



Fairfield Primary School Child on Child Abuse Policy

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INTRODUCTION

Fairfield Primary School recognises that child-on-child abuse, including harassment and violence, can occur between children of any age, gender, background or circumstance. It may take place inside or outside school, online or face-to-face, and may occur simultaneously across different environments.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Online Safety Policy, Relationships and Health Education arrangements and relevant local safeguarding procedures.

All concerns about child-on-child abuse, whether occurring in school, outside school or online, must be reported without delay in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures. Staff must not investigate allegations themselves beyond establishing immediate facts necessary to protect children; the DSL or deputy DSL will determine the appropriate safeguarding response.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 states that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse and 'how allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with'. The document also states it is most important to ensure opportunities of seeking the voice of the child are heard, 'Governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, all systems and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.' Extra guidance this year highlights the importance of staff recognising the signs of child-on-child abuse and knowing how to respond to reports.

All staff should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. All staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child-on-child abuse.

This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including online bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Hate incidents and hate crimes which may also include an online element
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as teenage relationship abuse)
 - physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
 - Racism
 - Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).
 - Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) which is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive. HSB can occur online and/or face to face, and can also occur simultaneously between the two – and includes, for example:
 - sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence); and causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
 - 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.
 - Online sexual harassment this may be stand-alone or part of a wider pattern of sexual violence and/or harassment. It may include; consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and or videos (previously known as sexting or nudes and semi-nudes); sharing of unwanted explicit content, sexualised online bullying, unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media, sexual exploitation, coercion and threats, and coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they are not comfortable with online.

- Misogyny – commonly defined as dislike of, or contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against girls and women. Extreme rhetoric is also commonly connected to macho culture or harmful ideas about masculinity which can be harmful to males. Also, misandry, which is commonly defined as dislike of, or contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against males.

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, many of which are listed below, that are actually abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

At Fairfield Primary School we are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse.

In particular ensuring that our school staff protect our children by, wherever possible being aware of the nature and level of risk that children are exposed to, having a clear and comprehensive strategy specific to that child’s safeguarding context and having a whole school contextual safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse.

This policy is preventative in its response to child on child abuse by raising awareness of issues, supporting staff in identifying them with children, and providing appropriate response and intervention that is followed consistently across the whole school workforce.

All staff and governors have signed to say that they have read, understood and agreed to work within this policy framework and parents have access to this policy.

This policy will be updated annually.

PURPOSE AND AIMS

‘Research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of peer-on-peer abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers’ (Farrer and Co, 2022).

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as child-on-child abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child-on-child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK AND LEGISLATION

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children’s Act 1989 that the child’s welfare is paramount. Another key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, highlighting that every assessment of a child, should ‘reflect the unique characteristics of the child within their family and community context’ (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026:28). This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child and to be mindful of the contexts children live in.

PREVENTION AND A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH RECOGNITION

Fairfield Primary School takes a proactive, whole-school approach to preventing child-on-child abuse. Staff monitor incidents and concerns for patterns and trends, identify areas of the school environment where children may be less safe, and use this information to inform safeguarding practice and preventative action. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and CPD, and issues relating to child-on-child abuse are addressed through the curriculum and wider safeguarding work.

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT, CURRICULUM AND CHILDREN'S VOICE

Fairfield Primary School has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This has been strengthened through a strong and positive PSHE 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.

To enable such an open and honest environment, it is necessary to ensure the whole workforce and governing body feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is necessary for whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to young people in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice. It is incredibly important that staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that staff 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. Staff must also feel enabled to discuss issues about online access and support and reinforce appropriate behaviours online including understanding why age limits are in place on social media platforms, encouraging children to share online concerns, talking about issues that have happened in an open forum and working closely with parents.

INVOLVING PARENTS AND CARERS

Fairfield Primary School is committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. The school provides parents and carers with clear information about child-on-child abuse, including the different forms it can take, the potential impact on children, the school's preventative approach and the procedures that will be followed when concerns are identified.

The school maintains open, honest and respectful communication with parents and carers and encourages them to raise any concerns about their child's safety, wellbeing or relationships with others. Information about safeguarding, including child-on-child abuse, is shared through a range of appropriate channels to ensure that parents and carers understand how concerns can be reported and support accessed.

Where child-on-child abuse is identified, suspected or disclosed, the school will work closely with parents and carers where appropriate and in accordance with safeguarding guidance. Parents and carers will ordinarily be informed and involved in planning support and protective measures. However, there may be circumstances where informing a parent or carer is not in the best interests of a child or could place a child at increased risk of harm. In such situations, decisions will be made in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant safeguarding partners as appropriate.

