

SPRINGWOOD HEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL

PEER ON PEER ABUSE (Child on Child)

INTRODUCTION:

Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021 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.'

Whilst it is recommended that Peer on Peer abuse is part of the Child Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse we at Springwood Heath Primary School have taken the decision to have a separate policy which is linked to our Behaviour Policy.

At Springwood Heath Primary School in order to secure a safe and caring environment we will ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the individual, with full consideration to the impact on their emotional mental health and wellbeing.

- We will instil in our children that bullying is unacceptable and that reports of bullying will be taken seriously, recorded and acted upon.
- We will reassure children that they will be listened to and that it is alright to tell someone that it is happening.
- We will involve parents and inform them of the actions taken in response to an incident.
- We will investigate fully and keep detailed records on CPOMS (safeguarding and Child Protection Software) of any incidents, reports or complaints to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach adopted and to enable patterns to be identified and suitable action then taken to reduce the incidents of bullying.
- We will take appropriate action, including possible exclusion in cases of severe or repeated bullying.

AIM:

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as peer on peer abuse. This policy explores the many forms of peer on peer abuse and includes a planned and supportive response.

LEGISLATION:

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children Act 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Working Together 2018, highlighted that every assessment of a child, should 'reflect the unique characteristics of the child within their family and community context' (Working Together, 2018:28). This is supported by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child and to be mindful of the context children live in.

BULLYING DEFINITION:

Bullying can be described as being a deliberate act done to cause distress solely to give a feeling of power, status or other gratification to the bully. Bullying can range from

ostracising, name-calling, teasing, threats and extortion, through to physical intimidation, assault on persons and/or their property. It can be an unresolved single frightening incident that casts a shadow over a child's life, or a series of such incidents causing a child to feel unhappy, scared or depressed for much of the time possibly leaving them psychologically damaged or even suicidal.

PEER ON PEER DEFINITION:

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as bullying, sexual experimentation etc. This is a matter of professional judgement.

If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse: bullying, fighting and harassment between children are not generally seen as child protection issues. However, it may be appropriate to regard a young person's behaviour as abusive if:

- There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned; or
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged perpetrator.

If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

ABUSIVE and HARMFUL BEHAVIOUR:

Abusive behaviour can happen to children 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', 'just having a laugh' 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 (Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2020). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

Children with Special Educational Needs:

Children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- Being more prone to peer group isolation than other children;
- The potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

To address these additional challenges, schools and colleges should consider extra pastoral support for children with SEND and disabilities particularly when investigating any form of peer on peer abuse. (KCSIE, 2021)

TYPES OF ABUSE:

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

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

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, 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 accidentally before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

Bullying associated with disability:

This will include bullying associated with obesity or its opposite, as well as that concerned with any physical or mental disability. Particularly vulnerable are children who cannot compete with others equally such as those with a learning disability and those with a physical disability.

Also vulnerable are children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs such as ADHD are often targets for bullying. Taunting or ridiculing children for their disability is probably the most common form of bullying in this category. Pupils with special educational needs might not be able to articulate experiences as fluently as other children. However, they are often at greater risk of being bullied, both directly and indirectly, as a result of their disability. Staff must be aware of this, and must make sure that their own behaviour does not unintentionally trigger bullying by singling out these children for special attention. They must also be careful not to make comments related to pupils' appearance or perceived character.

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.

Sexual violence:

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 or a significant change in wellbeing, or 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 and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

All staff should be aware of the associated risks and understand the measures in place to manage these.

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.

Low level disruption and the use of offensive language can itself have a significant impact. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour.

Bullying associated with high achieving:

Children who achieve highly are often targets for bullying, sometimes to the extent that they become afraid to answer correctly in class for fear of being ridiculed or called names. They may have their belongings hidden or moved or may be ostracised. This form of bullying is often based on jealousy and should be taken just as seriously as other forms of bullying.

Cyber bullying:

Cyber bullying is the use of face-to-face bullying using 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. Whilst some cyber-bullying can be deliberate and aggressive, some incidents can be unintentional and the result of not thinking of the consequences, e.g. forwarding on a joke, taking part in a discussion group or online poll.

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, our school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations. (If you deal with a case of cyber-bullying keep a record of the abuse, particularly the date and time, the content of the message(s); and where possible the sender's ID or the web address of the profile / content)

Use of computers/ tablets in school for all users including staff and visitors

- Only approved websites may be accessed.
- There must be online safety filters on all computers.
- All children must be supervised at all times if on the internet.
- No children's access to social media is permitted.

