

# **Peer on Peer Abuse Policy**

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**Queen's College, Taunton**

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## Contents

1	The school’s responsibilities .....	3
2	This Policy .....	3
3	Understanding peer-on-peer abuse .....	4
4	What is contextual safeguarding .....	4
5	How prevalent is peer-on-peer abuse? .....	5
6	When does behaviour become problematic or abusive? .....	5
7	Other behaviour.....	6
8	How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?.....	7
9	Are some children particularly vulnerable to abusing or being abused by their peers? .....	8
10	A whole school approach.....	8
11	Multi-agency working .....	9
12	Responding to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse.....	10
13	What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s)? .....	11
14	How will the School respond to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse..	11
15	Individual risk and needs assessment.....	12
16	Disciplinary action.....	12
17	On-going proactive work to a contextual whole-school approach.....	13
Appendix A	Examples of Further Resources.....	15
Appendix B	Contact details for local agencies and summary of referral pathways....	16
Appendix C	Referral Pathway .....	17

## Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

### 1 The school's responsibilities:

The Governors, Senior Leadership Team, and all staff and volunteers at Queen's College, Taunton (the School) are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of peer-on-peer abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the School. In particular, we:

- 1.1 believe that in order to protect children, all schools should (a) be aware of the level and nature of risk to which their students are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context; and (b) take a contextual whole-school approach to preventing and responding to peer-on-peer abuse;
- 1.2 regard the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure, and do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to peer-on-peer abuse in response to alleged incidents of it;
- 1.3 recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to ensure that our students are safe; and
- 1.4 encourage parents to hold us to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers, they should inform the School so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

### 2 This Policy:

- 2.1 sets out our strategy for preventing, identifying and appropriately managing peer-on-peer abuse.
- 2.2 applies to all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff, volunteers, contractors etc. It is reviewed annually, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which students are or may be exposed. This review involves and is informed by an assessment of the impact and effectiveness of this policy over the previous year;
- 2.3 is the School's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute peer-on-peer abuse.
- 2.4 It relates to, and should be read alongside, the School's child protection and safeguarding policy and any other relevant policies including, but not limited to, anti-bullying (including cyber-bullying), youth produced sexual imagery, online safety, children missing in education, student behaviour and discipline, and exclusions;
- 2.5 does not use the term 'victim' and/or 'perpetrator'. This is because our School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in allegations of or concerns about peer-on-peer abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused and those who are alleged to have abused their peers, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter. Research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of peer-on-peer abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers;<sup>2</sup>
- 2.6 uses the terms 'child' and 'children', which is defined for the purposes of this policy as a person aged under 18. We have nonetheless chosen not to restrict our approach to

peer-on-peer abuse under this policy to children but instead to adopt a wider interpretation of our safeguarding responsibilities so that they apply to all students, regardless of age. Although the starting point is that the School's response to peer-on-peer abuse should be the same for all students, regardless of age, there may be some additional considerations in relation to a student aged 18 or over in terms of how local agencies and/or partners respond. This, for example, is likely to be different on the part of local authorities, given that their safeguarding duties are limited, in the case of children's social care services - save for a number of specific exceptions<sup>4</sup> - to children and, in the case of adult social care services, to adults with care and support needs. Similarly, the School's response to incidents involving the exchange of youth produced sexual imagery will need to differ depending on the age of the students involved – see Appendix C for further information. There is also likely to be a more significant criminal justice response in relation to any student responsible for abuse who is aged 18 or over;

- 2.7 is compliant with the statutory guidance on peer-on-peer abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2018);
- 2.8 should, if relevant according to the concerns/allegations raised, be read in conjunction with the DfE's advice on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges (May 2018), and any other advice and guidance referred to within it, as appropriate;<sup>6</sup>
- 2.9 should be read in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LSCB) Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

### **3 Understanding peer-on-peer abuse:**

- 3.1 What is peer-on-peer abuse?  
For these purposes, peer-on-peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate).
- 3.2 Peer-on-peer abuse can take various forms, including: serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence,<sup>2</sup> child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or gender-based violence.  
These types of abuse rarely take place in isolation and often indicate wider safeguarding concerns. For example, a teenage girl may be in a sexually exploitative relationship with a teenage boy who is himself being physically abused by a family member or by older boys. Equally, sexual bullying in schools and other settings can result in the sexual exploitation of children by their peers. For 16 and 17 year olds who are in abusive relationships, what may appear to be a case of domestic violence may also involve sexual exploitation. Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives and spaces in which they spend their time. Any response to peer-on-peer abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of peer-on-peer abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's experiences.<sup>17</sup> This can be done by adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that our response to incidents of peer-on-peer abuse takes into account any potential complexity.