The school recognises that children who have experienced child-on-child abuse, as well as children whose behaviour has caused harm, may both require support. Parents and carers will be supported to understand the school's response, the measures put in place to keep children safe and any intervention or support that may be offered.

The school actively promotes a culture in which children are encouraged to speak to trusted adults and report concerns, knowing that all reports will be taken seriously, investigated appropriately and responded to in a timely and proportionate manner.

SIGNPOSTING AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT

Fairfield Primary School ensures that children know how to access support if they do not feel confident raising a concern directly with a member of staff or another child. Children are provided with information about the ways they can seek help and the trusted adults they can speak to within school.

The school provides appropriate signposting to support services and resources where these are relevant to children's needs. Information about sources of help is made available to children in an age-appropriate way and is reinforced through the school's safeguarding, pastoral and curriculum provision.

Where appropriate, Fairfield Primary School works with external agencies and support services to provide advice, education and targeted support in relation to child-on-child abuse and associated safeguarding issues. This forms part of the school's wider preventative approach and supports children to understand healthy relationships, recognise harmful behaviour and know how to seek help.

CHILDREN'S VOICE AND PARTICIPATION

Fairfield Primary School is committed to ensuring that children's views, wishes and feelings are heard and taken into account in matters that affect their safety and wellbeing. We provide children with appropriate opportunities to express their views through our school council, pupil voice activities, class discussions and other age-appropriate feedback mechanisms.

Children are encouraged to contribute to the development of positive behaviour expectations and to share their views about what helps them to feel safe and respected in school. Their feedback is used to inform our safeguarding practice, relationships and

behaviour expectations, and our approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse.

Staff actively promote an environment in which children know who they can speak to if they are worried about something or have experienced inappropriate or harmful behaviour from another child. Children are listened to sensitively and their wishes and feelings are considered when decisions are made about the support and safeguarding action required.

The school recognises that some children may experience additional barriers to communicating their views. Appropriate support and reasonable adjustments will be provided to ensure that all children, including those with SEND or other vulnerabilities, have meaningful opportunities to participate and have their voice heard.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Fairfield Primary School works in partnership with relevant agencies to ensure that concerns about child-on-child abuse are responded to appropriately and that children receive the right support at the earliest opportunity.

Where concerns cannot be managed safely and effectively within school, we seek advice from and make referrals to the appropriate safeguarding partners, including the local authority's Front Door/Children's Social Care and the police where appropriate. Staff follow the school's established safeguarding procedures when making referrals and record concerns, advice received and actions taken.

The school recognises that child-on-child abuse can be complex, particularly where there are additional or wider safeguarding concerns affecting the children involved. We therefore work collaboratively with external agencies where their involvement is required, sharing relevant information appropriately and contributing to assessments, meetings, safety planning and agreed support.

Where advice is required, Fairfield Primary School seeks guidance at an early stage rather than waiting for concerns to escalate. This enables appropriate decisions to be made promptly and supports effective preventative action, early intervention and safeguarding responses.

The school maintains effective communication with parents and carers where appropriate and safe to do so, while ensuring that information-sharing and safeguarding decisions remain focused on the best interests of the children involved.

PROMOTING A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

Fairfield Primary School promotes a culture in which children are expected to treat one another and all members of staff with respect. Our behaviour expectations apply across the whole school environment, including classrooms, corridors, the dining hall, playground and other areas of the school, as well as when children are travelling to and from school where behaviour has an impact on the safety and wellbeing of our school community.

Staff consistently reinforce expectations around respectful behaviour and positive relationships. Children are taught that their actions can affect others and that behaviour which causes harm, distress, humiliation or fear is not acceptable.

Our school values and behaviour expectations are reinforced through our curriculum, relationships education, safeguarding work and day-to-day interactions between staff and children. Staff model positive and respectful relationships, and children are encouraged to demonstrate these behaviours towards their peers.

We recognise that a positive school culture is an important part of preventing bullying, harassment and other forms of child-on-child abuse. We therefore address inappropriate behaviour at an early stage and provide children with opportunities to speak to trusted adults when they are worried about their own safety or the behaviour of another child.

WHAT IS CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE?

Child-on-child abuse is abuse that occurs between children. It can be physical, sexual, emotional or financial, and can involve coercive control, exploitation, harassment, violence, bullying or discriminatory behaviour. Abuse is abuse and will never be tolerated, dismissed as 'banter', 'part of growing up', 'boys being boys' or any other form of minimisation.

