

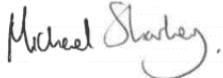


Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School



Approved Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body: 29th January 2020

Signed  Chair of Governors.

To be reviewed: January 2023, or dependent on any legislative changes

Safeguarding Statement:

'Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the safety and welfare of all children and expects all staff, parents, governors and volunteers to share this commitment.'

Our Vision

As a Catholic school that puts Christ at the centre, we are committed to encouraging everyone to 'Be the Best They Can Be'

Values and Ethos

We believe that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God and we value the equality of all, reject discrimination of any kind, and welcome the diversity of different cultures.

The governors, senior leadership team, and all staff (this term shall apply to all volunteer staff members) at Our Lady of the Assumption are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of peer-on-peer abuse both within and beyond the School.

This policy is the School's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute peer-on-peer abuse. It relates to, and should be read alongside, the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and any other relevant policies including, but not limited to, Anti-Bullying (including cyber-bullying), Online Safety and Behaviour.

Our Lady of the Assumption takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in concerns or allegations about peer-on-peer abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused, and those who are alleged to have abused their peers, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter. We recognise that children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of peer-on-peer abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may themselves have been abused by peers, parents or adults in the community.

What is peer-on-peer abuse?

Peer-on-peer abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyber-bullying)
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Upskirting
- Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?

All staff should be alert to the wellbeing of students and to signs of abuse as details in the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by peer-on-peer 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.

Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers without SEND, and additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in children with SEND. e.g. relating possible indicators of abuse to the child's disability; communication barriers.

Some children may be more likely to experience peer-on-peer abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs.

Responding to allegations of abuse

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up”.

We also recognise the gendered nature of peer-on-peer abuse (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be abused and boys will abuse). However, all peer-on-peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Most cases of pupils hurting other pupils will be dealt with under our school's behaviour policy, but this Child Protection and Safeguarding policy will apply to any allegations that raise safeguarding concerns.

If a pupil makes an allegation of abuse against another pupil:

- Staff must record the allegation and tell the DSL, but not investigate it. If the designated safeguarding lead is not available, it should be reported to the deputy safeguarding lead without delay.
- The DSL will contact the local authority children's social care team and follow its advice, as well as the police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence
- The DSL will put a risk assessment and support plan into place for all children involved with a named person they can talk to if needed
- The DSL will contact the children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), if appropriate

We will minimise the risk of peer-on-peer abuse by:

- Challenging any form of derogatory or sexualised language or behaviour, including requesting or sending sexual images
- Being vigilant to issues that particularly affect different genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing type violence with respect to boys
- Ensuring our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent (Protective Behaviours)
- Ensuring pupils know they can talk to staff confidentially by placing posters around the school and reminding children in assemblies or as part of PSHEE in lessons
- Ensuring staff are trained to understand that a pupil harming a peer could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves, and that this would fall under the scope of this policy

Informing parents/carers

Parents/carers will be informed initially by phone and then in a face to face meeting. The nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents/carers whether their child is the child who was abused or who abused another.

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 abused:

- Opportunities for counselling support with the school Wellbeing Manager
- Support through the teaching of Protective Behaviours

For the young person who has abused a peer:

- Opportunities to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way through mentoring and counselling.
- Support from outside agencies through Early Help

Disciplinary action

The School may wish to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved. However, if there are police proceedings underway, or there could be, it is critical that the school works in partnership with the police and/or children's social care.

Where a matter is not of interest to the police and/or children's social care, the school may still need to consider what is the most appropriate action to take to ensure positive behaviour management.

Disciplinary action may be appropriate in order to:

- ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;
- demonstrate to the child/children and others that peer-on-peer abuse can never be tolerated; and
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

Record-keeping

A written record of all allegations of peer-on-peer abuse, discussions and decisions made will be kept in individual children's files, for all pupils involved. This will be separate from the main school file and will only be accessed by the relevant safeguarding staff.

Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School keeps all safeguarding files electronically, using a system called CPOMs.

Staff will submit all concerns in writing to the DSL at the earliest opportunity. This may be after having a verbal conversation, but conversations will also be followed up in writing.