



Alverstone Infant School

Managing Allegations against other Pupils Policy and Procedures

Policy Statement

DfE guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)* says that 'Governing bodies and proprietors have a strategic leadership responsibility for their school's or college's safeguarding arrangements and must ensure that they comply with their duties under legislation. They must have regard to this guidance, ensuring policies, procedures and training in their schools and colleges are effective and comply with the law at all times.' The guidance also states the importance of minimising the risks of child-on-child abuse. In most instances, the conduct of students towards each other will be covered by the school's Behaviour & Relationships Policy. Some allegations may be of such a serious nature that they may raise safeguarding concerns. These allegations are most likely to include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. It is also likely that incidents dealt with under this policy will involve older students and their behaviour towards younger students or those who are vulnerable.

The safeguarding implications of sexual activity between young people

The intervention of child protection agencies in situations involving sexual activity between children can require difficult professional judgments. Some situations are statutorily clear – for example, a child under the age of 13 cannot consent to sexual activity. But it will not necessarily be appropriate to initiate safeguarding procedures where sexual activity involving children and young people below the age of legal consent (16 years) comes to notice. In our society generally the age at which children become sexually active has steadily dropped. It is important to distinguish between consensual sexual activity between children of a similar age (where at least one is below the age of consent), and sexual activity involving a power imbalance, or some form of coercion or exploitation. It may also be difficult to be sure that what has or has been alleged to have taken place definitely does have a sexual component. As usual, important decisions should be made on a case by case basis, on the basis of an assessment of the children's best interests. Referral under safeguarding arrangements may be necessary, guided by an assessment of the extent to which a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Key specific considerations will include:

- The age, maturity and understanding of the children;
- Any disability or special needs of the children;
- Their social and family circumstance;
- Any evidence in the behaviour or presentation of the children that might suggest they have been harmed;

- Any evidence of pressure to engage in sexual activity;
- Any indication of sexual exploitation.

There are also contextual factors. Gender, sexuality, race and levels of sexual knowledge can all be used to exert power. A sexual predator may sometimes be a woman or girl and the victim a boy.

Policy

At Alverstoke Infants, 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 recognise that some students will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under the school's Behaviour Policy.

Prevention

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

- Providing a developmentally appropriate PSHE/RSHE syllabus through the 'SCARF Programme' which develops students understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe.
- Having systems in place for any student 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 students by others in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. It is likely that, to be considered a safeguarding allegation against a pupil, some of the following features will be found. If 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 student could include:

Physical Abuse

- Violence, particularly pre-planned
- Forcing others to use drugs or alcohol

Emotional Abuse

- Blackmail or extortion
- Threats and intimidation

Sexual Abuse

- Indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assault.
- Forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting.

Sexual Exploitation

- Encouraging other children to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour (For example - having an older boyfriend/girlfriend, associating with unknown adults or other sexually exploited children, staying out overnight)
- Photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts

Child on Child Abuse

KCSIE 2023 states that;

All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing other children (including online). All staff should be clear about their school's or college's policy and procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that their child protection policy includes:

- Procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse
- The systems in place (and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously
- How allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with
- Clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported
- A recognition that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported
- A statement which makes it clear there should be a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, and it should never be passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children
- Recognition that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators but that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously, and
- The different forms of child-on-child abuse can take such as;
 - Bullying (including cyber bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)

- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (also known as teenage relationship abuse)
- Physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair-pulling or otherwise causing physical harm
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment. Part 5 of the KCSiE sets out how schools and colleges should respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery): the policy should include the school or college's approach to it. The Department provides https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1091132/Searching_Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf for schools. The UKCIS Education Group has published https://ineqe.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/UKCIS_sharing_nudes_and_semi_nudes_advice_for_education_settings_V2.pdf which outlines how to respond to an incident of nude and/or semi-nude being shared
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- Upskirting (which is a criminal offence), which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm, and
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

Procedure:

Child-on-child abuse will not be tolerated. When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, members of staff should take the allegation seriously and consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern. If there is a safeguarding concern the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be informed. The DSL at Alverstoke Infant School is Vanessa Ridler, the Headteacher. If the DSL is not immediately available then one of the Deputy DSLs should be informed. The Deputy DSLs are; the Deputy Headteacher, Stacey Hodson, and the Family School Link Worker., Diane McEwan.

- A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances.
- The DSL will follow the guidance in Annex 6 of the school's Child Protection Policy and make an immediate risk and needs assessment on a case-by-case basis (Annex 8 CP Policy) . The DSL may contact the Children's Reception Team (CRT) to discuss the case. The DSL 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, CRT will refer the case to the multi-agency agency safeguarding hub where the police will become involved.
- Parents, of both the student being complained about and the alleged victim, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral.
- The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in the files of both pupils.

- It may be appropriate to exclude the pupil being complained about for a period of time according to the school's Behaviour policy and procedures.
- Where neither social services nor the police accept the complaint, a thorough school investigation should take place into the matter using the school's usual disciplinary procedures.
- 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.

Reviewed by Governing Body: September 2023

Next Review: September 2024