For these purposes, child-on-child abuse 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 peer associations. Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including: serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or gender-based violence. Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives and spaces in which they spend their time. Any response to child-on-child abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of child-on-child abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's experiences.

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils 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. This means adopting a whole school community contextual safeguarding approach by ensuring all staff: understand how a child's wider context may have an impact on them; contribute to creating a strong safeguarding culture in school by following policies that address child-on-child abuse and harmful attitudes; promote healthy relationships and attitudes to gender/sexuality; support the school by identifying 'less safe' areas in school; access training on bias and stereotyped assumptions; be alert to changes in children's behaviour and seek appropriate responses to concerns shared.

Research suggests that child-on-child abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse affecting children in the UK (Farrer and Co, 2019). 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 (KCSIE 2026). Research suggests that child-on-child

abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure will also be different. As a result, school will explore the gender dynamics of child-on-child abuse within our setting and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender imbalanced environments (Farrer and Co. 2019).

It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

CHILDREN WITH SEND AND ADDITIONAL VULNERABILITIES

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, the school offers extra pastoral support for children with SEN and disabilities particularly when investigating any form of child-on-child abuse.

- Children Who Are Lesbian, Gay, Bi or Trans (LGBT)

Children who are LGBT can be targeted by other children and risks can be compounded where children who identify as LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced, and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff (KCSIE, 2026).

LANGUAGE AND RECORDING

For the purposes of this policy the language used will refer to alleged victims and alleged perpetrators, this is to ensure that children are not given 'labels' about their behaviour unfairly and without any full and thorough conclusive investigation. The language used to children and parents in the reporting of any incidents that may have occurred could impact on any future rehabilitation of children and young people following any investigations that may occur. The school will use language that is appropriate to the circumstances and avoids pre-judging outcomes whilst ensuring children who have experienced harm are recognised and supported.

FORMS OF CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE

Child-on-child abuse may include, but is not limited to:

- bullying, including online, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying; abuse in intimate personal relationships; physical abuse and serious physical assault; sexual violence and sexual harassment; consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes; sexualised online abuse; upskirting; initiation or hazing-type violence and rituals; hate incidents and hate crime; racism, faith-targeted abuse and other discriminatory behaviour; misogyny and harmful attitudes relating to gender; and behaviour connected with exploitation or coercion.

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

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.

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, sexual assault, rape or abuse.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence refers to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

What is consent? Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment means 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. In referencing sexual harassment, it is in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment

Sexual harassment can include:

- Sexual comments, such as; telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names; Sexual 'jokes' or taunting;
- Physical behaviour, such as; deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence - it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature;
- Online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

It may include:

- Non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos;
- Sexualised online bullying;
- Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media;
- Sexual exploitation; coercion and threats;
- Upskirting

UPSKIRTING

'Upskirting' 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. It is now a criminal offence

BULLYING AND DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOUR

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. Bullying could involve targeting those with protected characteristics.

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.

ONLINE ABUSE AND BULLYING

Online bullying is the use of mobile phones, instant messaging, email, chat rooms, online gaming platforms, social networking sites or other digital technologies to harass, threaten, intimidate or otherwise cause harm to another person.

The school recognises that online bullying, online abuse and harmful online communications may, in some circumstances, constitute criminal behaviour. Such conduct may fall within the scope of the Online Safety Act 2023, as well as offences under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and the Communications Act 2003. Electronic communications that are grossly offensive, indecent, obscene, menacing, threatening, knowingly false, or intended to cause distress, anxiety or harm may amount to a criminal offence.

Where the behaviour involves the creation, possession or distribution of sexual images of a child under the age of 18, this may also constitute a criminal offence under relevant legislation, including the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

The school will respond to concerns relating to online bullying and online abuse in accordance with current legislation, safeguarding requirements and statutory guidance. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will determine whether advice should be sought from, or a referral made to, the police and/or children's social care.

MAKING, SHARING OR POSSESSING NUDES AND SEMI-NUDES

Any incident involving the creation, possession, sharing, storing, forwarding, requesting, coercing, threatening to share, or distributing of nude or semi-nude images or videos involving a child will be treated as a safeguarding matter and responded to promptly. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will follow current Department for Education guidance and seek advice from children's social care, the police or other agencies where appropriate.

