

CHILD ON CHILD ABUSE POLICY

Our school is:

- a safe, **supportive** stimulating learning environment;
- a **team** of respectful, tolerant, open minded citizens;
- a community where everyone **aspires** to be the very best they can be;
- a community of **resilient** lifelong learners;
- a centre of excellence where all achieve **success**.

PURPOSE

This policy sets out a clear and consistent framework for managing child-on-child abuse, in line with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

Written date	November 2023
Written by	Sarah Ferguson
Next Review	November 2024
Summary of changes	New policy linked to Behaviour Policy

Approved By:

Head Teacher **Date**

Chair of Governors **Date**

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1. Statement of intent

Arboretum Primary school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every pupil, both inside and outside the school premises, and is aware that abuse against children can be inflicted by other children. We implement a whole-school preventative approach to managing child-on-child abuse, ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils is at the forefront of all action taken.

This policy sets out a clear and consistent framework for delivering this promise, in line with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

It will be achieved by:

- Creating a culture of mutual respect amongst all pupils.
- Teaching pupils about behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable.
- Identifying and making provision for any pupil that has been subject to abuse.
- Ensuring that members of the governing board, the headteacher and staff members understand their responsibilities under safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, are alert to the signs of child-on-child abuse, and know to refer concerns to the DSL team.
- Ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are transparent, clear and easy to understand for staff, pupils and parents.

The DSL is Mrs Helen Phillips - Headteacher. A team of seven additional DDSL's supports her:

Charmian Hardy – Deputy Head

Tilly Linnecor – SENCO

Sarah Ferguson – Senior Phase Leader

Ali Roberts – Phase Leader

Roxy Darling – Phase Leader

Mandy Carvell – Pastoral Officer

Suzanne Forster – Chair of Governors

2. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- DfE (2018) 'Working together to safeguard children'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023' (KCSIE)

The policy also has regard to the following non-statutory guidance:

- DfE (2015) 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'
- DfE (2018) 'Information sharing'
- DSIT, DCMS and UK Council for Internet Safety (2020) 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'
- National Police Chief's Council (2020) 'When to call the police: guidance for schools and colleges'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- **Data Protection Policy & Freedom of Information Policy**
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- DDAT Staff, Agency Worker and Visitors Code of Conduct Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Children Missing from Education Policy

3. Definitions

"Child-on-child abuse" is defined, for the purposes of this policy, as any form of abuse inflicted by one child or a group of children, i.e. individuals under the age of 18, against another child or group of children. This policy covers child-on-child abuse both inside and outside of school.

"Harmful sexual behaviour" is defined as any sexual behaviour which:

- Does not observe and respect any individuals on the receiving end of the behaviour, e.g. touching someone without their consent.
- Is inappropriate for the age or stage of development of the pupil.
- Is problematic, abusive or violent.
- May cause developmental damage.

Please note: Harmful sexual behaviour can occur online and/or face-to-face, and can also occur simultaneously between the two.

This policy will use the following terms to describe pupils involved in child-on-child abuse:

- **Victim(s)** – the individual(s) against whom the abuse has, or has allegedly, been inflicted.

- **Perpetrator(s)** – the individual(s) exhibiting abusive behaviour against their peers.
- **Alleged perpetrator(s)** – individual(s) against whom a report of abusive behaviour has been made, where guilt has not yet been ascertained.

Please note: The use of the word ‘alleged’ does not mean that the pupil in question is not guilty of child-on-child abuse, that the school does not believe the allegation, or that the allegation will not be taken seriously. Staff will remember that the school has a legal duty of care to all perpetrators and alleged perpetrators who are pupils at the school, including a requirement to ensure they can access their education. Staff will also keep in mind that, in some cases, the abusive behaviour will have been harmful to the perpetrator as well. Victims will be reassured that use of the term ‘alleged perpetrator’ is not an attempt to discredit their allegation.

Staff will also be conscious of the fact that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim or would want to be described this way. Staff will be prepared to use any term which the individual child is most comfortable. Staff will think very carefully about terminology when speaking in front of pupils, and the use of appropriate terminology will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has a duty to:

- Ensure that the school complies with its duties under the above child protection and safeguarding legislation.
- Hold the school to account for its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Guarantee that the policies, procedures and training opportunities in the school are effective and comply with the law at all times.
- Guarantee that the school contributes to multi-agency working in line with the statutory guidance ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’.
- Confirm that the school’s arrangements for handling child-on-child abuse take into account the procedures and practices of the LA as part of the inter-agency safeguarding procedures.
- Appoint a member of staff from the SLT to the role of DSL as an explicit part of the role-holder’s job description.
- Appoint a team of deputy DSLs to provide support to the DSL, ensuring that they are trained to the same standard as the DSL, and that the role is explicit in their job description(s).
- Ensure that the DSL has the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post.
- Ensure the DSL is given the additional time, funding, training, resources and support needed to carry out the role effectively.
- Make sure that pupils are taught about child-on-child abuse, including online , through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Ensure that staff members are appropriately trained to support pupils to be themselves at school, e.g. if they are LGBTQ+.
- Ensure the school has clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible risk of harm in pupils, including clear routes to escalate concerns and clear referral and accountability systems.
- Guarantee that there are procedures in place to handle pupils’ allegations against other pupils.
- Ensure that appropriate disciplinary procedures are in place, as well as policies pertaining to the behaviour of pupils.

- Ensure that procedures are in place to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to child-on-child abuse.
- Make sure that pupils' wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide to protect individual pupils.
- Guarantee that there are systems in place for pupils to express their views and give feedback.
- Ensure that all governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) training at induction that is regularly updated, in order to equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place are effective and support the delivery of a robust, whole-school approach to safeguarding – this training should include, amongst other things, the expectations and responsibilities on staff in relation to filtering and monitoring.

The headteacher has a duty to:

- Safeguard pupils' wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.
- Ensure that the policies and procedures adopted by the governing board, particularly concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect, are followed by staff members.
- Provide staff, upon induction, with the Safeguarding Policy, DDAT Staff, Agency Worker and Visitors Code of Conduct Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, part one and, where appropriate, Annex A of KCSIE, the Behaviour Policy, the Children Missing from Education Policy, online safety training, and the identity of the DSL and any deputies.
- Ensure staff receive training on recognising indicators of abuse and handling disclosures or concerns about a pupil.

The DSL has a duty to:

- Understand and keep up-to-date with local safeguarding arrangements.
- Make the necessary child protection referrals to appropriate agencies.
- Understand when they should consider calling the police, in line with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) [guidance](#).
- Liaise with the headteacher to inform them of safeguarding issues and ongoing enquiries.
- Liaise with the deputy DSL(s) to ensure effective safeguarding outcomes.
- Act as a source of support for pupils who have been abused by, or who have abused, other pupils.
- Lead the school in taking a preventative approach to child-on-child abuse.

Other staff members have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard pupils' wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.
- Provide a safe environment in which pupils can learn.
- Act in accordance with school procedures with the aim of eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to child-on-child abuse.
- Maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.
- Be aware of the signs of abuse and understand that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school, inside and outside the home, and online.
- Adhere to the early help process and understand their role in it.
- Understand and adhere to the procedure to follow in the event that a child confides they are being abused by a peer.
- Understand that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful.
- Understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding issues.

- Support social workers in making decisions about individual children, in collaboration with the DSL.
- Maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality when dealing with individual cases, and always act in the best interest of the child.
- Understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature.
- Build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.

5. Types of child-on-child abuse

Staff will familiarise themselves with the forms that child-on-child abuse can take, including but not limited to:

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which may involve actions such as hitting, throwing, burning, drowning and poisoning, or otherwise causing physical harm to another child.

Sexual abuse

A form of abuse involving sexual activity between children – sexual abuse, for the purposes of this policy, is divided into two categories: sexual violence and sexual harassment.

“**Sexual violence**” encompasses the definitions provided in the Sexual Offences Act 2003, including rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, i.e. non-consensual sexual touching, and causing another child to engage in sexual activity without consent, e.g. forcing someone to touch themselves sexually.

