



CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY

Member of Staff Responsible	Head of Lower School
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Distribution:	All staff

Introduction

Rokeby School (hereafter referred to as ‘the School’) recognises that children are vulnerable to being abused by other children and to abusing other children. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. This includes verbal, physical and digital abuse. All child-on-child abuse is unacceptable. Child-on-child abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as part of “banter,” “having a laugh,” “part of growing up” or “boys being boys.”

We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse within our school and beyond.

In cases where child-on-child abuse is identified we will follow our child protection procedures, as set out in the School’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy & Procedures document, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation.

We recognise that child-on-child abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

- Child sexual exploitation
- Sexting or youth produced digital imagery, whether consensual or non-consensual
- Physical abuse
- Bullying (including cyber-, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Radicalisation
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Causing someone to engage in non-consensual sexual activity, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- Gang association and serious violence (County Lines)

- Initiation type violence and rituals
- Upskirting (though this is less likely to happen in our all boys school)

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in the School such as the:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection & Procedures Policy
- Behaviour, Conduct and Discipline Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy for Boys

This policy has greater focus on child-on-child abuse in the context of sexual harassment and sexual violence to reflect increased Government guidance in this area ((eg Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (2021)); however this policy covers all forms of non-sexual abuse too. It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021) and should be read in conjunction with the Kingston and Richmond Safeguarding Children Partnership's policy and procedures, and any relevant practice guidance issued by it. It also follows the guidance provided in When to Call the Police – Guidance for Schools and Colleges and Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (2021).

Understanding Child-On-Child Abuse

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex or a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

The impact of this behaviour on children can be very distressing and have an impact on academic achievement and emotional health and wellbeing.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence may occur online and offline.

The Context

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

In this policy we recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour (Harmful Sexual Behaviour 'HSB').

We are adopting the NSPCC definition of HSB as, "Sexual behaviours expressed by children...that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child...or adult."

We will also use Simon Hackett's continuum model (see Appendix 1) to understand the range of sexual behaviours and, consequently, help the School decide an appropriate response if HSB

occurs or is alleged. Aspects of the continuum can also be used to assess where other alleged behaviour, such as physical or emotional abuse, falls on the spectrum and help the School decide how to respond.

Vulnerable Groups

We recognise that all children can be at risk; however, we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable. This can include: experience of abuse within their family; living with domestic violence; young people in care; children who go missing; children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities); and children who identify or are perceived as LGBT and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010. In addition, we acknowledge that children who have allegedly abused other children or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable and may have been abused by peers, parents or adults in the community.

Whilst research tells us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by other children (and boys are more likely to be perpetrators), we know that such abuse is not confined to girls. Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviour such as antisocial behaviour. Research also shows that boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs.

All staff should be aware of the indicators of serious violent crime. These include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

Responding to Concerns and Alleged Incidents

All allegations of child-on-child abuse must be taken seriously. Staff should follow the Child Protection Procedures section of the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy & Procedures document if they have a concern regarding child-on-child abuse or if an allegation of such abuse is made to them. The procedures tell staff what to do to fulfil their responsibilities to identify, act on and refer the early signs of abuse. These procedures enable children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously.

All staff must report any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and challenge abusive behaviours between pupils.

Reports of such abuse will be recorded and investigated in line with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and Behaviour, Conduct and Discipline Policy. A thorough investigation into the matter will be conducted and appropriate support will be put in place for involved pupils, as required.

The school understands that even if cases of child-on-child abuse are not reported, such abuse may still be happening. Therefore, staff will be vigilant for the signs of abuse and the school will make efforts to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse.

In addition to following these procedures there are certain other considerations and actions the School will take when responding to specific types of child-on-child abuse incidents. These are outlined below.

Sexual violence and/or sexual harassment incidents

Following an incident, we will consider:

- The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment
- 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. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or staff; and other related issues and wider context?
- Guidance provided in *When to Call the Police – Guidance for Schools and Colleges*

In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, we may decide that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally through utilising the School's Behaviour, Conduct and Discipline Policy and/or the Anti-Bullying Policy and by providing pastoral support.

We may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to Children's Social Care (CSC) following locally agreed protocols. The School will take advice from CSC on the investigation of such allegations and will take all appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of all children involved including the child or children accused of abuse.

Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to CSC. Where a report has been made to the police, the School will consult the police and agree what information can be

disclosed to staff and others, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the relevant agencies to support all children involved (including potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought in order to help us and ensure any actions the School takes do not jeopardise the police investigation.

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the School will update its risk assessment and ensure relevant protections are in place for all children.

Where cases are classified as “no further action” by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, we will continue to offer support to the child who has allegedly been abused and the child who has allegedly carried out the abuse for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the child who has allegedly been abused. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. We will continue to support all parties in this instance.

Regardless of whether a case is managed internally or referred to an external agency, the school will consider any suitable action through reference to our Behaviour, Conduct and Discipline policy. A child (or children) against whom an allegation of abuse has been made may be suspended from the School during the investigation. For any child displaying regular violent behaviour, the school should draw up individual action and support plans in order to reduce the necessity for the use of ‘reasonable force’. The circumstances when a staff member may use such force are set out in the School’s Code of Conduct and follows Government guidance set out in Use of Reasonable Force (2013).

All staff will be trained to manage a report of child-on-child sexual violence or sexual harassment.

Physical abuse

While a clear focus of child-on-child abuse is around sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be abusive.

Physical abuse can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm.

These are equally not tolerated and if it is believed that a crime has been committed, will be reported to the police.

The principles from the Anti-Bullying Policy will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any police investigation will need to take priority.

Online behaviour

Many forms of child-on-child abuse have an element of online behaviour, including behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting.

Policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour can be found in the School's ICT Acceptable Use Policy for Boys, the Code of Conduct and Anti-Bullying Policy.

Where an incident includes an online element the School will seek advice on searching, screening and confiscation.

If indecent images and/or videos of children are discovered at school, staff will follow procedures set out in the School's Code of Conduct. In particular, an immediate referral should be made to the DSL and the police contacted. The images/equipment/device should be confiscated, secured and there should be no attempt to view or delete the images as this could jeopardise necessary criminal action. The police will advise what to do with the images. If the images are of children known to the School, a referral should also be made to CSC.

Prevention

The School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse. The actions we take are noted in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy & Procedures; Anti-Bullying Policy; Behaviour, Conduct and Discipline Policy; and our policy on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education.

Appendix I

Simon Hackett (2010) has proposed a continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant:

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
Developmentally expected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problematic and concerning behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victimising intent or outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physically violent sexual abuse
Socially acceptable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes misuse of power	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highly intrusive
Consensual, mutual, reciprocal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Context for behaviour may be inappropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No overt elements of victimisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator
Shared decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generally consensual and reciprocal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consent issues may be unclear• May lack reciprocity or equal power• May include levels of compulsivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intrusive• Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim• May include elements of expressive violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sadism