



# **Relationship Abuse in Young People Policy**

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Signed  
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## **SCHOOL ETHOS AND VALUES**

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.

### **1 Purpose and Aims**

Sexey's School fully recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding children and has a Safeguarding Policy and a number of other policies to safeguard young people within the school. As part of the school's commitment to safeguard young people the school has produced a policy on abusive relationships between young people. The school recognises as part of its safeguarding commitment a need for an Abusive Relationship between Young People Policy as teen relationship abuse is a Safeguarding issue.

This policy applies to students under the age of 18 years old in abusive relationships, should one partner in an abusive relationship be over the age of 18 years old then Childhood Sexual Exploitation (CSE) protocols as detailed in the Safeguarding Policy must be followed and involve external agencies including Somerset Direct and the Police.

Specific roles and responsibilities of school staff in relation to abusive relationships between students are detailed within this policy but overall responsibility for Safeguarding and the safety of all students is with the Designated Safeguarding lead within school (or deputies).

## 2 Definitions

2.1 **Relationship abuse** between young people refers to relationships where the young people have been or are in an intimate relationship. This includes long term boyfriend or girlfriend relationships or more casual or one-off encounters and this policy applies to all young people within the school below the age of 18 years.

**Domestic violence** “is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between partners (16 years and over) who are or have been in an intimate relationship or between adult family members (18 years and over), regardless of gender and sexuality” (HM Government).

From March 2013 the definition of domestic violence was changed to include young people aged 16-17 years.3.2 The UK Government cross – departmental definition of domestic violence “**is any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between partners (16 years and over) who are or have been in an intimate relationship or between adult family members (18 years and over), regardless of gender and sexuality**” (HM Government).

Sexey’s School considers that Teen relationship abuse consists of the same patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour as domestic abuse. These patterns might include some or all of the following: sexual abuse, physical abuse, financial abuse, emotional abuse and psychological abuse. This can include a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent against a current or former dating partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse.

It can also involve control of who the person is allowed to “see” or be friends with and may involve controlling or monitoring their means of communication through mobiles phones or social networking sites. This may mean that young people become isolated from their friends and peers or they may be coerced into sending inappropriate messages or photographs, “sexting”, through social media or mobile phones.

**Sexting** is defined by the NSPCC as “the exchange of sexual messages and images, creating, sharing and forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images through mobile phones and the internet”.

## 3 Abusive Behaviour

3.1 Abusive behaviour in relationships between young people can take the form of physical, emotional sexual and financial abuse. It can involve control of who or where a young person is „allowed” to see or go, or communicate with social networking pages or mobile phone. Such control leads to isolation from the peer group and trusted friends in whom a young person might confide. Other forms of abusive behaviour may include:

- coercion may be used to force sexual activity.
- coerced into sending inappropriate images or “sexting” via social media.
- threats, put downs and humiliation are behaviours associated with emotional abuse.

It is important to be aware that Some young people, particularly those who have witnessed abuse or violence at home, may find it hard to distinguish between care and control and may mistake abusive behaviour for the “norm”.

#### **4 The difference between young person relationship abuse and bullying**

4.1 There are similarities between relationship abuse and bullying however relationship abuse is different due to the intimate nature of the relationship and the emotional context.

4.2 Young people who are being bullied may be able to distance themselves from those who bully them as they generally do not gain anything from the relationship however with relationship abuse some young people may feel pressured to remain in the relationship or they may be experiencing their first romantic relationship and are unwilling or unable to break from the relationship.

4.3 The abusive behaviour may be interpreted as loving, caring or complimentary and may also be given credibility by peers.

4.4 Behaviours such as name calling or inappropriate language will be dealt with through the anti-bullying and behaviour policies with appropriate sanctions instigated (provided there are no Safeguarding concerns) unless the behaviour occurs within an abusive relationship which is then responded in line with this policy.

#### **5. Warning signs**

These are some common signs of relationship abuse, however, the list is not exhaustive and these signs could be indicative of other issues.

