



Joseph Hood Primary School

# Child on Child Abuse Policy

Updated: October 2025  
Review Date: October 2027

## Introduction

Everybody at Joseph Hood Primary School is committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse.

Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (September, 2025) is our lead policy for ensuring that our children are kept safe from harm. However, child-on-child is a national (and increasing) concern and we have introduced this policy as a preventative measure in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and child-on-child abuse in our school.

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers (including online) and that child-on-child abuse can manifest in many different ways. We are clear that this type of abuse should always be treated seriously, and our school has a zero tolerance approach to such attitudes and behaviours.

This policy should be read alongside the following policies:

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Behaviour and Relationships Policy

Online Safety Policy

Whistleblowing Policy

At Joseph Hood Primary School, we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently. In dealing with such issues our aim is to reduce the extent of the harm on the child and to minimise the impact it has on the child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

At Joseph Hood Primary School, we recognise that it is essential for all of our staff to maintain the attitude of 'it could happen here' and to understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, that are abusive in nature and never to be dismissive of such behaviours.

*"All staff should understand that even if there are no reports in their schools or colleges it does not mean it is not happening. It may be the case that abuse is not being reported."*  
*KCSiE 2025 pg.13*

*"Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it."*

*Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), 2024*

## 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 is *Working Together, 2023* highlighting that every assessment of a child, 'must be informed by the views of the child'. This is echoed by *Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2025* through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

### What is Child-on-Child abuse?

Child on Child abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to hurt others physically, sexually or emotionally. It could happen within children's relationships, friendships or within wider peer associations. All our staff recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers.

### Types of Abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive.

**Physical Abuse:** This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person.

**Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment:** Any incident in school of sexual violence or sexual harassment must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). All staff in school are aware that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up. In responding to such concerns, the DSL will contact and seek advice from the Children's and Families Hub (MASH) if appropriate and follow the principles set out in Part 5 of KCSiE and the DfE guidance on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment (2024).

***DSLs – Anita Saville (Executive Head teacher) / Libby Wright (Head of School)***  
***DDSLs- Wendy Shepard (AHT), Michael Waterman (AHT), Jesica Earl-Spencer (SLT)***

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and gender and sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others.

Sexually harmful behaviour may include:

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse
- upskirting – this is a criminal offence

**Bullying:** Bullying is repeated and intentional harming of one child by another child, or by a group of children, that involves a power imbalance. Bullying can happen face-to-face or

online. Online bullying is the use of technology (e.g. social media, gaming, text messages, e mails) to harass, threaten or intimidate someone. Online bullying can take many forms and can include:

- abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
- posting abusive comments on social media sites
- sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- spreading rumours online
- prank calls or messages, including anonymous messages

***Emotional abuse:*** name-calling, taunting, online or face-to-face, isolating from peers , being left out deliberately, befriending with the intent to harm, and so on.

***Other forms of Child on Child abuse can also include:***

- sexting or sharing nude or indecent imagery
- initiation or hazing
- prejudiced behaviour

Any form of Child on Child abuse can:

- Be motivated by perceived differences (prejudice) e.g. on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other differences
- Result in significant, long lasting and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to the victim; vulnerable adults are at particular risk of harm <sup>[1]</sup><sub>(SEP)</sub>

Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs e.g.:

- Significant disruption in their own lives
- Exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering abuse
- Educational under-achievement
- Involved in crime

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the first priority of any educational setting, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical. School staff, alongside their Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy, have to make their own judgements about each specific case and should use this policy guidance to help.

### Responding to Incidents of Child-On-Child Abuse

At Joseph Hood Primary School, we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to the impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

All concerns around child-on-child abuse will be taken seriously, reported, investigated, recorded and managed in line with the procedures outlined in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Staff will follow guidance to respond to incidents of child-on-child abuse and they will do this immediately and sensitively. Staff will talk to children in a calm and consistent manner; they will not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Staff members responding to such incidents will alert the DSLs or DDSLs by speaking to them face-to-face. It is the responsibility of the member of staff who is the **first responder** to ensure that a MyConcern log is made to record the incident and to ensure that the class teacher is aware of any incidents which have happened outside of the classroom.

In responding to incidents of child-on-child abuse staff will consider the following:

- age of children involved
- any aspects of power imbalance
- all aspects of the incidents (physical and verbal)
- the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery.
- the effect on the victim
- any attempts to keep the incident a secret
- the motivation or reason for the behaviour whether it was a one-off incident or if it is a repeated incident

In recording incidents on MyConcern of child-on-child abuse staff will:

- be clear and factual in their wording and not give an opinion
- speak to the DSL or DDSL face-to-face immediately if they feel a child is at risk of significant harm
- log the incident on MyConcern as soon as possible
- use proper names for body parts, but record exactly what the child said
- note where and when (time and date) the incident happened

A member of staff will inform parents/carers of any incidents of child-on-child abuse in school. This is best done face-to-face and it should be a member of the Designated Safeguarding Team or a member of the Senior Leadership Team who informs parents/carers.

### What happens after an incident of Child-on-Child Abuse?

It is necessary to ensure that incidents of child-on-child abuse are not repeated and that support or intervention is given to those who need it. 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 punishment to be undertaken.