“**Sexual harassment**” refers to any sexual behaviour that could violate another child’s dignity, make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated, and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment, including:

- Sexualised jokes, taunting or comments.
- Physical behaviour, e.g. deliberately brushing against someone.
- Online sexual harassment, including:
 - Upskirting.
 - Sexualised online bullying.
 - Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media.
 - Sexual threats or coercion.

The “**sharing of sexualised imagery**” can also constitute sexual harassment – this refers to the consensual and non-consensual sharing between pupils of sexually explicit content, including that which depicts:

- Another child posing nude or semi-nude.
- Another child touching themselves in a sexual way.
- Any sexual activity involving another child.
- Someone hurting another child sexually.

Staff will be aware that children creating, possessing, and distributing indecent imagery of other children is a criminal offence, even where the imagery is created, possessed, and distributed with the permission of the child depicted, or by the child themselves. Incidents of sharing sexualised imagery will be handled in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Bullying

Many kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying, and bullying can be related to almost anything. Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:

- Verbally

- Physically
- Emotionally
- Online (cyberbullying)

Bullying will generally be handled in line with the Anti-bullying Policy; however, particularly severe instances will be handled in line with this policy and the Safeguarding Policy.

Online abuse

This involves the use of technology and the internet in order to harass, threaten or intimidate another child. Instances of online abuse will be managed in line with this policy, the Online Safety Policy and the Anti-bullying Policy.

Discriminatory behaviour

Discriminatory behaviour encompasses abuse inflicted on a pupil because of their protected characteristics, e.g. religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, culture, or any SEND. Discriminatory behaviour is never acceptable, and all cases will be handled in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, schools will not tolerate unlawful discrimination against pupils because of any protected characteristics they may have.

6. A whole-school approach to tackling child-on-child abuse

The school will continue to involve all members of the school community, including the governing board, staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders, in creating a whole-school approach to child-on-child abuse.

The governing board will ensure that keeping children safe and protected from harm, including child-on-child abuse, is central to all policies and procedures implemented across the school. The school will ensure that procedures for handling child-on-child abuse are transparent, clear and understandable, and are readily accessible to any member of the school community who wishes to access them.

The school will implement a contextual approach to safeguarding pupils against child-on-child abuse, and will ensure that all procedures take into account incidents of child-on-child abuse that occur outside of school or online.

The headteacher will ensure that all staff receive adequate training on handling child-on-child abuse.

School culture

The school will prioritise cultivating a safe and respectful environment amongst pupils, and ensure that all pupils are aware that the school will adopt a **zero-tolerance stance** on child-on-child abuse of any kind.

The school will promote respectful interactions amongst pupils, and all staff will model appropriate and respectful behaviour. Staff will take care to avoid normalising harmful behaviour, particularly harmful sexual behaviour, e.g. by refraining from the use of phrases such as 'boys will be boys' or describing such behaviour as 'just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up', as these phrases can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and normalised abuse.

The school will ensure that wider societal factors that exacerbate the problem of child-on-child abuse are reflected in its approach to creating a preventative culture. This means that individuals who are more likely to be abused, e.g. girls or LGBTQ+ pupils, or who are at increased risk of acting as a perpetrator in abusive situations, e.g. due to abusive home situations or anger management issues, are given additional support from an early stage. The school will have a clear set of values and standards that will be upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life and will be underpinned by the school's policies, procedures and curriculum.

The school will manage all early help and intervention for pupils that show early signs of harmful behaviour, or early signs of being the victim of harmful behaviour, in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Curriculum

The school maintains the position that education surrounding respectful and healthy attitudes and behaviour towards others is the best way to combat child-on-child abuse in the school. All staff, not just teaching staff, will be responsible for passing this knowledge on to pupils.