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.

Popular apps include 'Snapchat' and 'WhatsApp' allow posting of photos and messages. Some young people believe that sexting is harmless fun and fail to think of any potential repercussions. 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. These are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

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.

Up Skirting:

The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019 which criminalised the act of 'up skirting'. The Criminal Prosecution Service (CPS) defines 'up skirting' as a colloquial term referring to the action of placing equipment such as a camera or mobile phone beneath a person's clothing to take a voyeuristic photograph without their permission. This 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).

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).

Homophobic Bullying:

Homophobic bullying is when people behave or speak in a way which makes someone feel bullied because of their actual or perceived sexuality. People may be a target of this type of bullying because of their appearance, behaviour, other physical traits or because they have friends or family who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender or just because they are seen as being different.

Homophobic language and bullying are motivated by prejudice. Stonewall's research shows that more than half, (55%), of gay young people experience homophobic bullying and almost all, (99%), hear the phrases 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in schools.

RAISING AWARENESS OF PEER TO PEER ABUSE WITHIN SPRINGWOOD HEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL:

- School assemblies are used to provide a moral framework outlining acceptable behaviour and stressing the effects of bullying.
- RE, RSE and SEAL is used to reinforce the safe messages through stories (both fiction and non-fiction), role play, current affairs and other suitable activities.
- Circle time with the younger children, especially those in the Early Years Foundation Stage gives opportunities to talk about kindness to others.
- Children in the Early Years will learn to respond positively to cultural, social and physical diversity (often the causes of bullying) as part of their curriculum.
- School prefects will help staff to monitor behaviour in the playground and will try to encourage and help any child who seems to be unhappy.
- Staff endeavour at all times to create surroundings where each individual feels confident and safe in school.
- We ensure that the school is well supervised, especially in areas where children might be vulnerable.
- All teachers try to make classroom activities and lessons sensitive to the needs of all children. They teach assertiveness and other social skills and teach 'victims' to say 'No' and how to get help.
- All children are encouraged at all times to report incidents to any member of staff and not to retaliate.
- Children are reminded through e-safety learning, that if they ever receive a text message, email or see a screen image that makes them feel uncomfortable to show it to their parents or a member of staff immediately.
- Parents are encouraged to inform us if they feel that their child is being bullied or being a bully.
- We will inform children's parents or carers if we become aware of their child accessing inappropriate websites or if they are using a mobile phone in an unacceptable manner.

SUPERVISION OF KEY AREAS OF THE SCHOOL:

- Staff on playground duty should pay particular attention to those children already identified as victims or children who seem to be distressed or isolated.
- A member of staff is positioned at each exit and the corner of the KS2 pathway when children leave the classroom either to go out into the playground or to leave school at the end of the day.
- At the beginning and end of the school day two staff members are positioned at the Danefield Road gate.

- A member of staff is always present when children are accessing the computers by the school hall.

At Springwood Heath in order to try and reduce incidents of bullying and to 'recognise' bullies all staff watch for early signs of distress and marked changes in children's normal behaviour. We watch, listen, believe and act.

SIGNS OF BULLYING:

It is not always easy to spot when a child is being bullied as each child will respond to it in their own way.

Children may:

- become upset and not want to come to school
- become introverted and isolate themselves
- appear worried or afraid
- react aggressively
- cling to adults
- develop nervous habits e.g. nail biting

GUIDELINES TO BE TAKEN BY ALL STAFF:

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 a true, accurate account of what has happened so that nothing is forgotten. It is 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.

- never ignore suspected bullying
- do not make premature assumptions
- listen carefully to all accounts – several pupils with the same version does not necessarily mean it is the truth
- adopt a problem-solving approach that allows pupils to move forward from self-justification
- always follow up proven cases to check that bullying has not returned
- keep detailed records of any incidents on CPOMS to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach adopted and to enable patterns to be identified and suitable actions then taken to reduce the incidence of bullying.