### **4 What is contextual safeguarding?**

This policy encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which:

- 4.1 is an approach to safeguarding children that recognises their experiences of significant harm beyond their families, and seeks to include these contexts within prevention, identification, assessment and intervention safeguarding activities;
- 4.2 recognises that as children enter adolescence they spend increasing amounts of time outside of the home in public environments (including on the internet) within which they may experience abuse; and
- 4.3 considers interventions to change the systems or social conditions of the environments in which abuse has occurred. For example, rather than move a child from a school, professionals could work with the school leadership and student body to challenge harmful, gendered school cultures, thus improving the pre-existing school environment.<sup>18</sup>

## 5 **How prevalent is peer-on-peer abuse?**

Research suggests that peer-on-peer abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse affecting children in the UK.<sup>20</sup> For example, [more than four in ten teenage schoolgirls aged between 13 and 17 in England have experienced sexual coercion (Barter et al 2015).

Two thirds of contact sexual abuse experienced by children aged 17 or under was committed by someone who was also aged 17 or under (Radford et al 2011)].

## 6 **When does behaviour become problematic or abusive?**<sup>23</sup>

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.

### 6.1 Sexual behaviours

As the NSPCC explains “children's sexual behaviours exist on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to highly abnormal and abusive. [Staff] should recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour... As both problematic and abusive sexual behaviours are developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage, a useful umbrella term is harmful sexual behaviours or HSB.” This term has been adopted widely in the field, and is used throughout the NSPCC’s and Research in Practice’s Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, as well as this policy.

For the purpose of the NSPCC’s and Research in Practice’s Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, and as adopted in this policy, harmful sexual behaviours are defined 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.

Simon Hackett has proposed the following continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children, which may be helpful when seeking to understand a student's sexual behaviour and deciding how to respond to it.

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

6.2 Hackett's continuum relates exclusively to sexual behaviour and is not exhaustive. The Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool can also be very helpful in identifying sexual behaviours by children.

6.3 Staff should always use their professional judgment and discuss any concerns with the DSL. Where an (alleged) incident involves a report of sexually harmful behaviour, staff should consult the DfE's Advice.

## 7 Other behaviour

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on aspects of Hackett's continuum to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, whether it:

- 7.1 is socially acceptable
- 7.2 involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time
- 7.3 is socially acceptable within the peer group
- 7.4 is problematic and concerning
- 7.5 involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
- 7.6 involves an element of coercion or pre-planning
- 7.7 involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power
- 7.8 involves a misuse of power  
It should be borne in mind that there are some aspects of Hackett's continuum which may not of course be relevant or appropriate to consider in response to other alleged behaviour involving reports of other types of abuse. For example, the issue of consent and the nuances around it, is unlikely to apply in the same way in cases where the alleged behaviour is reported to involve emotional and/or physical abuse, as it could in cases of alleged sexual behaviour which is reported to involve harmful sexual behaviour.
- 7.9 In addition, the School could be required to deal with cases involving a range of alleged behaviours including sexual behaviour, emotional, physical behaviour and digital behaviour.
- 7.10 It should also be recognised that the same behaviour presented by different children may be understood at different points on a spectrum, depending on the particular context. For example, an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery may be inappropriate in one context, for example, when exchanged between two children in a consenting relationship, and abusive in another, for example, when it is (a) shared

without the consent of the child in the image; (b) produced as a result of coercion; or (c) used to pressure the child into engaging in other sexual behaviours.

