



*Meeting Individual Needs*

## Child on Child Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance Including sexual violence and sexual harassment between children

<b>Date:</b>	<b>February 2026</b>	<b>Named Responsibility</b>	<b>Lisa Williams</b>
<b>Next Review:</b>	<b>February 2027</b>	<b>Named Responsibility</b>	<b>Lisa Williams</b>

1. Context and definition
2. Responsibility
3. Framework and legislation
4. Abuse and harmful behaviour
5. Types of abuse
6. The response to child-on-child abuse

## Context and Definition.

The purpose of the Child-on-Child Abuse Policy is to ensure that all forms of Child-on-Child abuse, across a spectrum of behaviours, including concerns/allegations of inappropriate behaviour through to sexual assault are fully understood by staff working with children.

It is essential that staff action the appropriate approach and respond immediately to any form of concern. As a school we adopt a zero tolerance approach to all forms of Child-on-Child abuse.

This policy sits alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and The Child-on-Child Abuse toolkit

Child on Child abuse is defined as being for those under the age of 18 and is any form of physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse, and coercive control exercised between children, and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships, and wider child associations intended to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others.

At Haughton School we will ensure that staff are aware that children are capable of abusing other children. All staff will receive regular training on how to recognise, be aware of and report this.

The children at Haughton School have moderate / severe learning difficulties and complex needs and because of their diagnosis may not always understand their actions. The children have an increased staff to child ratio, if a child does not understand personal space or actions then plans will be put in place to support understanding and safe supervision to protect themselves and others.

The staff receive training:

- that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- in not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys",
- that challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts are not acceptable. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to):

- bullying (including cyberbullying)
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse

- upskirting, which 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, distress or alarm
- sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery), and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Online Child-on-Child abuse is any form of Child-on-Child abuse with a digital element, for example:

- sexting
- online abuse
- coercion and exploitation
- child-on-child grooming
- threatening language delivered via online means
- the distribution of sexualised content
- harassment.

## **Responsibility**

The governors, senior leadership team, and all staff at Haughton School are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of Child-on-Child abuse both within and beyond the school.

We believe that in order to protect children, school should be aware of the nature and level of risk to which children may be exposed and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy to support the needs of the children as well as taking a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse.

Contextual Safeguarding supports creating a safe culture in school, promoting healthy relationships and attitudes to gender, sexuality, training on bias and stereotyped assumptions, being alert to and monitoring changes in behaviour and reporting concerns to relevant local agencies/multi agency working. It is about being aware of and seeking to understand the impact that wider social contexts may be having on the children in school.

At Haughton 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 child, taking into consideration the impact on emotional and mental health and wellbeing. We are aware that for some children an action may not have intent, however, in all circumstances plans will be put in place to support understanding and safe supervision to protect themselves and others.

All staff receive regular and robust training on child protection and safety including training in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and have read and accessed all safeguarding policies. Child-on-Child abuse is also referenced in the school’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Haughton School is committed to identifying children who may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life.

Haughton School staff will identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent concerns from escalating. They will provide a safe environment in which children can learn.

Staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child. The school actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of Child-on-Child abuse by:

- educating all governors, its senior leadership team, staff, children, and parents about this issue
- in a way appropriate to the needs of the children educating them about the nature and prevalence of Child-on-Child abuse, positive responsible and safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts about consent, via the curriculum.
- engaging parents on these issues
- supporting the on-going welfare of the children by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise children's mental health, and by providing in-school counselling and therapy when relevant to address underlying mental health needs. School will use strategies personalised to each child, these will be linked to what is appropriate to the individual learning needs of each child
- working with governors, senior leadership team, and all staff, children, 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 children can aspire to, and realise, safe and healthy relationships fostering a whole-school culture
- responding to cases of Child-on-Child abuse promptly and appropriately, and
- ensuring that all Child-on-Child abuse issues are fed back to the DSL and deputies so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify children who may be in need of additional support.

Haughton School actively engages with Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership (TWSP) in relation to Child-on-Child abuse, and works closely with, for example, children's social care, the police 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 Child-on-Child abuse. The DSL (or deputy) will regularly review safeguarding records and behaviour incident logs which can help to identify any changes in behaviour and/or concerning patterns or trends at an early stage.

We recognise that any child can be vulnerable to Child-on-Child abuse due to the strength of child influence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children.

Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers.

We know that research suggests:

- Child-on-Child abuse may affect boys differently from girls (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators). However, all Child-on-Child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously
- children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers without SEND, and
- some children may be more likely to experience Child-on-Child abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs.

The DFE advice requires schools to conduct a risk and needs assessment following any report of sexual violence and to consider on a case-by-case basis whether such an assessment is required following a report of sexual harassment. The assessment will consider the 'victim' the 'perpetrator' and any other children, and staff as appropriate.

## **Framework and Legislation**

This policy is supported by

- the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 where the child's welfare is paramount.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 which ensures that procedures are in place in school to hear the voice of the child.
- The Child-on-Child Abuse toolkit which provides case studies and further information and advice.
- The school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **Abuse and harmful behaviour.**

Staff receive training in:

- What abuse is, what it looks like and the reporting procedure in place.
- The appropriate support and interventions that can be put in place to support and meet the needs of the individual.
- The preventative strategies that can be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how to recognise the impact that this may have on children.

## **Types of Abuse**

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

- Physical Abuse,
- bullying including cyber bullying
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault

- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, jokes, remarks, online sexual harassment
- Up skirting, typically involving taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing with the intention of viewing genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.
- Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- County Lines

Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail within our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The policy also lists possible indicators of CSE and CCE and support pathways. All staff, especially the DSL (or deputy) will give immediate consideration as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator (and any other children involved/impacted).

The DSL will liaise with the relevant bodies and agencies to assist in the management of the report. School will also follow the guidance in the Child-on-Child Abuse toolkit.

All staff are trained on the indicators of abuse to help them to identify children who may be in need of help or protection. We believe that abuse and safeguarding issues are rarely stand-alone events. All staff are aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside of school and/or can occur between children outside of these environments. All staff, but especially the DSL and deputies will consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families.

Through robust training staff are alert to the well-being of children 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.

Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL will consider what urgent action can be taken, this may include seeking specialist help as outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and Child-on-Child Abuse toolkit. It may be appropriate to contact children's social care and/or police to assist in carrying out a safety plan.

### **The response to child-on-child abuse**

When responding to concern(s) or allegation(s) of child-on-child abuse, the school will:

- always consider carefully, in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies (where they are involved), how to share information about the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the children affected, their parents, staff, and other children and individuals

- record the information that is necessary for the school and other relevant agencies (where they are involved) to respond to the concern(s) or allegation(s) and safeguard everyone involved
- keep a record of the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including relevant authorities, and ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and to only use it for the agreed legal purpose, and
- be mindful of and act in accordance with its safeguarding and data protection duties.

A written safety plan/risk assessment will be carried out in respect of:

- any child who is alleged to have behaved in a way that is considered to be abusive or violent
- any child who has reportedly been abused or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child, or
- any child who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child as deemed appropriate by the DSL.

Within Houghton School our approach is covered within the Behaviour Policy and this Policy. It is supported by the Child-on-Child Abuse Toolkit and our PSHE policy. We will ensure a calm considered and appropriate response to any reports. All reports are taken seriously with all facts recorded. The Designated Safeguard lead DSL (or deputy) will use their professional judgement to:

- assess the nature and seriousness of the alleged behaviour, and
- determine whether it is appropriate for the alleged behaviour to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required e.g. social care/police. Will assess the needs of the victim and alleged perpetrator and keep a record of all action taken.

Houghton School will always reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. We will never give a victim the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting Child-on-Child abuse, including sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor will we make a victim feel ashamed for making a report.

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL (or deputy) without delay. The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the member of staff who has reported it/them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected.

All staff, especially the DSL (or deputy) will give immediate consideration as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator (and any other children involved/impacted).

Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL will consider what urgent action can be taken, this may include seeking specialist help, such as advice from The Internet Watch Foundation and the police in preventing the images spreading further and removing the images from the internet.

Haughton School will follow the guidance and procedures outlined in the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. It may be appropriate to contact children's social care and/or police to assist in carrying out a safety plan. The DSL may also use and consider the TWSP Sexually harmful behaviour - risk assessment tool. Where other children have been identified as witnesses to alleged abuse or violence, consideration will also be given by the DSL (or deputy) to whether there might be any risks to those children, and whether a safety plan would be appropriate in relation to any risks presenting to them.