Child on Child Abuse

Brooklands

Prepared Respectful and Safe

Introduction

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), Brooklands School recognises that children can abuse other children and that this can happen both inside and outside of school, including online. All staff understand the important role they play in preventing, identifying and responding to concerns relating to child-on-child abuse.

All staff are aware that child-on-child abuse may go unreported and that the absence of disclosures does not mean abuse is not occurring. Any concerns regarding child-

on-child abuse will be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL.

Brooklands School recognises that harmful behaviours should never be dismissed as "banter", "having a laugh", "part of growing up" or similar explanations. We are committed to creating a culture where all pupils feel safe, respected and listened to and where concerns are taken seriously.

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

- Bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying.
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm.
- Abuse within intimate personal relationships.
- Sexual violence.
- Sexual harassment, including online sexual harassment.
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent.
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images and videos.
- Upskirting.
- Initiation or hazing type violence and rituals.
- Discriminatory behaviour, including racism, faith-based prejudice and other prejudice-based incidents.

While child-on-child abuse forms part of Brooklands School's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the school has adopted a separate Child-on-Child Abuse Policy due to the sensitive nature of these issues and the need for specific guidance for staff.

At Brooklands School, we are committed to ensuring that all pupils feel **Prepared, Respectful and Safe**. We recognise that, due to pupils' varying ages, developmental stages, communication needs and vulnerabilities, child-on-child abuse may pupils may not always be able to communicate or disclose concerns directly. Staff remain vigilant and act promptly to safeguard all pupils.

Any form of child-on-child abuse or harmful behaviour will be addressed immediately, consistently and in accordance with safeguarding procedures, with full consideration given to the needs, wellbeing and outcomes of all pupils involved.

Purpose and Aim

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in several ways which would be classified as child on child abuse. 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.
We have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour 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 to Safeguard Children 2018, highlighting that every assessment of a child, '*must be informed by the views of the child'* and within that '*It is important to understand the resilience of the individual child when planning appropriate services*. (Working Together, 2018:23) This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

Introduction to abuse and harmful behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE, 2019). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

Physical abuse e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling etc.)

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 accidently before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault etc.)

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.

Bullying (physical, name calling, homophobic etc.)

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, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass, threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.
It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 under section 1 which states that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

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, whatever 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.

Upskirting

Upskirting 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, stress or alarm.

Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies.
The idea behind this practice is that it welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

Prejudiced Behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular, prejudices to do with disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

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.

Expected action taken from all staff

All staff at Brooklands School are trained in safeguarding and receive annual refreshers to maintain their knowledge, understanding and awareness of potential issues. Each member of staff is aware of their responsibility to safeguard all students and staff and are aware of the expected action to take. Staff understand that all

child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will never be dismissed as banter, part of growing up, horseplay or harmless behaviour.

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and initiator 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 peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred as soon after the child(ren) may have 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.

Gather the Facts

Where appropriate and taking account of pupils' communication needs, staff will speak to all pupils involved separately. Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC), visual supports, social stories, communication passports, trusted adults and other individual communication approaches may be used to support pupils to share their views and experiences. Staff will 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?)

Where the incident was observed by staff, we will gather facts from them immediately in the manner described above

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 is gathered you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must make a safeguarding referral immediately (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also). 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. All of this is to be recorded My Concern.

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 and pursue a route of professional challenge. If on discussion however, you agree with the decision, you may then be left to inform parents.

Informing parents

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care you have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved, then you need to inform the parents as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents. lf a young person is deemed to be 'Gillick Competent' (Gillick competence is a term originating in England and is used in medical law to decide whether a child(under 16) is able to consent to his or her own medical treatment without the need for parental permission or knowledge), following the 'Fraser' guidelines (Fraser guidelines refer to a legal case which looked specifically at whether doctors should be able to give contraceptive advice or treatment to under 16's without parental consent) and does not wish you to share the information with parents, then the school must consider this especially for example if the young person is pregnant and this is why they are being bullied (unless this has occurred through significant harm in which case a criminal/social care case is likely or the young person is under the age of 13).

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then the school should encourage the young person to share the information with their parent or even with them (they may be scared to tell parents that they are being harmed in any way). Where school can evidence they are acting in the best interests of the young person they would not be criticised, however this would be the case if they actively breached the rights and choices of the young person.

The best way to inform parents 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 whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

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). At Brooklands, we would always consider a pupils age and stage when considering this

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? Pupils with communication needs will need support in this

What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?

At Brooklands School, particular consideration will always be given to a pupil's developmental stage, communication needs, social understanding, learning needs and EHCP outcomes when assessing incidents. Staff will seek to understand whether behaviour was intentional, exploratory, impulsive, imitative or indicative of a safeguarding concern. Do the young people know/understand what they are doing? For example, 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 an 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 there is any risk involved, please seek advice from Children's Services Social Care. This is particularly important in our school

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?

Next Steps

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

For the young person who has been harmed

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via the nurture team or class staff. 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 practice 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 cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the curriculum of RSE, PHSE and THRIVE 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.

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

In this circumstance 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. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an Early Help referral/ LD CAMHS etc and the young person may require additional support from family members.

Support will focus not only on consequences but also on helping the pupil understand boundaries, relationships, consent, safety and the impact of their behaviour on others. Where appropriate, support plans, risk assessments and Positive Behaviour Support strategies will be reviewed and updated.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that young person receives an appropriate consequence for their behaviour, based on their developmental level and understanding. This may be in the form of restorative practice 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 specialist 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 whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation, 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 of those 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.

The school will adhere to the Behaviour Policy in such circumstances.

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. Staff will continue to monitor the wellbeing of all pupils involved and ensure they continue to feel safe, respected and supported within the school community.

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). In which case, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

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 this 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. At Brooklands School, preventative education forms an important part of our approach. Through PSHE, Relationships Education, Personal Development and Safeguarding Curricula, pupils are taught about:

- Healthy and respectful relationships.
- Personal space and boundaries.
- Consent and trusted adults.
- Online safety.
- Bullying and discrimination.
- Keeping themselves and others safe.

This supports pupils in developing the knowledge and understanding needed to be Prepared, Respectful and Safe both in school and beyond.

To enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure the whole workforce feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is necessary for whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to young people in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice. It is incredibly important that staff do not dismiss issues as ‘banter’ or ‘growing up’ or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that staff

consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a young person seeking no further help or advice.

It is important that signposting is available to young people if they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. Finally, it is useful to ensure young people are part of changing their circumstances and that of the procedures within schools. Having a school council and pupil voice and encouraging young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour' will go far in helping to create a positive ethos in school and one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

Monitoring and Review

All incidents of child-on-child abuse will be recorded on CPOMS and reviewed by safeguarding leaders. Patterns, trends and emerging concerns will be monitored to help inform safeguarding practice, curriculum development and staff training.

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Senior Leadership Team.

Links to other Polices

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour and Attitudes Policy
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy
- Equality Objectives

References

Whatis.com http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/cyberbullying

New Choices Inc http://newchoicesinc.org/educated/abuse/TDV/def
This is abuse campaign
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/410010/2 015-03-08_This_is_Abuse_campaign_summary_report__2_.pdf

Stop bullying.gov

http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is bullying/definition/index.html#types

EACH resources for LGBT

CEOP https://www.ceop.police.uk/Media-Centre/Press-releases/2009/What-does-sexting- mean/
Preventing bullying , including cyber bullying – DfE advice
Sexting: responding to incidents and safeguarding children – UK council for Internet safety.