- 7.11 Behaviour which is not abusive at first may potentially become abusive quickly or over time. Intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour which may be displayed by a child is vital, and could potentially prevent their behaviour from progressing on a continuum to become problematic, abusive and/or violent - and ultimately requiring (greater/more formal) engagement with specialist external and/or statutory agencies. For example, a physical fight between two children may not constitute peer-on-peer abuse where the fight is a one-off incident, but may be abusive where the child's/children's behaviour subsequently deteriorates into a pattern of bullying behaviour and requires a safeguarding response from a multi-agency partnership – including a statutory assessment of whether this has led, for example, to a risk of significant harm to a child.
- 7.12 The importance of intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour does not just apply on an individual student basis, but could also apply across the student body.
- 7.13 Behaviour generally considered inappropriate may in fact indicate emerging concerning behaviour to which schools need to take a whole-school approach in order to prevent escalation. For example, where multiple boys are making inappropriate comments about girls, one-off sanctions are unlikely to be effective and wider actions should be considered, such as arranging for an external person to deliver a year group intervention exercise; revising the School's SRE programme; and/or a discussion around whether anything is happening within the wider community that might be affecting the students' behaviour.
- 7.14 It will also be important to consider the wider context in which the alleged behaviour is reported to have occurred, and which may trigger the need for a referral. For example, some behaviour that is considered inappropriate may be capable of being dealt with internally. However, if there are wider safeguarding concerns relating to the child/children in question, a referral to statutory agencies may be necessary. Where the behaviour which is the subject of the concern(s)/allegation(s) is considered or suspected by the DSL to constitute peer-on-peer abuse, the School will follow the procedures set out below.

## **8 How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?**

All staff should be alert to the well-being of students and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by peer-on-peer abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ.

Signs that a child may be suffering from peer-on-peer abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse (Appendix 2 of the child protection policy for indicators of abuse) and can include:

- 8.1 failing to attend school, disengaging from classes or struggling to carry out school related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected;
- 8.2 physical injuries;
- 8.3 experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing;
- 8.4 becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much;

- 8.5 broader changes in behaviour including alcohol or substance misuse;
- 8.6 changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age; abusive behaviour towards others.

Abuse affects children very differently. The above list is by no means exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse. The behaviour that children present with will depend on their particular circumstances. Rather than checking behaviour against a list, staff are trained to be alert to behaviour that might cause concerns, to think about what the behaviour might signify, to encourage children to share with them any underlying reasons for their behaviour, and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents/carers so that the cause(s) of their behaviour can be investigated.

Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for his/her age, staff should always consider whether an underlying concern is contributing to their behaviour (for example, whether the child is being harmed or abused by their peers) and, if so, what the concern is and how the child can be supported going forwards.

The power dynamic that can exist between children is also very important when identifying and responding to their behaviour: in all cases of peer-on-peer abuse, a power imbalance will exist within the relationship. This inequality will not necessarily be the result of an age gap between the child responsible for the abuse and the child being abused. It may, for example, be the result of their

relative social or economic status. Equally, while children who abuse may have power over those who they are abusing, they may be simultaneously powerless to others.

## 9 **Are some children particularly vulnerable to abusing or being abused by their peers?**

- 9.1 Any child can be vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to the strength of peer influence during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers. For example, an image of a child could be shared, following which they could become more vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to how others now perceive them, regardless of any characteristics which may be inherent in them and/or their family. Peer group dynamics can also play an important role in determining a child's vulnerability to such abuse. For example, children who are more likely to follow others and/or who are socially isolated from their peers may be more vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse. Children who are questioning or exploring their sexuality may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their peers.

Research suggests that peer-on-peer abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure will also be different. As a result, schools need to explore the gender dynamics of peer-on-peer abuse within their settings, and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender-imbalanced environments.<sup>33</sup>

## 10 **A whole school approach**

How can the School raise awareness of and prevent peer-on-peer abuse?