The DSLs are responsible for providing support to all children involved in incidents of child-on-child sexual abuse.

Our ELSAs or our SEMH councillor can provide 1:1 or group nurture sessions for children who have been harmed or upset by child-on-child abuse. A restorative approach will be used to manage relationships between children.

The Designated Safeguarding Team can refer children to the Merton Early Help Team or the Children's and Families Hub (MASH)- where appropriate. The DSLs or DDSLs will follow guidance in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to refer children.

Any child who has displayed harmful behaviour will receive a consequence for their behaviour. This could be in the form of restorative justice, missing playtimes/lunchtimes, an internal exclusion or a fixed-term suspension from school. Staff will support children who display harmful behaviour to reflect on their behaviour in a developmentally appropriate way.

APPENDIX: Guidance for adults.

Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool

	Green behaviours	Amber behaviours	Red behaviours
<b>0-5 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Holding or playing with own genitals</li> <li>&gt; Attempting to touch or curiosity about other children's genitals</li> <li>&gt; Attempting to touch or curiosity about breasts, bottoms or genitals of adults</li> <li>&gt; Games, eg mummies and daddies, doctors and nurses</li> <li>&gt; Enjoying nakedness</li> <li>&gt; Interest in body parts and what they do</li> <li>&gt; Curiosity about the differences between boys and girls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Preoccupation with adult sexual behaviour</li> <li>&gt; Pulling other children's pants down/skirts up/ trousers down against their will</li> <li>&gt; Talking about sex using adult slang</li> <li>&gt; Preoccupation with touching the genitals of other people</li> <li>&gt; Following others into toilets or changing rooms to look at them or touch them</li> <li>&gt; Talking about sexual activities seen on TV/online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Persistently touching the genitals of other children</li> <li>&gt; Persistent attempts to touch the genitals of adults</li> <li>&gt; Simulation of sexual activity in play</li> <li>&gt; Sexual behaviour between young children involving penetration with objects</li> <li>&gt; Forcing other children to engage in sexual play</li> </ul>
<b>5-9 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Feeling and touching own genitals</li> <li>&gt; Curiosity about other children's genitals</li> <li>&gt; Curiosity about sex and relationships, eg differences between boys and girls, how sex happens, where babies come from, same-sex relationships</li> <li>&gt; Sense of privacy about bodies</li> <li>&gt; Telling stories or asking questions using swear and slang words for parts of the body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Questions about sexual activity which persist or are repeated frequently, despite an answer having been given</li> <li>&gt; Sexual bullying face to face or through texts or online messaging</li> <li>&gt; Engaging in mutual masturbation</li> <li>&gt; Persistent sexual images and ideas in talk, play and art</li> <li>&gt; Use of adult slang language to discuss sex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Frequent masturbation in front of others</li> <li>&gt; Sexual behaviour engaging significantly younger or less able children</li> <li>&gt; Forcing other children to take part in sexual activities</li> <li>&gt; Simulation of oral or penetrative sex</li> <li>&gt; Sourcing pornographic material online</li> </ul>

**9-13  
years**

- > Solitary masturbation
- > Use of sexual language including swear and slang words
- > Having girl/ boyfriends who are of the same, opposite or any gender
- > Interest in popular culture, eg fashion, music, media, online games, chatting online
- > Need for privacy
- > Consensual kissing, hugging, holding hands with peers

- > Uncharacteristic and risk-related behaviour, eg 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
- > Verbal, physical or cyber/virtual sexual bullying involving sexual aggression
- > LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) targeted bullying
- > Exhibitionism, eg flashing or mooning
- > Giving out contact details online
- > Viewing pornographic material
- > Worrying about being pregnant or having STIs

- > Exposing genitals or masturbating in public
- > Distributing naked or sexually provocative images of self or others
- > Sexually explicit talk with younger children
- > Sexual harassment
- > Arranging to meet with an online acquaintance in secret
- > Genital injury to self or others
- > Forcing other children of same age, younger or less able to take part in sexual activities
- > Sexual activity, eg oral sex or intercourse
- > Presence of sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- > Evidence of pregnancy

[https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_with\\_harmful\\_sexual\\_behaviours\\_research\\_review\\_2014.pdf](https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/children_and_young_people_with_harmful_sexual_behaviours_research_review_2014.pdf)

**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:**

<b>Normal</b>	<b>Inappropriate</b>	<b>Problematic</b>	<b>Abusive</b>	<b>Violent</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developmentally expected</li><li>• Socially acceptable</li><li>• Consensual, mutual, reciprocal</li><li>• Shared decision making</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour</li><li>• Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group</li><li>• Context for behaviour may be inappropriate</li><li>• Generally consensual and reciprocal</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Problematic and concerning behaviours</li><li>• Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected</li><li>• No overt elements of victimisation</li><li>• Consent issues may be unclear</li><li>• May lack reciprocity or equal power</li><li>• May include levels of compulsivity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Victimising intent or outcome</li><li>• Includes misuse of power</li><li>• Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance</li><li>• Intrusive</li><li>• Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim</li><li>• May include elements of expressive violence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physically violent sexual abuse</li><li>• Highly intrusive</li><li>• Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator</li><li>• Sadism</li></ul>