



Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School



Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

To be reviewed: January 2024, 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 child-on-child abuse both within and beyond the school.

This policy is the school's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute child-on-child 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 Positive Behaviour.

Our Lady of the Assumption takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in concerns or allegations about child-on-child abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused, and those who are alleged to have abused other children, 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 child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may themselves have been abused by other children, parents or adults in the community.

What is child-on-child abuse?

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

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- 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)
- 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)
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- 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
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm, and
- 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).

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 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.

Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are 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 child-on-child 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 other children. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys".

We also recognise the gendered nature of child-on-child abuse (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be abused and boys will abuse). However, all child-on-child 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead, but not investigate it. If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is not available, it should be reported to the Deputy Safeguarding Lead without delay.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead will contact the children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), if appropriate
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We will minimise the risk of child-on-child 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 PSHE 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 Pastoral 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 child-on-child abuse can never be tolerated; and
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

Record-keeping

A written record of all allegations of child-on-child 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead at the earliest opportunity. This may be after having a verbal conversation, but conversations will also be followed up in writing.