

**CHILD ON CHILD ABUSE POLICY**

**Introduction**

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 (draft consultation) states that “A**l**l staff should be clear about their School’s or College’s Policy and Procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse”. Governing Bodies and Proprietors should ensure that their Child Protection Policy includes:

* Procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse
* The systems in place (should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously
* How allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with
* Clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported
* A recognition that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported
* A statement which makes clear there should be a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, and it should never be passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys” as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children
* Recognition that is more likely that girls will be victims and boy s’ perpetrators, but that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously, and the different forms of child-on-child abuse can take, such as:
* Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
* Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (also known as teenage relationship abuse)
* Physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
* Sexual violence and sexual harassment.
* Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery. Advice can be found:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

* Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
* Upskirting (which is a criminal offence), which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm
* Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

**Purpose**

Reynolds Training Academy is committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse. Ensuring that Academy / College Staff protect Learner’s by, wherever possible, being aware of the nature and level of risk that young people are exposed to, having a clear and comprehensive strategy specific to that Learner’s safeguarding context and having a whole Academy / College contextual safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse. This part of the Policy is preventative in its response to child-on-child abuse by raising awareness of issues, supporting Staff in identifying them with young people, and providing appropriate response and intervention that is followed consistently across the whole college workforce.

**Preventative Strategies**

It is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of child-on-child abuse rather than only manage the issues in a reactive way. It is important to recognise that child-on-child abuse can 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. This involves Staff analysing any incidents for trends, patterns and identifying any areas around the setting that may appear to be ‘less safe’. Staff should also have access to regular CPD and training to ensure a consistent approach to managing child-on-child issues.

It is important that staff do not dismiss issues as ‘banter’ or ‘growing up’ or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that Staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. If Staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a young person seeking no further help or advice.

**Signposting**

It is important that signposting is available to young people if they don’t feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. An anonymous safeguarding QR Code is available around the Academy facilities and should be used to alert an issue.

**Types of Abuse**

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive:

* Physical abuse e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling etc.)
* Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse/sexual violence and sexual harassment e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault etc).Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault, rape or abuse.

Sexual Violence refers to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>

* Online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos, sexualised online bullying, unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media, sexual exploitation, coercion and threats.
* Upskirting typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttock to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/upskirting-law-comes-into-force>.
* Bullying (inclusive of all types) can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups. For example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a young person is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between
* Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (formally known as sexting)
* 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

**Expected action taken from all Staff**

All Staff should be alert to the well-being of children and young people and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. It is important to deal with a situation of child-on-child abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get a true, accurate account of the facts around what has happened, so that nothing is forgotten. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the young person and caregivers when they become involved.

**Next Steps**

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

For the young person who has been harmed (alleged victim) 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.

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour (alleged perpetrator) 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.

Support from identified services may be necessary through an 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.

The Academy may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

**Disciplinary Action**

In some circumstances the Academy may need to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any young person involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it and attitudes underlying it. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including:

* to ensure the young person(s) take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour
* to demonstrate to the young person and others that child on child abuse can never be tolerated
* to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other young people

However, these considerations must be balanced against the young person(s) own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns. Before, deciding on appropriate action the Academy will always consider its duty to safeguard all children and young people from harm; the underlying reasons for a young person’s behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the young person; the risk that the young person(s) may pose to other young people; and the severity of the child-on-child abuse and the causes of it.

The Academy will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed moves or exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognising that even if this is ultimately deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this Policy may still be required.

Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other young people in the Academy.

**Review of Circumstances**

Following any incident of harm, it is necessary for the Academy to consider if anything could have been done differently. This demonstrates how proactive the Academy is in continually reviewing its Policies and systems in effectively keeping children safe.

The following Policies should be read in conjunction with this Policy:

* Safeguarding and Welfare Policy
* Low Level Safeguarding Concern Policy
* Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy
* E-Safety Policy
* Acceptable Use Statement for Internet and Social Media
* Physical Contact between Staff and Learners Policy
* Students Missing from Education Policy
* Learner Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure Policy
* Searching and Confiscation Policy
* Data Protection Policy

RTA – Child on Child Abuse Policy – last reviewed 2-9-2024