- Absent from school
- Physical signs of injury
- Decline in academic attainment
- Mood/personality changes
- Becoming passive or withdrawn
- Bullying behaviour or being bullied
- Isolation from friends and peer group
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour, attitudes or language
- Depression
- Self-harm, eating disorders, sleeping problems
- Alcohol or drug use (these may not have been present before)
- Being exclusively with a partner at the expense of friends

#### **6. Risk factors and vulnerability**

Young people who have a history of parental domestic violence within their home have a greater vulnerability to being in an abusive relationship themselves. Young people who experience peer violence or family violence are at a higher risk of experiencing relationship violence. Having an older partner increases the risk of an

abusive relationship, especially for girls who have an older male partner who are at significantly higher risk of experiencing physical, emotional and sexual violence (Barter et al, 2009). Young people who are in an abusive relationship with someone who attends the same school as them have the increased pressure as being in the same daily environment as their abuser which may greatly impact on their personal safety and emotional well-being and increase their overall risk level. It is important to be aware that Young people who identify as being lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) also experience abusive relationships at the same rate as those in heterosexual relationships. LGB young people may be more vulnerable though as their relationship maybe hidden from friends and family or they fear being „outed“ by their partner which makes it harder for them to access support.

## **7. A whole school approach and the curriculum**

The school is committed to safeguarding all students and has a Safeguarding Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, and Behaviour Policy in place to safeguard students physical, emotional and mental well-being.

The school has a Sex & Relationship Education (SRE) policy in place that promotes healthy and respectful relationships and this is promoted through the curriculum, within themed weeks, assemblies and workshops. The PSHE lessons have been carefully planned to be mindful of students" well-being and to prevent any anxiety or distress to students and a respectful environment is created to allow students to discuss respectfully and safely, sensitive subjects. Any disclosures within a lesson (by an affected student or a student wishing to make a disclosure about a friend) are referred immediately to the DSL in line with the Safeguarding Policy guidelines for disclosures. Should a disclosure be made within the classroom it will be reiterated to the students of that class that the disclosure is confidential and not to be discussed outside of the classroom and appropriate support will be offered to all students. If an individual student makes a disclosure about another student then appropriate support will also be offered to them to manage any distress or concerns they have.

Students identified as "At risk students" are supported through their care plans, the pastoral support worker, the Boarding Manager, the Designated Safeguarding Lead and outside agencies as deemed necessary. The school has a stringent reporting procedure for reporting concerns (including abusive relationships). The Designated Safeguarding Lead has overarching responsibility for all safeguarding issues within the school.

Sexey's School promotes a culture of sharing concerns and staff and students have strong relationships that facilitate staff noting changes in the way students present and also to provide a mechanism for students to share concerns about themselves or others. We also have an Independent Listener for all Boarders to access.

Safe use of social networks/mobile phones/internet is part of the taught safeguarding curriculum within the school both within designated theme weeks such as Internet Safety Week and as a wider part of the PSHE and ICT curriculum.

The school has a designated pastoral care team, where vulnerable or at risk students can attend, before, during and after school. Pastoral support room is a secure area, permanently staffed by pastoral staff.

## **8 Working with parents**

If parents or carers are concerned that their child is in an abusive relationship they may contact their son/daughters Head of Year, Tutor or the Designated Safeguarding Lead within the school.

At times Young people may not want their parents to know that they are experiencing relationship abuse. Parents may be unaware of their son or daughter being in a relationship and the young person's fear of them finding out may stop them from seeking help from adults. The views of the young person should be sought and taken into account; however Safeguarding concerns should be discussed with parents unless doing so will put the young person at increased risk from harm. (For guidance on this matter please consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead).

One of the risk factors for relationship abuse between young people is parental domestic abuse. The school therefore needs to be sensitive to the possibility that the parents are also experiencing domestic abuse and therefore they may react in a non-supportive manner to their child as their own experience of domestic abuse may result in them normalising relationship abuse. The school may need to work with other agencies to support the whole family.

Young people may be fearful that their parents may judge them or criticise them or that their parents just "won't understand" however, they should be encouraged if they feel able and it is safe to do so to tell their parents.

## **9 Staff training**

As part of ongoing safeguarding training within the school, staff will be trained to recognise signs of abusive relationships and will be updated through Safeguarding training the reporting mechanisms for concerns and disclosures and the relevant people within the school to direct the concerns to.

## **10 Recording and reporting concerns**

Disclosures about relationship abuse are responded to in line with Sexey's School Safeguarding procedures. All staff are aware of how to respond to a Safeguarding disclosure and what action they need to take if they are concerned about a student's safety. Care must be taken not to ask leading questions but ascertaining the following information about an abusive relationship will be useful:

- Are they currently being harmed?
- Are they likely to be harmed in the future?
- Is anyone else at risk of being harmed?
- Do they need medical attention?
- What are their overall needs?
- What is important to them?