If an incident is reported or observed by

- Lunchtime Supervisory Assistant/Learning Support Assistants - then they should inform the Senior Supervisor (Jenny Caddick/Emma Foy/Alan Holland) who if necessary inform the child's class teacher and/or speak to those involved. Following this discussion, a decision will be made as to whether to refer the incident to the Learning Mentor, Assistant Headteachers, Associate and/or Headteacher. A record of the incident will be made on CPOMS and sanctions applied as necessary. If the incident is serious then a record is made on CPOMS, and the member of staff will speak directly to the Headteacher.
- Teachers – Class teacher to speak to those involved. Following this discussion, a decision will be made as to whether to refer the incident to the Learning Mentor, Assistant Headteachers, Associate and/or Headteacher. A record of the incident will be made on CPOMS and sanctions applied as necessary. If the incident is serious

then a record is made on CPOMS and the teacher will speak directly with the Headteacher.

- Assistant Headteacher/Associate Headteacher/Headteacher – If an incident is reported directly they should refer to CPOMS and school staff to establish any background information and decide whether to take further actions.

Guidelines for staff:

1. Discuss the nature of the bullying with the 'victim' at length, recording all the facts. This will require patience and understanding.
2. Identify the alleged bully/bullies and any witnesses.
3. Interview witnesses.
4. Discuss the incident(s) with the alleged bullies. Confront them with the allegations and ask them to tell the truth about the situation. Make it clear that this is only an investigation into the truth at this stage.
5. If the bully owns up, make it understood that bullying is not acceptable at Springwood Heath Primary School. Explain the effect it has on the 'victim' and also on other children in the class. Apply sanctions relevant to the type of bullying.
6. If the allegation of bullying is denied, investigate further. If there is sufficient evidence, apply relevant sanctions.
7. Hold separate discussions with the parents of both victim and bully.
8. Sanctions/Consequences for the bully/ies include:
 - Withdrawal from favoured activities for a specified length of time, for example, a school visit or a match.
 - Loss of playtimes for a specified length of time.
 - Loss of a responsibility.
 - Making some reparation to the victim for any damage to property that may have occurred.
 - Performing duties around school e.g. tidying up.
 - The choice of suspension or internal suspension for a period of time to allow the child time to reflect on their behaviour.
9. Provide Pastoral Support for the victim with staff monitoring and observing at break times and lunchtimes and through discussion to make sure there is no repetition.
9. Provide pastoral Support for the bully/ies. This will include giving opportunities for the children to discuss relationships, feelings and the effect bullying can have on individuals.

Informing parents:

The best way to inform parents is face to face. The nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may suffer can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then school will encourage the child to share the information with their parent or even be with them when they are telling their parent if this is the choice of the young person.

A bullying incident should be treated as a child protection concern when there is "reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm". In

this situation staff will follow the guidelines of the Safeguarding Policy which can involve external agencies.

If the problem persists, it will be necessary to consider the consequences in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

DFEE Circular 10/95 recommends that exclusion is not an appropriate sanction as it does not solve the problem but moves it elsewhere.

However, at Springwood Heath we reserve the right to use this sanction in extreme cases, where support from child and/or parents has broken down.

Parents have the right of appeal to the governing body against any decision to exclude their child.

Parents/Carers will be kept informed at all stages of the process and will be given opportunities to discuss their child's progress and the sanctions/consequences to be employed.

Bullying off the School Premises:

Springwood Heath Primary School cannot be held directly responsible for bullying that takes place off the school premises. However, if both the victim and the bully are from our school, action will be taken as if the incident had occurred on school property, and this includes informing parents.

Bullying of, or by, Adults:

Although bullying in school is mostly associated with the bullying of children by other children, other instances may occur. Occasionally bullying of a child by an adult may be reported and must be investigated using the procedures outlined above. Where a member of staff is involved, the Headteacher/Governing body must be immediately informed and suitable sanctions imposed.

If a member of staff feels that they are being bullied or victimised by another member of staff, this should be immediately reported to the Headteacher who will offer support and help to the victim. Full discussion with both parties should try to get to the bottom of the problem and the governors should be informed. Sanctions will follow if appropriate.

Staff working with children should maintain an attitude of **'it could happen here'** where safeguarding is concerned.

When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff should always act in the best interests of the child and shouldn't assume that a colleague or another professional will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe.

If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately.

They should follow their school or college's child protection policy and speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy). In the absence of the designated safeguarding lead or deputy staff should speak to a member of the school senior leadership team.

Monitoring:

- The Safeguarding Team will review incidences within their Phase on CPOMS and discuss at the regular Safeguarding Meetings.

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