expressive violence	

## Appendix 2

### Support for Young People:

If you think that a child has been harmed or is being neglected, contact the Access and Referral Hub on 0300 300 8585, or out of hours 0300 300 8123.

The Police are also there to offer support and guidance to both alleged victims and children alleged to have caused harm, they can be contacted on 101.

- Internet Watch Foundation (to potentially remove illegal images)
- NSPCC – Report Abuse in Education helpline - [0800 136 663](tel:0800136663) or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)
- The UK Safer Internet Centre helpline - [0344 381 4772](tel:03443814772) or email [helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)

### National charities:

#### Victim Support

A national charity dedicated to helping anyone affected by crime – not just victims and witnesses, but friends, family and anyone else caught up in the aftermath.

### Rape Crisis

A national charity offering confidential help, advice and a range of Rape Crisis Centres around the UK.

### Galop

A national charity providing advice and support to members of the LGBT community.

### Survivors UK

A national charity supporting men who have been raped or sexually assaulted.

### Crimestoppers

A national charity with a free helpline for reporting crime anonymously.

### Refuge

Refuge supports women, children and men with a range of services, including refuges, independent advocacy, community outreach and culturally specific services.

### Women's Aid

Women's Aid is a national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children.

### Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327

Confidential helpline for men experiencing domestic violence from a partner or ex-partner (or from other family members).

## **Appendix 3**

### **Useful Publications and Websites**

#### **Government Publications**

- Keeping Children safe in Education
- Preventing youth violence and gang involvement
- Preventing and tackling bullying in schools
- DfE: Statutory guidance: Working together to safeguard children, 2018
- DfE: Searching, screening and confiscation at school, January 2018
- DfE: Statutory guidance Suspension and Permanent exclusion, Sept 2023
- DfE: Teaching Online Safety in Schools, Jan 2023
- DfE: Relationship Education and Relationship and Sex Education, Sept 21
- DfE: Behaviour in schools, Sept 2022
- DfE: Mental health and behaviour in schools, November 2018
- DfE: Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff, November 2014
- DfE: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings, December 2020
- DfE: Respectful School Communities: Self-Review and Signposting Tool
- UKCIS: Tackling race and faith targeted bullying face to face and online, May 2017
- UKCIS: Education for a connected world, June 2020
- Gov.uk: Equality Act 2010: advice for schools, June 2018

#### **Other useful documents**

- LGFL 'Undressed' -how to teach young children about being tricked into getting undressed online in a fun way without scaring them or explaining the motives of sex offenders
- The Safeguarding Network – Child-on-child abuse

- Preventing abuse among children and young people-guidance from Stop it Now
- What is Age appropriate?
- Brook Traffic lights
- NSPCC-Harmful sexual behaviour
- NSPCC – Is this sexual abuse?
- Childnet - Project deSHAME- Digital Exploitation and Sexual Harassment Amongst Minors in Europe Understanding, Preventing, Responding
- Equality and Human Rights Commission: Public Sector Equality Duty Guidance for Schools in England
- Key messages from research on children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour - CSA Centre
- NPCC- When to call the police
- West Midlands Procedures for Child-on-child abuse
- Please also see: Anti-Bullying Alliance guidance for school about sexual and sexist bullying

## Appendix 4 Useful definitions

### Sexual Harassment

This can be defined as ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline. In the context of this guidance this means 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.

It 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.

### Sexting

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others or sends sexually explicit messages. They can be sent using mobiles, tablets, smartphones, laptops - any device that allows you to share media and messages. This is also known as youth produced sexual imagery

The UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) Education Group has published Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people.

### Upskirting

This typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is now a criminal offence and may constitute sexual harassment. Cases of ‘up skirting’ have a mandatory requirement for being reported.

### Rape

A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

### Assault by Penetration

A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

### Sexual Assault

A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

### Consent

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

It is important to know that: -

- The age of consent is 16:
- A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity;
- Sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

It is also important to differentiate between consensual sexual activity between children of a similar age and that which involves any power imbalance, coercion or exploitation. Due to their additional training, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) should be involved and leading the school or college response. If in any doubt, they should seek expert advice.

It is important that schools and colleges consider sexual harassment in broad terms. 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.

### **Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)**

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is "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.

### **Initiation/hazing**

Hazing or initiation ceremonies refers to the practice of rituals, challenges, and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group. Hazing is seen in many different types of social groups, including gangs, sports teams and school groups. The initiation rituals can range from relatively low-level pranks, to protracted patterns of behaviour that rise to the level of abuse or criminal misconduct. Hazing may include physical or psychological abuse. It may also include nudity or sexual assault.

### **Contextual Safeguarding**

All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) should be considering the context within which incidents and/or behaviours occur. This is known as contextual safeguarding, which simply means assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare.