



Southlands Peer on Peer/child on child Abuse Policy Updated Sept 2021

At Southlands School we believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the school and from the other students.

We recognise that some students will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under the school's Behaviour Policy.

Safeguarding allegations

Occasionally, allegations may be made against students by others in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. It is likely that to be considered a safeguarding allegation against a pupil, some of the following features will be found, however this is not an exclusive list. Each incident will be looked at on a case by case basis.

The allegation:

- is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger pupil or a more vulnerable pupil.
- is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence.
- raises risk factors for other pupils in the school.
- indicates that other pupils may have been affected by this student.
- indicates that young people outside the school may be affected by this student.
- raises concerns around the conduct of pupils outside of school.

Examples of safeguarding issues against a student could include:

Physical Abuse

- violence or the use of force, particularly pre-planned
- forcing or coercing others to use drugs or alcohol

Emotional Abuse

- blackmail or extortion

- threats and intimidation
- overtly controlling behaviour
- coercive control

Sexual Abuse

- indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assaults including rape
- forcing or coercing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting

Sexual Exploitation

- encouraging other children to attend inappropriate parties
- photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts
- providing the contact details of children to third parties / recruiting or enabling contact to occur between unrelated persons for the purpose of CSE

In areas where gangs are prevalent, older students may attempt to recruit younger pupils using any or all of the above methods. Young people suffering from sexual exploitation themselves may be forced to recruit other young people under threat of violence.

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between peers

Southlands school is aware that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, should not be tolerated and is not an inevitable or unavoidable part of growing up. Southlands school is aware that dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

Sexual violence relates to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 – Rape, Assault by Penetration and Sexual Assault. Further definitions are available in Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and colleges – DFE May 2018.

Sexual Harassment can include:

Sexual comments, sexual jokes or taunting, physical behaviour such as non consensual touching, deliberately brushing against someone, displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature. Online Sexual Harassment may include non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos, sexualised online bullying, unwanted sexual comments and messages and sexual exploitation, coercion and threats.

Harmful Sexual Behaviours

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum from normal and developmentally appropriate to inappropriate problematic, abusive and violent. Harmful sexual behaviour can occur online and/offline and simultaneously between the two, it should always be considered in a child protection context. It is worth considering that children displaying harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced their own abuse and trauma and need appropriate support/therapy.

Minimising the risk of safeguarding concerns towards pupils from other students

On occasion, some students will present a safeguarding risk to other students. The school should be informed that the young person raises safeguarding concerns, for example, they are coming back into school following a period in custody or they have experienced serious abuse themselves. These students will need an individual risk management plan to ensure that other pupils are kept safe and they themselves are not laid open to malicious allegations. There is a need to balance the tension between privacy and safeguarding.

What to do following a report of peer on peer/child on child abuse

- When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern. **The allegation should be recorded on CPOMS and tagged as a Cause for Concern. This will then be picked up by the safeguarding team. It is the responsibility of the member of staff receiving the allegation to ensure the concern is recorded on CPOMS. If the allegation is of a serious nature, the safeguarding team should be informed verbally.**
- A factual record should be made of the allegation by the staff member receiving the allegation, this may be in conjunction with the DSL. No attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances. School needs to do all it can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment.
- The DSL should contact children's social care to discuss the case. It is possible that children's social care are already aware of safeguarding concerns around this young person. The DSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a children's social care referral where appropriate.
- The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in the files of both pupils' files on CPOMS.
- If the allegation indicates a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police should be contacted at the earliest opportunity and parents informed (of both the student being complained about and the alleged victim).
- It may be appropriate to exclude the pupil being complained about for a period of time according to the school's behaviour or exclusion policy and procedures.

- Where neither children's social care nor the police accept the complaint, a thorough school investigation should take place into the matter using the school's usual disciplinary procedures. **The outcome(s) of this investigation should be recorded in both/all pupils files on CPOMS**
- In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan. Staff need to be made aware of the risk assessment. Any risk assessment needs to consider:
 - The nature of the abuse.
 - The likelihood of the abuse to re-occur in school.
 - The risk posed to other students and how it can be minimised and managed.
 - The likely effect the abuse may have on the educational attainment of the victim and the perpetrator.
- **A copy of the plan should be kept on CPOMS**. The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.

