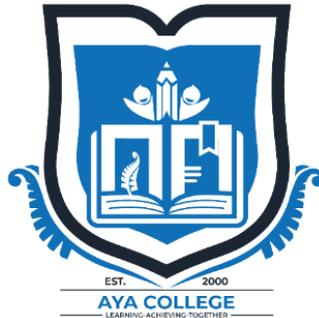# AYA College

Child on Child Abuse Policy

Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment

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Owner: **Michael Buadi**

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Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 states that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure there are appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare.

These should include individual schools and colleges having:

• an effective child protection policy which:

• should describe procedures which are in accordance with government guidance.

• refer to locally agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements put in place by the three safeguarding partners.

• include policies as reflected elsewhere in Part two of this guidance, such as online safety, Child on child abuse and SEND

Definition

Children can abuse other children. This is generally referred to as child-on-child abuse and can take many forms. It can happen both inside and outside of school/college and online. It is most likely to include, but may not be limited to: bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying); abuse in intimate personal relationships between children/young people; physical abuse; sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; sexual harassment; non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos; causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent; up skirting; and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Adapted from: Keeping Children Safe in Education

Introduction

AYA College recognises that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. This includes verbal as well as physical abuse. The school's responsibilities, the governors, senior leadership team, and all staff (which term shall apply to all volunteer staff members) are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the school.

In particular we:

Believe that in order to protect children, all schools should

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

(b) take a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse,

Regarding the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure. We

(a) do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to child-on-child abuse in response to alleged incidents of it; and

(b) believe that in order to tackle peer on peer abuse proactively, it is necessary to focus on all four of the following areas:

1. systems
2. structures
3. prevention
4. identification response/intervention

• recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and child-on-child abuse in the school setting

• 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.

What is child-on-child abuse?

Child-on-child abuse is sexual, emotional or physical abuse that happens between children of a similar age or stage of development. It can happen between any number of children and can affect any age group

(Department for Education (DfE), 2021).

It can be harmful to the children who display it as well as those who experience it. Children can experience child-on-child abuse in a wide range of settings (NSPCC, 2018), including:

• at school

• at home or in someone else's home

• in public spaces

• online

It can take place in spaces which are supervised or unsupervised. Within a school context, for example, child-on-child abuse might take place in spaces such as toilets, the playground, corridors and when children are walking home (Contextual Safeguarding Network, 2020).

As children develop healthily, it's normal for them to display certain types of behaviour. It's important that adults who work or volunteer with children can identify if any behaviour has become harmful or abusive and respond proportionally to keep all the children involved safe. We recognise that peer on peer abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Vulnerable groups

We recognise that all children can be at risk however we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable. This can include

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

Whilst research tells is us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers and, girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools this is not confined to girls. Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviour such as antisocial behaviour. Boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs. We recognise that both boys and girls experience child-on-child abuse, but they do so in gendered ways.

• Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)

• Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')

• Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)

• Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)

• Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse

• 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

• Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos11 (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)

• Upskirting, 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 (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element)

- Radicalisation
- Abuse in intimate relationships
- Children who display sexually harmful behaviour
- Gang association and serious violence (County Lines)

Purpose and Aim

The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child-on-child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues. At AYA College, we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Child Protection Policy,
- Anti-Bullying Policy,
- Online Safety Policy.
- Behaviour and Positive Handling Policy.

Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together 2018, highlighting that every assessment of a child, should 'reflect the unique characteristics of the child within their family and community context' (Working Together, 2022:28).

This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child and to be mindful of the context's children live in.

Identifying child-on-child abuse

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

• 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.

Prevention

AYA College actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of Prevention AYA College 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, students, and parents about this issue. This will include training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer 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 peer-on-peer abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of peer-on-peer abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing.

• Educating children about the nature and prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum.

• Students 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 policy towards all forms of peer-on-peer 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

• Involving parents in the review of School policies and lesson plans

• 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 lead so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who maybe in need of additional support. This is done by way of a weekly safeguarding meeting at which all concerns about students (including peer-on-peer 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, students 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 students can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships – Incorporating the School ethos of Success

• Creating a culture in which our students feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to - Incorporating the School ethos of Strive

Preventative Strategies for Schools and Settings

For all schools and settings, it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of Child-on-child abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way.

Firstly, and most importantly for schools and settings is recognition that Child on child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in

supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff.

This can be supported by ensuring that each school/setting has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them.

This can be strengthened through a strong and positive PHSE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. At AYA College our PSHE Curriculum incorporates:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- What respectful behaviour looks like
- Consent
- Gender roles, stereotyping and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment

Expected action taken from all staff

All staff should be alert to the well-being of children and young people 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 way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ (Farrer and Co. 2017).

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator of the harm, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm.

- It is important to deal with a situation of child abuse immediately and sensitively.
- It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get a true, accurate account of the facts around what has happened, so that nothing is forgotten.
- 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. For example, do not use the word perpetrator, this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

In all cases of Child-on-child abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner.

Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Staff should also be mindful of contextual safeguarding and that wider safeguarding concerns may influence the child's account of the event(s).

Alongside this peer pressure and the impact of sharing information about the incident(s) may also influence a child's account.

Gather the Facts

In cases specifically relating to Sexual violence and sexual harassment, part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2022 states that two members of staff (one being the Designated Safeguarding Lead) should be present to manage the report, where possible.

In all circumstances, staff need to speak to all the young people involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account.

The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the young people to tell you what happened. Only interrupt the young person from this to gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?)

A full and clear record of exactly what the young person has said in their own language should be made and stored on CPOMS.

Consider the intent (begin to Risk Assess)

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

Decide on your next course of action

If from the information that you gather you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm, you must make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also).

This action would, in most circumstances be undertaken by the Designated Safeguarding Lead but in the event of their absence the referral can be made by another member of staff. If this is the case, once social care has been contacted and made a decision on what will happen next then you will be informed on your next steps. 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 also.

It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take. It may also be that social care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case you may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, you agree with the decision, you may then be left to inform parents.

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 if other issues arise (see following)

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, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one young person different from another and 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 that has 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? In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If you are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, please seek advice from Children's Services Social Care.

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?

Outcomes

The outcome of the investigation will follow our local threshold guidance.

Therefore, a referral has been made to the police/social care for a full investigation (tier 4). It may have resulted in Children's Services undertaking a further assessment

(Tier 3) or as a school/setting you may have identified additional services/intervention that are non-statutory and in which case completed an early help assessment (Tier 2).

It may be that on investigation; a decision has been made to handle the incident (s) internally and which case the school may implement a risk assessment plan (Tier 1).

In any of the above outcomes the school has a duty of care to manage the education needs of both children/young people in which case a risk assessment plan may be needed irrespective of the outcome.

Multi-agency working

The School actively engages with its local partners in relation to peer-on-peer abuse, and works closely with Croydon's 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 peer-on-peer 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 students can access the range of services and support they need quickly

(c) To support and help inform our local community's response to peer-on-peer 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 students.

The School actively refers concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse where necessary to Croydon's children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies.

Children resident out of borough but attending Aya College will be reported 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 will be informed and a coordinated approach to address any incidents or concerns will be required.

The Context

Child-on-child abuse takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it. It is essential that responses to incidents are proportionate and contextual. In this

policy we recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour (Harmful Sexual Behaviour HSB). 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:

Determining the level of incidents

While determining the level of incidents is not always clear-cut we use this as a guide. In addition to this we consider the following behaviours:

• 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. An example of this is the consensual sharing of an image between 16-year-olds might be inappropriate but would sit on the continuum as 'inappropriate', however if these images were shared wider without consent this could be deemed as 'problematic & abusive'.

Normal

- Developmentally expected
- Socially acceptable
- Consensual, mutual, reciprocal
- Shared decision making

Inappropriate

- Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group
- Context for behaviour may be inappropriate
- Generally consensual and reciprocal

Problematic

- Problematic and concerning behaviours
- Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected
- No overt elements of victimisation
- Consent issues may be unclear
- May lack reciprocity or equal power
- May includes levels of compulsivity

Abusive

- Victimising intent or outcome
- Includes misuse of power
- Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance
- Intrusive
- Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given by victim
- May include elements of expressive violence

Violent

- Physically violent sexual abuse
- Highly intrusive
- Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator
- Sadism

Green behaviours

- solitary masturbation
- sexually explicit conversations with peers
- obscenities and jokes within the current cultural norm
- interest in erotica/pornography
- use of internet/e-media to chat online
- having sexual or non-sexual relationships
- sexual activity including hugging, kissing, holding hands
- consenting oral and/or penetrative sex with others of the same or opposite gender who are of similar age and developmental ability
- choosing not to be sexually active

What is a green behaviour?

What can you do?

Amber behaviours

- accessing exploitative or violent pornography
- uncharacteristic and risk-related behaviour, e.g. sudden and/or provocative changes in dress, withdrawal from friends, mixing with new or older people, having more or less money than usual, going missing
- concern about body image
- taking and sending naked or sexually provocative images of self or others
- single occurrence of peeping, exposing, mooning or obscene gestures
- giving out contact details online
- joining adult- only social networking sites and giving false personal information
- arranging a face to face meeting with an online contact alone

What is an amber behaviour?

What can you do?

Red behaviours

- exposing genitals or masturbating in public
- preoccupation with sex, which interferes with daily function
- sexual degradation/humiliation of self or others
- attempting/forcing others to expose genitals
- sexually aggressive/exploitative behaviour
- sexually explicit talk with younger children
- sexual harassment
- non-consensual sexual activity
- use of/acceptance of power and control in sexual relationships
- genital injury to self or others
- sexual contact with others where there is a big difference in age or ability
- sexual activity with someone in authority and in a position of trust
- sexual activity with family members
- involvement in sexual exploitation and/or trafficking