



Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility - 'it could happen here'.

Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

September 2020

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Review Date	September 2022
SLT Link	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Governing Body Link	Safeguarding Governor Dan Palmer

We believe that all children and young people should have the same protection regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise the additional needs of children from minority ethnic groups and disabled children and the barriers they may face, especially around communication.

Signature.....Date:.....

Headteacher

SignatureDate:.....

Safeguarding Governor

School Values and Ethos

Our Christian values are at the heart of the ethos of the school and through these we grow individually and as a community. The Story of the Good Samaritan underpins our 7 core values of:

- Honesty
- Forgiveness
- Empathy
- Courage
- Resilience
- Kindness
- Respect

These core values underpin our policies, procedures and the way we treat one another in our community.

Introduction

Peer on Peer abuse is part of our Safeguarding Policy, however due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse we have completed this separate policy. At Sexey's 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. 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.

The following policies should be read alongside this policy:

- Behaviour and Rewards
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

Context

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. It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required. Sexey's School does not condone any form of abuse and has clear consequences set out within the Behaviour Policy for students who are found to be acting in an abusive way towards another student.

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 accidentally before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault etc.)

Please see Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy

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 (inclusive of all types)

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.

Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online. Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying 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.

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. Hazing or Initiation is not accepted at Sexey's School and any such event would lead to a most significant consequence including possible isolation and/or exclusion.

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

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and initiator of the harm, staff will follow these simple steps to 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 peer on peer 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.

All Peer on Peer abuse incident must be referred to the DSL and recorded on My Concerns. The Safeguarding Team will manage the incident once reported.

Steps to be taken by member of the Safeguarding Team

1. Gather the Facts

Speak to all the young people involved separately, 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?)

2. 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?

3. Decide on your next course of action

If from the information that you gather you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must notify the DSL who will make a safeguarding referral to social care 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 the next steps.

If social care and the police intend to pursue this further the DSL will seek advice about next steps as CSC and the Police may wish to interview the student.

It is important that the DSL is 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 the DSL may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, the DSL agrees with the decision, you may then be left to the DSL to inform parents.

DSL Informing parents

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care the DSL has agreement to inform parents or has been allocated that role from the other services involved then the DSL must 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.

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 a mentor. 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 justice 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 continued curriculum of PHSE that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

If the young person feels particularly vulnerable a risk assessment will 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 and the young person may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that young person receives a consequence for their behaviour in line with the Behaviour and Rewards Policy.

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.

Preventative Strategies

Sexey's School is committed to developing appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of peer on peer abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way. The 7 Core Values set out the behaviours that we expect of ourselves.

We recognise that peer on peer abuse can and will occur at any School even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. However, we continue to recognise and manage such risks and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff. The strong staff and student relationships support this.

Sexey's School has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This is strengthened through a strong and positive Pastoral Support Team and the PHSE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another.

In order to create such an environment, we ensure whole staff training and CPD include matters around abusive behaviours and talking to young people in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice.

Staff must not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare to their own experiences of childhood. Staff will 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.

Signposting is available to young people in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer through the website and external visitors,

Sexey's Parliament (school council) provides a forum to encourage young people to support changes in their school community.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Peer on Peer Abuse Protocol Flowchart