What to do following a report of sexual violence/sexual harassment/harmful sexual behaviour:

Report the information to the DSL or deputies. Brett MacLennan DSL and Helen Irving DDSL at Melrose site. Log the concern on CPOMS ensuring that the incident is linked with each student and the appropriate members of staff are notified. Seek advice from Senior Leadership Team if necessary.

The Safeguarding team will consider the schools initial response – considerations will include:

- The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed.
- The nature of the alleged incident(s) including: whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour.
- The ages of the children involved;
- The developmental stages of the children involved;
- Any power imbalance between the children?
- Is the alleged incident a one off or a sustained pattern of abuse?
- Any ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school and college staff.
- Any other related issues/wider context.

The victim should be assured that sexual violence/harassment/harmful sexual behaviour is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

A written record of the report needs to be made, this should be uploaded onto CPOMS.

A decision needs to be made whether the report needs to be shared with Children's social care and /or the police. They may provide advice about if a crime has been committed, if the alleged perpetrator should be informed and suggest how the situation should be managed.

Options –

1 – Managed internally –

For example Sexual Harassment, inform the parents about the incident. Education targeting the issue, potentially 1:1 with a suitable member of staff. **Support should be made available to the victim.**

Records should be made on both / all pupils involved and referred to on CPOMS – consider who needs to be informed. Seek advice from the Senior Leadership team if necessary.

2 – Early Help –

For example – non violent harmful sexual behaviour. Inform parents, inform Front Door and **seek advice – which may be to** begin the EHA process.

Records should be made and referred on CPOMS **on all students involved.**

3 – Referral to Children’s Social Care

For example when a child has been harmed or put in immediate danger, inform parents/carers unless there are compelling reasons not to, eg if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk. Children’s social care will then make enquiries to determine if the children involved are in need of protection or other services. A statutory assessment may be made. The safeguarding team will need to work closely with Children’s Social care to ensure that all children are protected and any ongoing investigations are not jeopardised.

A risk assessment will need to be written by school to state how the safety of the victim and any risk posed by the alleged perpetrator will be managed in school.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded and kept in the students individual **CPOMS** folders – (victim and alleged perpetrator).

4 – Reporting to the police.

Any report to the police will generally be made in parallel with a referral to Children’s Social care. Children’s Social care/The police will be able to provide advice if parents and carers should be informed.

Children’s Social Care/The police will need to be consulted about disclosing information to staff and others. They will be able to provide advice on how best to protect the victim and their anonymity.

If police decide not to take action school needs to continue to engage with support for the victim as required. **A support plan may be required.**

A risk assessment will need to be written by school to state how the safety of the victim and any risk posed by the alleged perpetrator will be managed in school. **Any risk assessment will be shared with staff and a copy kept on CPOMS.**

Schools should not wait for the outcome or the start of a police investigation before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator and other children in school. This should not jeopardise any police investigation and liaison will be required with the police.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons should be recorded and kept in the students individual folders on CPOMS – (victim and alleged perpetrator).

If an allegation leads to a caution or conviction this needs to be reflected on a risk assessment, school will need to ensure that relevant protections and in place for all children &/or staff at the school. If the perpetrator remains at the same school as the victim, the school need to be clear as to their expectations regarding the perpetrator now that they have received a conviction or caution – this includes any restrictions the school thinks are reasonable and proportionate with regard to the perpetrators timetable.

School is required to protect both the victim and the perpetrator from bullying and harassment (including online).

Where cases are classified as 'No Further Action' by the police or CPS, or where there is a not guilty verdict school should continue to offer support for the victim and alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated by the police or CPS does not mean that it was unfounded.

Further information –

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges – DFE May 2018

The Brook sexual behaviours traffic light tool.