The school recognises that technology continues to evolve and that concerns may involve AI-generated, digitally manipulated or synthetic intimate imagery, including so-called "deepfakes". Such incidents will be managed using the same safeguarding principles, taking account of potential exploitation, coercion, image-based abuse, humiliation, harassment, criminality and ongoing online harm.

For the purposes of this policy, the term nude or semi-nude imagery includes still images and videos created, shared or possessed by children, including content created by the child themselves or by another child. The school recognises that such incidents can occur in many different contexts, including friendships, peer groups, intimate relationships, online communities and coercive situations.

Children may experience pressure, manipulation, coercion or threats to create or share nude or semi-nude imagery. This can affect any child regardless of age, sex, gender, ethnicity, background or personal circumstances. Once imagery has been shared, the child may lose control over how it is distributed, stored, copied, altered or used by others.

The school will respond in a child-centred and proportionate manner, recognising that children involved may require safeguarding support and protection. Staff must not view, copy, download, print, share or forward imagery, nor ask a child to produce or display imagery. Any

concern must be reported immediately to the DSL, who will determine the appropriate safeguarding response in line with current national guidance.

INITIATION, HAZING AND RITUALS

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.

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.

PREJUDICED, DISCRIMINATORY AND HATE-RELATED 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).

ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

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.

ASSESSING THE BEHAVIOUR AND CONTEXT

Simon Hackett's continuum of behaviour (taken from Farrer and Co. 2017) can be a useful guide to measure the behaviour that has occurred and consider the circumstances around the incident (s).

The continuum looks at whether it:

- is socially acceptable
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time
- is socially acceptable within the peer group
- is problematic and concerning
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning
- involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power
- involves a misuse of power

Behaviour which is not abusive at first may potentially become abusive quickly or over time. Intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour which may be displayed by a child is vital and could potentially prevent their behaviour from progressing on a continuum to become problematic, abusive and/or violent - and ultimately requiring (greater/more formal) engagement with specialist external and/or statutory agencies.

WHAT ALL STAFF MUST DO

Any member of staff who receives a disclosure or becomes aware of possible child-on-child abuse must take the concern seriously, reassure the child that they have been listened to, avoid making promises of confidentiality, make a factual record using the child's own words where possible, and report the concern to the DSL or deputy DSL without delay.

Staff must not ask leading questions or attempt to conduct a detailed investigation. Immediate action should focus on safety, preserving evidence where relevant and enabling the DSL to decide whether the police, children's social care or other agencies should be contacted.

All staff should be alert to the well-being of children and young people 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.

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator of the harm, these simple steps can 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 child-on-child abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get a true, accurate account of the facts around what has happened, so that nothing is 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 child-on-child 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.

Staff should also be mindful of contextual safeguarding and that wider safeguarding concerns may influence the child's account of the event(s). Alongside this peer pressure and the impact of sharing information about the incident(s) may also influence a child's account.

RESPONDING TO A REPORT

In cases specifically relating to Sexual violence and sexual harassment, part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2026 states that two members of staff (preferably one being the Designated Safeguarding Lead) should be present to manage the report, where possible.

The most appropriate member of staff with the best relationship with the child should be the person alongside the child who wishes to disclose wherever possible. However, staff should always be aware that children may choose to disclose to any member of staff that they feel most comfortable with and therefore all staff need basic training in managing disclosures. In any circumstance the member of staff must make clear to the child that they cannot maintain

confidentiality if what is being shared has put or will put the child or another person at risk of harm.

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. Staff should listen carefully and allow the child to give their account in their own words. Where clarification is necessary to understand the nature of the concern and ensure immediate safety, staff may use open questions. Staff must not ask leading questions or attempt to investigate the matter.

ASSESS IMMEDIATE SAFETY AND RISK

The DSL will consider the needs and safety of the child who has experienced harm, the child who has displayed harmful behaviour, and any other children who may be at risk. A proportionate risk assessment or safety plan will consider whether there may have been other affected children, the context and location of the incident, online factors, power imbalances, vulnerabilities and actions required to prevent further harm.

DECIDE THE NEXT COURSE OF ACTION

Where information gathered indicates that a child may be at risk of harm, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) considers the appropriate safeguarding response without delay. Where the threshold for referral is met, the DSL makes a referral to Children's Social Care/Front Door services in accordance with local safeguarding procedures. Where a criminal offence may have been committed, the police are contacted where appropriate.

The DSL takes the lead in making safeguarding referrals and liaising with external agencies. In the absence of the DSL, a trained deputy DSL or another appropriately trained member of the safeguarding team will take the necessary action to ensure that concerns are responded to without delay. Staff do not wait for the DSL to return before taking action where there is an immediate safeguarding concern.

