



St Michael's CE (Controlled) Junior School

Managing Allegations Against Pupils (including Peer on Peer Abuse) Policy

Creation Date:		
Issue Date:	January 2019	
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Signature(s)		
Next Review Date:	January 2020	
Remarks	Updated in January 2019 to include Peer on Peer abuse	

Managing allegations against other pupils

DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2018) says that 'governing bodies should ensure that there are procedures in place to handle allegations against other children'. The guidance also states the importance of minimising the risks of peer-on- peer abuse. In most instances, the conduct of students towards each other will be covered by the school's behaviour policy. Some allegations may be of such a serious nature that they may raise safeguarding concerns. These allegations are most likely to include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. It is also likely that incidents dealt with under this policy will involve older students and their behaviour towards younger students or those who are vulnerable.

The safeguarding implications of sexual activity between young peopleⁱ

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

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment as well as their emotional well-being. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support.

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are extremely complex to manage. It is essential that victims are protected, offered appropriate support and every effort is made to ensure their education is not disrupted. There will be a presumption of innocence until a full investigation has been undertaken. It is also important that other children, adult students and school and college staff are supported and protected as appropriate.

The intervention of child protection agencies in situations involving sexual activity between children can require difficult professional judgments. Some situations are statutorily clear – for example, a child under the age of 13 cannot consent to sexual activity. But it will not necessarily be appropriate to initiate safeguarding procedures where sexual activity involving children and young people below the age of legal consent (16 years) comes to notice. In our society generally the age at which children become sexually active has steadily dropped. It is important to distinguish between consensual sexual activity between children of a similar age (where at least one is below the age of consent), and sexual activity involving a power imbalance, or some form of coercion or exploitation. It may also be difficult to be sure that what has or has been alleged to have taken place definitely does have a sexual component.

- As usual, important decisions should be made on a case by case basis, on the basis of an assessment of the children's best interests. Referral under safeguarding arrangements may be necessary, guided by an assessment of the extent to which a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Key specific considerations will include:
 - The age, maturity and understanding of the children;
 - Any disability or special needs of the children;
 - Their social and family circumstance;
 - Any evidence in the behaviour or presentation of the children that might suggest they have been harmed;
 - Any evidence of pressure to engage in sexual activity;
 - Any indication of sexual exploitation.

There are also contextual factors. Gender, sexuality, race and levels of sexual knowledge can all be used to exert power. A sexual predator may sometimes be a woman or girl and the victim a boy

Policy

At St. Michael's CE Junior 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 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.

Peer on Peer Abuse

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers and this will be dealt with under our child protection policy and in line with KCSiE (2018)

We are clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up

We will minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse by:-

Prevention:

- Taking a whole school approach to safeguarding & child protection
- Providing training to staff

- Providing a clear set of values and standards, underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, and by a planned programme of evidence based content delivered through the curriculum.
- Engaging with specialist support and interventions.

Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment:

- Children making a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment will be taken seriously, kept safe and be well supported.
- If the report includes an online element staff will be mindful of the Searching, Screening and Confiscation: advice for schools (DfE 2018) guidance.
- Staff taking the report will inform the DSL or their Deputy as soon as practicably possible but at least within 24 hours.
- Staff taking a report will never promise confidentiality.
- Parents or carers will normally be informed (unless this would put the child at greater risk).
- If a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral will be made to Children's Social Care (01329 225379).

Risk Assessment:-

Following a report the DSL will make an immediate risk and needs assessment on a case-by-case basis.

The Risk assessment will consider;

- The victim, especially their protection and support.
- The alleged perpetrator, their support needs and any discipline action.
- All other children at the school.
- The victim and the alleged perpetrator sharing classes and space at school.

The risk assessment will be recorded and kept under review.

Where there has been other professional intervention and/or other specialist risk assessments, these professional assessments will be used to inform the school's approach to supporting and protecting pupils.

Action: The DSL will consider:-

- The wishes of the victim.
- The nature of the incident including whether a crime has been committed and the harm caused.
- Ages of the children involved.

- Developmental stages of the children.
- Any power imbalance between the children.
- Any previous incidents.
- Ongoing risks.
- Other related issues or wider context.

Options: The DSL will manage the report with the following options:-

- Manage internally
- Early Help
- Refer to Childrens Social Care
- Report to the police (generally in parallel with a referral to Social Care)

Ongoing Response:

- The DSL will manage each report on a case by case basis and will keep the risk assessment under review.
- Where there is a criminal investigation into a rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, the alleged perpetrator should be removed from any classes they share with the victim.
- The DSL will consider how best to keep the victim and perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport where appropriate.
- Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, the school will take suitable action. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same school or college would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other pupils or students).
- Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, the school or college will, if it has not already, consider any suitable sanctions in light of their behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion. Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school or college, the principle would be to continue keeping the victim and perpetrator in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school and college premises and transport. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.
- The victim, alleged perpetrator and other witnesses (children& adults) will receive appropriate support and safeguards on a case-by-case basis.
- The school will take any disciplinary action against the alleged perpetrator in line with behaviour and discipline in schools.

- The school recognises that taking disciplinary action and providing appropriate support are not mutually exclusive actions and will occur at the same time if necessary.

Physical Abuse

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

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.

References: –

KCSiE (DfE 2018)

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges (DfE 2018)

Allegations against Pupils

Prevention

As a school we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:

- Providing a developmentally appropriate PSHE syllabus which develops students understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe;
- Having systems in place for any student to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued;
- Delivering targeted work on assertiveness and keeping safe to those pupils identified as being at risk;
- Developing robust risk assessments & providing targeted work for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils.

Allegations against other pupils which are safeguarding issues

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.

If 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.

Examples of safeguarding issues against a student could include:

Physical Abuse

- Violence, particularly pre-planned
- Forcing others to use drugs or alcohol

Emotional Abuse

- Blackmail or extortion
- Threats and intimidation

Sexual Abuse

- Indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assaults
- Forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting

Sexual Exploitation

- Encouraging other children to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour (For example - having an older boyfriend/girlfriend, associating with unknown adults or other sexually exploited children, staying out overnight)
- Photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts

Procedure:-

- When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern. If there is a safeguarding concern the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be informed.
- A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances.

- The DSL should contact the children's reception team (CRT) to discuss the case. The DSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a referral where appropriate.
 - If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place, CRT will refer the case to the multi-agency agency safeguarding hub where the police will become involved.
 - Parents, of both the student being complained about and the alleged victim, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral.
 - 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.
 - It may be appropriate to exclude the pupil being complained about for a period of time according to the school's behaviour policy and procedures.
 - Where neither social services nor the police accept the complaint, a thorough school investigation should take place into the matter using the school's usual disciplinary procedures.
 - In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan.
 - The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.
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