- 10.1 School environment

The School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of peer-on-peer abuse by:

- 10.1.1 Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, students, and parents about this issue. This includes:
- 10.1.2 training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes (a) Contextual Safeguarding; (b) the identification and classification of specific behaviours; and (c) the importance of taking seriously all forms of peer-on-peer abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of peer-on-peer abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing.
- 10.1.3 educating children about the nature and prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum. For example, by addressing gender inequality in a statistics class, or by reviewing literature in an English class which addresses bullying and its effect on mental health. students are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse. They are regularly informed about the School's approach to such issues, including its zero tolerance policy towards all forms of peer-on-peer abuse.
- 10.1.4 ensuring that all peer-on-peer abuse issues are fed back to the School's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who may be in need of additional support. This is done in the first instance through the school's Pastoral recording and monitoring programme and by way of a weekly house staff meeting at which all concerns about students (including peer-on-peer abuse issues) are discussed.
- 10.1.5 challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom);
- 10.1.6 working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, students and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the School community;
- 10.1.7 creating conditions in which our students can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships;
- 10.1.8 creating a culture in which our students feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to; and
- 10.1.9 responding to cases of peer-on-peer abuse promptly and appropriately.

## 11 **Multi-agency working**

The School actively engages with its local partners in relation to peer-on-peer abuse, and works closely with, for example Somerset SCB, Somerset Direct, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies, and other schools.

- 11.1 The relationships the School has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the School is able to prevent, identify early and appropriately handle cases of

peer-on-peer abuse. They help the School (a) to develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in its local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist; (b) to ensure that our students are able to access the range of services and support they need quickly; (c) to support and help inform our local community's response to peer-on-peer abuse; (d) to increase our awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in our local area to enable us to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by our students.

- 11.2 The School actively refers concerns/allegations of peer-on-peer abuse where necessary to.
- 11.3 Somerset safeguarding Children's board, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies. This is particularly important because peer-on-peer abuse can be a complex issue, and even more so where wider safeguarding concerns exist. It is often not appropriate for one single agency (where the incident cannot be managed internally) to try to address the issue alone – it requires effective partnership working.

## 12 Responding to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse

### General Principles

It is essential that all concerns/allegations of peer-on-peer abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our School environment.

Any response should:

- 12.1 include a thorough investigation of the concerns/allegations and the wider context in which they may have occurred (as appropriate);
- 12.2 treat all children involved as being at potential risk - while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. Schools should ensure a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter;
- 12.3 take into account:
  - 12.3.1 that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved, and consider and address the effect of wider socio-cultural contexts - such as the child's/children's peer group (both within and outside the School); family; the School environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence. Consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child's/children's needs and to mitigate risk; and
  - 12.3.2 the potential complexity of peer-on-peer abuse and of children's experiences and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent. While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited they are not consenting;

12.3.3 the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/children and their parents and obtain consent to any referral before it is made. The School should manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so.

**13 What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s)?.**

- 13.1 If a student is in immediate danger, or at risk of significant harm, a referral to children's social care (if the student is aged under 18) and/or the police should be made immediately. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made (see Section 5.7 of the child protection and safeguarding policy).
- 13.2 If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay (in accordance with Section 5.6 of the child protection and safeguarding policy) so that a course of action can be agreed.
- 13.3 If a child speaks to a member of staff about peer-on-peer abuse that they have witnessed or are a part of, the member of staff should listen to the child and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement. For further details please see the procedure set out in Appendix 3 section of the child protection and safeguarding policy.

**14 How will the School respond to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse?**

- 14.1 The DSL will discuss the concerns or allegations with the member of staff who has reported them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected.
- 14.2 DSLs should always use their professional judgement to determine whether it is appropriate for alleged behaviour to be to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required. In borderline cases the DSL may wish to consult with children's social care and/or any other external agencies on a no-names basis to determine the most appropriate response. Where the DSL considers or suspects that the behaviour in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum (as opposed to inappropriate or problematic), the DSL should contact Somerset Direct immediately, and in any event within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of it, to discuss the allegations/concerns and agree on a course of action, which may include:

Manage internally with help from external specialists where appropriate and possible where behaviour between peers is abusive or violent (as opposed to inappropriate or problematic). However, where support from local agencies is not available, the School may need to handle allegations/concerns internally. In these cases, the School will engage and seek advice from external specialists (either in the private and/or voluntary sector).

Undertake/contribute to an inter-agency early help assessment, with targeted early help services provided to address the assessed needs of a child/children and their family. These services may, for example, include CAMHS, a specialist harmful sexual behaviour team, and/or youth offending services.

- 14.2.1 Refer child/children to children's social care for a section 17 and/or 47 statutory assessment.