Where Children's Social Care or the police become involved, Fairfield Primary School works cooperatively with those agencies and provides appropriate access to children, staff, records and other relevant information. Where it is appropriate for children to be spoken to in school, the school supports this process and provides a suitable and safe environment.

The school follows the advice and direction of safeguarding partners regarding the management of the concern, including any agreed safety planning, risk assessment, information-sharing and support for the children involved. Information is shared appropriately and in accordance with safeguarding requirements.

Where a referral does not meet the threshold for statutory intervention, the DSL considers the advice provided and determines the appropriate next steps for the child. Where necessary, the DSL seeks further clarification or challenges a decision where there are concerns that the level of need or risk has not been appropriately recognised. The school continues to monitor and support the child and will make a further referral if circumstances change or concerns escalate.

Where appropriate and safe to do so, parents and carers are informed of concerns and the action being taken. However, the school will not inform parents or carers where doing so would place a child or another person at increased risk of harm, or where this would otherwise prejudice a safeguarding or police investigation.

Fairfield Primary School recognises that effective partnership working is an essential part of responding to child-on-child abuse, particularly where incidents are serious, complex or linked to wider safeguarding concerns. The school therefore works collaboratively with relevant agencies to ensure that children receive appropriate protection, support and intervention.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES AND ONGOING SUPPORT

Fairfield Primary School responds to child-on-child abuse in accordance with the level of need and risk identified. Following an incident, the DSL assesses the information available and determines the appropriate safeguarding response. This may include managing the concern through the school's safeguarding and behaviour procedures, providing additional support within school, seeking advice from external agencies. It may involve seeking community-based Family Help support or making a targeted Family Help referral.

Whatever the outcome, the school continues to consider the educational, safeguarding and wellbeing needs of all children involved. Appropriate risk management and support arrangements are put in place where required, including arrangements to protect the child who has experienced harm, other children and the child who has displayed harmful behaviour.

SUPPORT FOR THE CHILD WHO HAS EXPERIENCED HARM

Fairfield Primary School provides appropriate support to children who have experienced child-on-child abuse. Support is tailored to the individual child and takes account of their wishes and feelings, age, development, needs and any additional vulnerabilities.

The child is given opportunities to speak to a trusted adult and is supported to understand what is happening and what steps are being taken to keep them safe. Staff monitor the child's wellbeing and provide ongoing support following an incident rather than assuming that the impact has ended once the immediate concern has been dealt with.

Where appropriate, the school provides additional pastoral support, mentoring or other targeted intervention and works with parents, carers and external services where further support is required.

Where an incident has affected relationships between children, the school addresses these relationships through appropriate support and intervention. Restorative approaches are used where they are considered safe, appropriate and in the best interests of the children involved. Restorative work is not used where it would place a child at further risk or be inappropriate given the nature of the abuse.

Where a child remains vulnerable following an incident, the school puts appropriate safety and support arrangements in place. These arrangements identify trusted adults, strategies for managing concerns and any additional measures required to help the child feel and remain safe in school.

SUPPORT FOR THE CHILD WHO HAS DISPLAYED HARMFUL BEHAVIOUR

The school recognises that a child who has displayed harmful behaviour may also have safeguarding or additional needs. The school therefore considers the reasons and circumstances surrounding the behaviour and assesses whether the child may themselves be experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation or other difficulties.

The child is supported to understand the impact of their behaviour and is provided with appropriate intervention to reduce the likelihood of further harmful behaviour. This may include pastoral support, targeted intervention, work around relationships and behaviour, or involvement from external services where appropriate.

The school maintains appropriate safeguarding and risk management arrangements for children who may pose a risk to other children. These arrangements are proportionate to the level of concern and are reviewed as circumstances change.

Where appropriate, the school applies consequences in accordance with its behaviour policy. Safeguarding needs are considered alongside the seriousness of the behaviour, the impact on others, the child's individual circumstances and any underlying needs.

Where external agencies are involved, the school works with them to coordinate support and risk management. Where a child cannot safely attend school as normal, the school makes appropriate arrangements for their education and safeguarding support in accordance with statutory requirements and advice from relevant agencies.

RECORD-KEEPING AND INFORMATION SHARING

Fairfield Primary School maintains clear, factual and dated safeguarding records relating to concerns about child-on-child abuse. Records are stored securely (using CPOMS) in accordance with the school's safeguarding recording procedures and data protection requirements.