In order to prevent child-on-child abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, the school will educate pupils about abuse, its forms and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

The school will also ensure that pupils are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. The school will also teach a planned programme of evidence-based RSHE, delivered in regularly timetabled lessons and reinforced throughout the whole curriculum. Such content will be fully inclusive, age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of pupils with SEND), and tackle issues such as the following:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Boundaries and consent
- Stereotyping, prejudice and equality
- How to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour
- LGBTQ+ identities and relationships
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- The concepts of, the laws relating to, and how to access support for the following:
 - Sexual consent
 - Sexual exploitation
 - Abuse
 - Grooming
 - Coercion
 - Harassment
 - Rape
 - Domestic abuse
 - So called honour-based violence, e.g. forced marriage or FGM
- What constitutes as sexual violence and sexual harassment and why these are always unacceptable

Pupils will be allowed an open forum to talk about concerns and sexual behaviour. They will be taught how to raise concerns and make a report, including concerns about their friends or peers, and how a report will be handled.

The curriculum will ensure that pupils of all ages are taught about and understand the concept of consent and its importance in an age-appropriate way.

7. Protecting pupils with increased vulnerability

The school is aware that, while child-on-child abuse can be perpetrated by, and against, anyone, there are certain groups of pupils who are at an increased risk of being on the receiving end of child-on-child abuse.

Staff will be careful to acknowledge the increased risk certain pupils face while refraining from making assumptions about the nature of any reported, witnessed or suspected abuse. Staff will be aware that pupils who are generally at increased risk of abuse can also be perpetrators of abuse.

The school will ensure that action is taken, where possible, before major concerns arise; therefore, incidents of low-level abuse related to the characteristics of the below groups will be handled in line with early help procedures, which are laid out within the Safeguarding Policy.

Girls

Staff will be aware that girls are more likely to be on the receiving end of child-on-child sexual abuse than their male counterparts, and that sexual violence and harassment against girls is very common and accounts for the majority of cases.

Taking into account that sexual harassment against girls is widespread in society, and largely based in gender inequality, the school will aim to encourage gender equality in all aspects of its operations. The school will aim to promote and nurture healthy attitudes and relationships amongst pupils of all genders, e.g. by challenging and working to deconstruct gender stereotypes in school.

Staff will challenge any incidents of misogynistic language or gender-based abuse, whether of a sexualised nature or not, as holding misogynistic viewpoints can make a pupil more likely to commit sexualised violence in the future.

LGBTQ+ pupils

Staff will be aware that pupils who are LGBTQ+, or are perceived to be LGBTQ+ whether they are or not, are more likely to be targeted by their peers, e.g. for discriminatory bullying.

The school will hold a zero-tolerance policy towards pupils using homophobic, biphobic or transphobic language, regardless of whether or not the language is being directed at another individual. Every staff member will be individually responsible for challenging such behaviour and making clear to all pupils that any abuse towards pupils who are LGBTQ+, or who are perceived to be, is unacceptable.

The school will ensure that it is able to provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ pupils to speak out and/or share their concerns with members of staff.

Pupils with SEND

Staff will be aware that pupils with SEND are at increased risk of child-on-child abuse, as they are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. The school will ensure that there are mechanisms in place to support pupils with SEND in reporting abuse, with due regard that these pupils may face additional barriers to reporting abuse and that spotting signs of abuse in these pupils may be harder.

Staff will avoid assuming that changes in the behaviour of pupils with SEND are as a result of their needs or disability, and will report any concerns to the DSL. The DSL and the SENCO will collaborate in the handling of instances of abuse towards pupils with SEND to ensure that barriers to communication can be effectively managed.

At our school, the SENCO is also a member of the DSL team.

Black, Asian and pupils from ethnic minorities

Staff will be aware that minority ethnic pupils, particularly black pupils, may be less likely to report abuse committed against them, and may be more likely to be misidentified as perpetrators of abuse.

The school will hold a zero-tolerance policy towards pupils using racist language, regardless of whether the language is being directed at another individual. Every staff member will be individually responsible for challenging such behaviour and making clear to all pupils that any abuse towards pupils from BAME backgrounds is unacceptable.

Staff will also be aware that pupils from ethnic minorities that are also female, SEND, LGBTQ+, or perceived LGBTQ+ are likely to face increased abuse due to the intersection of these identities. Staff will be vigilant with regard to these pupils and the ways in which other pupils behave towards them, in order to ensure any incidents or potential incidents can be handled as soon as they occur.

