

Wellington Primary School and Nursery



Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

Date: September 2019

Date of next review: September 2020

Policy

At Wellington Primary School and Nursery, 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 other pupils. We recognise that some pupils will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under the school's behaviour policy.

We continue to ensure that any form of abuse, or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently, to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 states that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with' (page 19). 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, any system and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.'

Purpose and Aim

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as peer on peer abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of peer on peer abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues. At Wellington Primary School and Nursery, we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy: Anti-Bullying Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy & E-Safety.

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, 2018, highlighting that every assessment of a child, 'must be informed by the views of the child' and within that 'It is important to understand the resilience of the individual child when planning appropriate services. (Working Together) This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

Introduction to abuse and harmful behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings. 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. It is also paramount to identify what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm. 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, 2019). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

Types of abuse

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 e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling.)

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 most appropriate response.

Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault, upskirting)

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 or sexual assault/abuse.

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 (physical: name calling: homophobia.)

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied, and who bully others, may have serious, lasting problems. In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Cyber bullying

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, to harass, threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, under section 1. This states that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information, or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim, would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the

Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18, then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Sexting

Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pictures', 'rude pictures' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture, can happen in any relationship, and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference. However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and

these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, 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 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).

Teenage relationship abuse

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.

Procedure following an allegation

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, which is of a safeguarding nature, it should be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) as soon as possible. If the DSL is not

available, the Head of School or deputy DSL should be informed. They must then report this to the DSL as soon as possible.

A factual record must be kept (as normal safeguarding child protection procedures) and updated with all actions and outcomes. The incident should not be investigated at this time.

The DSL will contact the MASH to discuss the case, and make a formal referral where appropriate.

If the allegation indicates that a potential crime has taken place, the school will refer the case to the police, following advice from MASH. Parents of both the alleged victim and the student being complained about should be informed, this should be discussed during the consultation with the MASH team.

A risk assessment will be considered at this time to protect all parties involved. It may be appropriate to exclude the alleged child against whom the report has been made for a fixed time, in line with our schools behaviour policy and procedures.

Police and social care will lead any investigation, however where neither police nor social care thresholds are met, our school will then undertake a thorough investigation following our school's policies and procedures.

A risk assessment will be considered along with an appropriate supervision plan. Support should be given to all children involved, and they should be involved in the relevant meetings and sign and agree to the plans that are set. The plan will be monitored and review dates set.

For the young person who has been harmed

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends. In which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PHSE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through a EHA/strengthening

Families; early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multiagency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour. The school may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion/seclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

After care

It is important that following the incident, the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help, even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour, either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). In which case, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

Preventative Strategies

At Wellington Primary School and Nursery, we recognise the importance of implementing appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of peer on peer abuse, rather than managing the issues in a reactive way.

Firstly, and most importantly, we understand that peer on peer abuse can, and will occur on any site, even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff.

At our school we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:

Providing PHSE as part of the curriculum, which will help students develop their understanding of acceptable behaviours, healthy relationships and keeping them-selves safe.

Having effective systems within our school for pupils to be able to raise concerns with staff, knowing they will be listened to, supported and valued, and that the issues they raise will be looked into and addressed.

Liaising and working with other professionals to develop robust risk assessments for pupils that are identified as posing a potential risk to other children.

Liaising with specialists to deliver appropriate targeted work to pupils identified as being at potential risk e.g. protective behaviours work.

At all times, we will endeavour to create an open and honest environment, where our staff team feel 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, we provide 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. As a staff team, we do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. We will consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action.

Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool

Many expressions of sexual behaviour are part of healthy development and no cause for concern. However, when children or young people display sexual behaviour that increases their vulnerability or causes harm to someone else, adults have a responsibility to provide support and protection.

This is where Brook's Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool can prove invaluable. Knowing how to distinguish healthy and harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people helps in both supporting the development of healthy sexuality and in the protection of children and young people from harm or abuse.

It may be misleading to label behaviours displayed by young children in the birth to 5 category, or even the 5 to 9 category, as 'sexual'. A child who plays with his or her genitals may or may not be seeking sexual pleasure.

It is not clear how aware younger children are of sexual feeling, and behaviours are more likely to be seen as sexual because of the perception of the adult making the observation.

Influences

Many factors influence sexual behaviour, such as:

- Lack of sex and relationships information
- Lack of privacy
- Boredom, loneliness, anxiety, confusion or depression
- Family/carer conflict or information and support needs
- Lack of rules, appropriate consequences or boundaries
- Emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- Sexual exploitation and/or trafficking
- Communication difficulties
- Sexual excitement or curiosity
- Attention or relationship needs
- Gender issues
- Copying the behaviour of other children and young people
- Copying behaviours seen on the internet or TV

Identifying any of these factors may help you to decide on the most appropriate intervention. However, this is not an exhaustive list and you may need specialist support to clearly identify the reason for the behaviour and the correct intervention.

Dealing with unhealthy sexual behaviour at an early stage can help to prevent subsequent sexually harmful behaviours from developing. Professionals can begin to help young people change their traffic lights from red to amber and/or from amber to green.

Vulnerability

All children and young people are potentially at risk of harm, though some groups may be at increased risk of exposure to, or of developing, unhealthy sexual behaviours. These include children and young people who have a disability, have been abused, or have experienced other disruptions to their development or socialisation. It is important to recognise that in these cases extra support and guidance may be needed.

By identifying sexual behaviours as GREEN, AMBER or RED, professionals across different agencies can work to the same criteria when making decisions and protect children and young people with a unified approach.

All staff have had/will have training on how to use this tool.

DFE guidance on sexual violence and harassment can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719902/Sexual_violence_and_sexual_harassment_between_children_in_schools_and_colleges.pdf