Relevant information is shared promptly and lawfully where this is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The school works within established information-sharing arrangements with Children's Social Care, safeguarding partners, the police and other relevant agencies.

Information is shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements. The school recognises that safeguarding concerns may require information to be shared without consent where there is an appropriate lawful basis to do so.

AFTERCARE AND REVIEW

Following an incident of child-on-child abuse, the school continues to monitor the wellbeing and safety of the children involved. The school recognises that the impact of an incident may become apparent some time after it has occurred and therefore maintains appropriate follow-up and support.

The DSL and relevant staff review the effectiveness of the support and safety arrangements in place and respond to any changes in the child's circumstances or presentation.

Where further concerns arise, these are considered through the school's safeguarding procedures and appropriate action is taken.

The school recognises that the impact of an incident may not become apparent immediately and that feelings of distress, anxiety, regret or vulnerability may emerge at a later stage. Ongoing review and support will therefore be provided for children involved where appropriate.

SAFETY PLANNING AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Fairfield Primary School uses appropriate safety planning and risk management arrangements to support children affected by child-on-child abuse and to reduce the likelihood of further harm.

Safety planning is tailored to the individual child and may include identifying trusted adults, potential triggers or situations that create risk, strategies for seeking help, supervision arrangements and measures to reduce opportunities for further harmful behaviour.

Where appropriate, parents and carers are involved in safety planning, alongside the children and relevant staff. Where external agencies are involved, the school works with them to ensure that safety planning and risk management are coordinated.

Risk assessments and safety plans are reviewed regularly and updated when circumstances change.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

The school addresses child-on-child abuse through its behaviour and disciplinary procedures where appropriate. Any response takes account of the seriousness and impact of the behaviour, the need to protect other children and the individual circumstances and safeguarding needs of the child who has displayed the behaviour.

Consequences are used alongside appropriate safeguarding and support measures and are not regarded as a substitute for addressing the underlying causes or safeguarding needs associated with the behaviour.

The school considers the potential risk posed to other children when determining appropriate action and ensures that decisions remain consistent with the school's behaviour policy and its safeguarding responsibilities.

Where exclusion or other significant disciplinary action is considered, the school follows the relevant statutory guidance and considers the child's individual circumstances, safeguarding needs and the safety and wellbeing of the wider school community.

REVIEW, LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Following significant incidents of child-on-child abuse, Fairfield Primary School reviews the circumstances of the incident and the effectiveness of the actions taken.

The school considers whether there are any lessons to be learned and whether changes are required to safeguarding procedures, supervision, behaviour expectations, curriculum provision, staff practice or the wider school environment.

Where appropriate, learning from incidents is used to strengthen preventative work and reduce the likelihood of similar concerns occurring in the future. Relevant actions and improvements are recorded and monitored through the school's safeguarding and school improvement processes.

Key Contacts for Safeguarding and Child Protection at the School

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Robert Birtwhistle

Contact email ffrob.birtwhistle@fairfieldprimary.org.uk

Telephone 01642 581305

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) Nathan Steel

Contact email ffnsteel@fairfieldprimary.org.uk

Telephone 01642 581305

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Heather Clayton

Assistant Headteacher ffhclayton@fairfieldprimary.org.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Abby Hodgson

ffahodgson@fairfieldprimary.org.uk

01642 581305

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Rachael Cooke

ffrcooke@fairfieldprimary.org.uk

01642 581305

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Sarah Clegg

ffsclegg@fairfieldprimary.org.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Laura Marshall

fflmarshall@fairfieldprimary.org.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Catherine Jenkinson

ffcjenkinson@fairfieldprimary.org.uk

Nominated Governor for Safeguarding

Mrs K Knowles

Local Authority Safeguarding Contacts

If you are concerned about an immediate risk to the safety of a child please call Stockton Family Help Point on 01642 130080. This was known previously as the 'Children's Hub'.

Safeguarding Contact Details

Family Help Point – familyhelppoint@stockton.gov.uk

Tel: 01642 130080

(Mon-Thurs 8.30 – 5.00pm / Fri 8.30am – 4.30pm)

Emergency Duty Team (Outside of Office Hours) Tel: 01642 524552

RELATED POLICIES AND KEY GUIDANCE

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (statutory guidance).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 (statutory guidance).
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.
- Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies.
- Current national guidance on sharing nudes and semi-nudes and local safeguarding partnership procedures.
- Fairfield Primary School Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and associated safeguarding procedures.

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements or school practice.

Created and Edited by Mr R Birtwhistle September 2026