8. Channels for pupils to report abuse

Pupils will be able to report incidents of child-on-child abuse or concerns about the behaviour of their peers through the following channels:

- Speaking to an adult in their classroom – Teacher/Teaching Assistant
- Speaking to any member of the SLT/SMT team who are also DSLs.
- Disclosing to a member of the DSL team situated in the pastoral office.
- Making a disclosure to any member of schools staff – Play team, office staff etc.

All channels for reporting abuse will be promoted and publicised throughout the school, and all pupils will be made aware of how, and to whom, to report incidents of abuse. The school will also ensure pupils are aware of the type of behaviours that should be reported such as fighting, inappropriate comments, excluding one child from social arrangements and inappropriate on-line comments. This list is not exhaustive and due to relational practice at Arboretum Primary school, children should feel they can raise anything that troubles them.

The school will maintain a culture that promotes reporting abuse, whether the individual reporting is the victim, a bystander, or a friend or relative of the victim. Staff will address any incidents of pupils equating reporting abuse to ‘snitching’ or being a ‘tattle-tale’, and will convey to these pupils how important it is to report abuse to help tackle the wider problem of child-on-child abuse in schools.

9. Staff identifying and reporting concerns

Staff will receive safeguarding training as part of their induction, and **annual** refresher training. This training will include guidance on how to recognise indicators of child-on-child abuse of all kinds, and how to distinguish between behaviour, particularly sexual behaviour, that is developmentally appropriate and that which is harmful.

When identifying pupils at risk of potential harm or who have been harmed by their peers, staff members will look out for a number of indicators including, but not limited to, the following:

- Injuries in unusual places
- Lack of concentration and acting withdrawn
- Knowledge ahead of their age, e.g. sexual knowledge
- Use of explicit language
- Fear of abandonment
- Depression and low self-esteem
- Changes to their social group, e.g. spending time with older pupils, or social isolation
- Alcohol or substance misuse

Where a pupil is displaying signs of being impacted by child-on-child abuse, or perpetrating child-on-child abuse, staff will report this to the DSL as soon as is reasonably practical.

Staff will challenge all instances of abusive or harmful behaviour displayed by pupils that they witness or are reported to them. Staff will not wait for concerns or situations between pupils to escalate before intervening; minor or singular instances of abusive behaviour will still be brought to the attention of the DSL team and the pupil will always be spoken to about their behaviour and disciplined, where appropriate, in line with the Behaviour Policy.

Staff will enforce the school’s policy that no known and substantiated incident of abusive or harmful behaviour between pupils will occur without consequences for the perpetrator(s), although these consequences will be decided on a case-by-case basis and will take into account the views of any victims involved, the context of the behaviour and the severity of the incident.

Staff will be aware that just because a victim of abusive behaviour does not report the behaviour or react to the behaviour negatively, this does not mean that the behaviour is not still harmful; staff will be made aware that some pupils will be uncomfortable challenging their peers on inappropriate behaviour, or may not be aware themselves that the behaviour is abusive.

Staff will ensure that both the perpetrator(s), or alleged perpetrator(s), and the victim(s) understand that such behaviour inflicted by or against them was unacceptable; staff will be made aware that failing to challenge a pupil on unacceptable behaviour can normalise that behaviour for all pupils.

Staff will remain cognisant that downplaying abusive behaviour can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour throughout the school and, as such, will treat all displays or reports of abusive behaviour with the utmost severity and sensitivity in order to reinforce to all pupils that such behaviour will not be tolerated, and to prevent further instances of this behaviour in the future.

10. Handling allegations of abuse against pupils

Staff will always, when handling an incident of alleged abuse, take the report of the victim seriously, reassure them, support them and work to keep them safe. Victims will never be made to feel like they are causing a problem by reporting **any** form of abuse, be made to feel ashamed, or have their experience minimised by staff at the school. Staff will be aware of the importance of not downplaying any reports of abuse; however, will ensure that they remain sympathetic, and observant of the duty of care, to both the alleged perpetrator(s) and victim(s).

