

Stithians CP School



Managing allegations against other pupils

“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility”

Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2016 states that ‘Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with’ (page 19). The document also states it is most important to ensure opportunities of seeking the voice of the child are heard, ‘Governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child’s wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, any system and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.’ While it is recommended that Peer on Peer abuse is part of the Child Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse we have completed this separate policy guidance template. (You may choose to add this directly to your Child Protection Policy)

Policy

At School we believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the school and other students.

We have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy

What is Peer on Peer Abuse

Peer on peer abuse occurs when a young person is exploited, bullied and /or harmed by their peers who are the same or a similar age; everyone directly involved with peer on peer abuse is under the age of 18.

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as bullying, sexual experimentation etc. This is a matter of professional judgement. If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse: bullying, fighting and harassment between children are not generally seen as child protection issues. However, it may be appropriate to regard a young person's behaviour as abusive if:

- There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned; or
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged young person. If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim or to exploit them, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

Prevention

As a school we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:-

- Providing a developmentally appropriate PSHE syllabus which develops pupils understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe.
- Having a robust Online and Mobile Technology safety programme which develops pupils knowledge, understanding and skills, to ensure personal safety and self-protection when using the internet and social networking.
- Having robust monitoring and filtering systems in place to ensure pupils are safe and act appropriately when using information technology in school.
- Having systems in place for any pupil to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued.
- Delivering targeted work on assertiveness and keeping safe to those pupils identified as being at risk
- Developing robust risk assessments & providing targeted work for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils

Allegations against other pupils which are safeguarding issues.

Occasionally, allegations may be made against pupils by other young people in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, teenage relationship abuse and sexual exploitation, bullying, cyber bullying and sexting. It should be considered as a safeguarding allegation against a pupil if some of the following features are present.

The allegation:-

- Is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger pupil or a more vulnerable pupil
- Is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence

- Raises risk factors for other pupils in the school
- Indicates that other pupils may have been affected by this student
- Indicates that young people outside the school may be affected by this student

Examples of safeguarding issues against a pupil could include:

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally, before considering the action or sanctions to be undertaken.

Bullying: Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e. g. size, hair colour, race, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Sexting: Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, regardless of their age, gender or sexual preference. However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003

Emotional Abuse: Can include blackmail or extortion and may also include threats and intimidation. This harmful behaviour can have a significant impact on the mental health and emotional well-being of the victim and can lead to self-harm.

Sexual Abuse: Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse. . It can also include indecent exposure, indecent touching /serious sexual assaults or forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting.

Teenage Relationship Abuse: Teenage relationship abuse is defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of

physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner.

Sexual Exploitation: This can include encouraging other young people to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour or grooming and recruiting members of the peer group into being sexually exploited by other young people or adults. It can also include photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts.

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Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Peer on Peer Abuse

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern.

If there is a safeguarding concern the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be informed.

A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should contact The MARU to discuss the case.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a referral where appropriate. If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police will become involved.

Parents, of both the student/s being complained about and the alleged victim/s, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in the Secure Safeguarding records.

If the allegation highlights a potential risk to the school and the pupil, the school will follow the school's behaviour policy and procedures and take appropriate action.

In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan. The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.