(Home Office/Against Violence and Abuse, 2007)

Concerns and disclosures are reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy Safeguarding Lead and the concerns or disclosures are recorded and any necessary referrals in line with the Safeguarding Policy will be made to Social Care, the Police or any other external agency. If appropriate, an Early Help Assessment may be opened to support the young person.

## **11 Support for students**

Research shows most abusive relationship disclosures are made to a student's friends and therefore the PSHE curriculum will cover information regarding support and advice services for young people and about the support mechanisms available to students within the school including adults that they can disclose to. As part of the holistic care offered to all students and in line with the school Safeguarding Policy all students will be made aware through the PSHRE curriculum, assemblies, vertical tutoring that staff are available to help and support students, including relationship abuse that happens outside of school hours.

The young person who has been identified as being an abuser will also need support as they may have unmet needs that need addressing and these concerns can be discussed with Designated Safeguarding Lead. The young person needs to be held accountable for their abusive behaviour and where the abuse is criminal then the police may be involved.

## **12 Support for staff**

Should staff be affected by the disclosure of a student's abusive relationship or should they personally be affected themselves by being in an abusive relationship then support will be offered through provision of support organisations information and helplines for domestic abuse.

## **13. Safety plans for students in abusive relationships**

13.1 Once a disclosure has been made by a student a safety plan can be made to support the student manage their personal safety providing the young person is not experiencing CSE or sexual abuse by an adult in which case a plan would need to be devised with police and social care. A safety plan should be developed by the young person with a trusted adult taking into consideration the following:

- **Led by young person**, supported by adult.
- **Responsibility.** Inform the young person that this plan does not make them responsible for the actions of others and it does not guarantee their safety, it only helps prepare them for situations where they might be unsafe. Staff responsibility is to support the young person in implementing agreed assigned actions.
- **Personalised safety plan.** The safety plan must be personalised to each young person's experience as relationship abuse experience is unique. Specific individual needs must be considered. Create plan when safe. The



young person must feel calm and in control when creating a safety plan to allow them to clearly formulate a safety plan.

- **Who else can support?** Involve other trusted individuals, such as peers, family members to help keep the young person safe and support them but consent to share the plan must be obtained.
- **Realistic and manageable.** The plan should be uncomplicated and realistic.
- **Recognise risk.** If the young person who is using abusive behaviour finds out about the safety plan, it may put the young person with the safety plan at risk. Discuss this concern with the young person.
- **Relationship Advice.** It is not staffs responsibility to tell the young person they must „break up“ with the young person using abusive behaviour, staff will be non-judgemental and allow the young person to consider their choices and support them to stay safe.
- **Holistic.** The safety plan must consider all aspects of the young person’s life where they need to keep safe, including online safety, at home, at school, school trips and socialising.
- **Positive.** In addition to personal safety the plan will consider ways to promote coping strategies.
- **Review.** A review date will be agreed but the plan is flexible to allow for unscheduled reviews.

#### **14. Policy review and monitoring**

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

## Appendix

### Useful resources Name

Expect respect: a toolkit for addressing teenage relationship abuse in key stages 3, 4 and 5

### Website

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97773/teen-abuse-toolkit.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97773/teen-abuse-toolkit.pdf)

Teenage Relationship Abuse: A Teacher's Guide to violence and abuse in teenage relationships

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97774/teen-abuse-teachers-guide.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97774/teen-abuse-teachers-guide.pdf)

Welsh Government PSE resources for teachers

<http://wales.gov.uk/pesub/home/holisti cpse/delivery/domesticabuse/?lang=en>

Woman Kind

<http://www.womankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/WKREPORT web-24-NOV-2010.pdf>

Abuse in relationships: a leaflet for teenagers

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97775/teen-abuse-leaflet.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97775/teen-abuse-leaflet.pdf)

Domestic Abuse awareness pack for Years 10 and 11. Includes lesson plans for PSHRE.

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/adva-education-pack.pdf>

"Spiralling" DVD and toolkit" has resources for primary aged children about positive friendships. The materials for secondary look at domestic abuse in teenage relationships. Lessons are designed to be taught in PSHRE and English Relationship Abuse- information leaflet for parents

<http://www.bava.org.uk/>  
<http://www.bava.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/bava-spiralling-tool-kit-web.pdf>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/269267/parents-leaflet.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269267/parents-leaflet.pdf)

Teenage relationship abuse- a parent's and carer's guide to violence and abuse in teenage relationships

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97766/parents-and-carers-leaflet.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97766/parents-and-carers-leaflet.pdf)

Sex and relationships education (SRE) for the 21st century

<http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/media/17706/sreadvice.pdf>