

**Beaver Road Primary School**

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**Safeguarding**

**Peer on Peer Abuse Policy**

## Introduction

1. Beaver Road Primary School encourages an open and inclusive learning environment where children feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This is strengthened through a strong and positive PHSE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children space to talk things through and avoid one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another.
2. At Beaver Road 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 impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

## Purpose of the Policy

3. This Policy reflects the requirements of the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2016 which states:

*'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 for seeking and hearing the voice of child.

4. Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as peer on peer abuse. The purpose of this Policy is to explore the many forms of peer on peer abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.
5. At Beaver Road Primary School we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:
  - Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
  - Anti-Bullying Policy (including Cyber Bullying)

## Peer on peer abuse.

6. At Beaver Road Primary School we believe that abuse 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, 2016). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

## Types of abuse

7. 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 followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

## **Physical abuse**

8. Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person.

## **Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse**

9. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from using inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role-play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse. Sexually harmful behaviour from children is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a child 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.

## **Bullying**

10. In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and be repeated over time. 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**

11. Cyber bullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Snapchat to harass, threaten or intimidate someone.
12. 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.
13. 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**

14. Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'.
15. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person
16. under 18, children are breaking the law.

## **Initiation/Hazing**

17. Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies.

## **Prejudiced Behaviour**

18. The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical, 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).

## **Expected action taken from all staff**

19. Instances of sexting or cyber bullying will be immediately reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. An immediate referral to Social Services and, if applicable, the Police, will be made if any of the following apply:
  - there is any adult involvement
  - there is any coercion or blackmail
  - the images are extreme or violent
  - the child involved has already been identified as vulnerable or is under 13
  - there is an immediate risk of harm.
20. For any allegation of peer on peer abuse if any member of staff believes any young person to be at risk of significant harm they will speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (David How, Liz Hardy or Tina Smith) immediately and a safeguarding referral to Social Care will be made. Where a crime has been committed the Police will also be involved.

## Gathering the facts

21. Any situation of peer abuse will be dealt with immediately and sensitively. Information will be gathered as soon as possible after the incident to get the true facts before the child(ren) forget. The member of staff will be sensitive to the language they use and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. Staff will not act in a prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible manner when dealing with such sensitive matters.
22. It is our policy to speak to all the young people involved in an allegation of peer on peer abuse separately to gain a statement of facts from them. The member of staff will ask the children to tell them what happened, only asking questions to gain clarity e.g. where did the incident happen, when etc. We will try to decipher whether this was a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another.

**Facts that we need to know:**

**The age of the children involved.**

23. NB 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 the incident or incidents took place.**

24. If the incident was in an open, visible place it may have been observed and more information can be gathered. If the incident did not take place in an open visible place then the school must consider if more supervision is required within this particular area.

**The explanation that was given by all of the children involved about what occurred.**

25. If all of the children give the same explanation of the incident we can have more faith in the account. If the versions differ we need to discover why. The effect of the incident may be different upon the different children involved.

**The children's own understanding of what occurred.**

26. It is important to be aware of what the children know about what they are doing, for example whether they know the names of body parts, about privacy and what it is inappropriate to touch. Also, whether the child knows the impact of their behaviour upon another.

**Any instances of repetition**

27. We need to find out if the behaviour has been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion and whether the behaviour has continued after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved.

**Deciding on our next course of action informing Social Services**

28. In consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) contact will be made with Social Services to gain advice about future actions. They will advise whether or not to inform parents.

**Informing parents**

29. If Social Services are not going to be involved then School will share information with parent and child together (depending on the child's age).

**Next Steps**

30. 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 child who has been harmed**

31. Support for the child who has been harmed depends on the individual young person. School can refer a child to counselling or one to one support via a mentor. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the child may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other children.
32. Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group, for example, a speaker on cyber or bullying etc. Issues can be discussed in PHSE lessons and addressed through the SMSC curriculum.
33. If the child 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 child who has displayed harmful behaviour**

34. In this circumstance it is important to find out why the child has behaved in such a way. It may be that the child is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases counselling may also be necessary or involvement of Social Services. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.
35. Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that the child receives a consequence for their behaviour in line with our behaviour policy. Beaver Road Primary School may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour (see exclusion policy)
36. Following the closing of an investigation there may be a need for an individual risk assessment 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 child and their parents.

### **After care**

37. It is important that following the incident the children involved continue to feel supported and receive help. It is important to ensure that the child does 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 child following the incident(s) are important.

**Relevant documentation**

<http://swgfl.org.uk/magazine/Managing-Sexting-Incidents/Sexting-Advice.aspx>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/444865/Advice\\_for\\_parents\\_on\\_cyberbullying.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444865/Advice_for_parents_on_cyberbullying.pdf)