If a friend of a victim makes a report or a member of staff overhears a conversation, staff will take action – they will never assume that someone else will deal with it, or wait for a disclosure. The basic principles remain the same as when a victim reports an incident; however, staff will consider why the victim has not chosen to make a report themselves, and the discussion will be handled sensitively. If staff are in any doubt, they will speak to the DSL team. All staff will be aware that pupils may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. This will not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL team if they have any concerns.

Where an alleged incident took place away from the school or online but involved pupils from the school, the school's duty to safeguard pupils remains the same and the incident will be treated equally as seriously and investigated in the same way as an incident that took place in school.

All staff will be trained to handle disclosures. Effective safeguarding practice includes:

- Never promising confidentiality at the initial stage.
- Only sharing the report with those necessary for its progression.
- Explaining to the victim what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to.
- Recognising that the person the pupil chose to disclose the information to is in a position of trust.
- Being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed.
- Not asking leading questions and only prompting the pupil with open questions.
- Waiting until the end of the disclosure to immediately write a thorough summary. If notes must be taken during the disclosure; staff will ensure they remain engaged and not appear distracted.
- Understanding that victims may not disclose the whole picture immediately and may be more comfortable providing information on a step-by-step basis.
- Ensuring that dialogue is kept open and encouraged.
- Only recording the facts as the pupil presents them – not the opinions of the note taker.
- Where the report includes an online element, being aware of searching, screening and confiscation advice.

- Wherever possible, managing disclosures with two staff members present (preferably with the DSL or a member of the DSL team).
- Informing the DSL or member of the DSL team as soon as possible after the disclosure if they could not be involved in the disclosure.

The DSL will be informed of any allegations of abuse against pupils with SEND. They will record the incident on the school's safeguarding system - CPOMS, then working with the SENCO, decide what course of action is necessary, with the best interests of the pupil in mind at all times.

Confidentiality

The school will only engage staff and agencies required to support the victim and/or be involved in any investigation. If a victim asks the school not to tell anyone about the disclosure, the school will not make this promise. The school will adhere to the principle that, even without the victim's consent, the information may still be lawfully shared if it is in the public interest and protects children from harm.

The DSL will consider the following when making confidentiality decisions:

- Parents will be informed unless it will place the victim at greater risk
- If a pupil is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger or has been harmed, a referral will be made to children's social care

The DSL will weigh the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and others. If a referral is made against the victim's wishes, it will be done so extremely carefully and the reasons for referral will be explained to the victim. Appropriate specialist support will always be offered.

Taking action following a disclosure

The DSL or a deputy will decide the school's initial response, taking into consideration:

- The victim's wishes.
- The nature of the incident.
- The ages and developmental stages of the pupils involved.
- Any power imbalance between the pupils.
- Whether the incident is a one-off or part of a pattern.
- Any ongoing risks.
- Any related issues and the wider context, such as whether there are wider environmental factors in a pupil's life that threaten their safety and/or welfare.
- The best interests of the pupil.

Immediate consideration will be given as to how to support the victim, alleged perpetrator and any other pupils involved.

A detailed account of the disclosure will be documented on the schools safeguarding system – CPOMS.

Where a pupil has been involved in harmful sexual behaviour, e.g. inappropriate behaviour for their age, the school will help the pupil to move forward from the incident by supporting them in adopting more positive behaviour patterns and attitudes. A risk assessment produced by the phase leader is undertaken to protect the victim, ensuring that the perpetrator is not able to be in a 1 to 1 situation with the victim. Relevant staff are made aware of the situation to ensure vigilance. Where the DSL team deem that the behaviour is cognisant with harmful sexual behaviour, a referral will be made to social care with the aim of providing additional support to the child and family.

Parents will be informed unless there is a compelling reason not to do so, e.g. if the referral will place the perpetrator or victim at risk. This decision will be made in consultation with children's social care.

The school will not wait for the outcome of an investigation before protecting the victim and other children.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the DSL and the headteacher.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **November 2024.**