As a matter of best practice, if an incident of peer-on-peer abuse requires referral to and action by children's social care and a strategy meeting is convened, then the School will hold every professional involved in the case accountable for their safeguarding response, including themselves, to both the child who has experienced the abuse, and the child who was responsible for it, and the contexts to which the abuse was associated.

- 14.2.2 Report alleged criminal behaviour to the Police

- 14.2.3 Alleged criminal behaviour will ordinarily be reported to the Police. However, there are some circumstances where it may not be appropriate to report such behaviour to the Police. For example, where the exchange of youth produced sexual imagery does not involve any aggravating factors (please see Appendix C below). All concerns/allegations will be assessed on a case by case basis, and in light of the wider context.

## 15 Individual risk and needs assessment

- 15.1 Where there is an incident of peer-on-peer abuse, the School will carry out a robust risk and needs assessment in respect of each child affected by the abuse. These risk assessments will:

- 15.1.1 assess and address the nature and level of risks that are posed and/or faced by the child;
- 15.1.2 engage the child's parents and draw upon local services and agencies to ensure that the child's needs are met in the long-term. Consider whether any targeted interventions are needed to address the underlying attitudes or behaviour of any child; and
- 15.1.3 be reviewed at regular intervals in light of the child's on-going needs to ensure that real progress is being made which benefits the child.

- 15.2 If at any stage the child's needs escalate, the DSL should contact Somerset Direct to determine the appropriate course of action.

## 16 Disciplinary action

- 16.1 The School will consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including

- 16.1.1 to ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;
- 16.1.2 to demonstrate to the child/children and others that peer-on-peer abuse can never be tolerated; and

- 16.1.3 to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.
- 16.2 However, these considerations must be balanced against the child's/children's own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action the School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the peer-on-peer abuse and the causes of it.
- 16.3 The School 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 the other children in the School.
- 16.4 Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of peer-on-peer abuse, and the School will always consider the wider actions that may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards, as set out above and below.

## 17 **On-going proactive work to a contextual whole-school approach**

The School's response to concerns/allegations of peer-on-peer abuse should be part of on-going proactive work by the School to embed best practice and take a contextual whole-school approach to such abuse. As such the School's response can become part of its wider prevention work. This response may include the School asking itself a series of questions about the context in which an incident of peer-on-peer abuse occurred in the School, the local community in which the School is based, and the wider physical and online environment - such as:

- 17.1 what protective factors and influences exist within the School (such as positive peer influences, examples where peer-on-peer abuse has been challenged etc.) and how can the School bolster these?;
- 17.2 how (if at all) did the School's physical environment contribute to the abuse, and how can the School address this going forwards, for example by improving the School's safety, security and supervision?;
- 17.3 did wider gender norms, equality issues and/or societal attitudes contribute to the abuse?;
- 17.4 what was the relationship between the abuse and the cultural norms between staff and students, and how can these be addressed going forwards?;
- 17.5 does the abuse indicate a need for staff training on, for example, underlying attitudes, a particular issue or the handling of particular types of abuse?;
- 17.6 how have similar cases been managed in the past and what effect has this had?;
- 17.7 does the case or any identified trends highlight areas for development in the way in which the School works with children to raise their awareness of and/or prevent peer-on-peer abuse, including by way of the School's PSHME curriculum and lessons that address underlying attitudes or behaviour. are there any lessons to be learnt about the way in which the School engages with parents to address peer-on-peer abuse issues?;

- 17.8 are there underlying issues that affect other schools in the area and is there a need for a multi-agency response?;
- 17.9 does this case highlight a need to work with certain children to build their confidence and teach them how to identify and manage abusive behaviour?; and
- 17.10 were there opportunities to intervene earlier or differently and/or to address common themes amongst the behaviour of other children in the School?
- 17.11 Answers to these questions can be developed into an action plan that is reviewed on a regular basis by school leadership and the DSL.

<b>Effective date of the policy</b>	31 August 2018
<b>SLG Responsible Member</b>	Andrew Free, Deputy Head

<b>Authorised by</b>	Board of Governors
<b>Signed</b>	Mark Edwards, <b>Chair of Governors</b>
<b>Date</b>	31 August 2018

## Appendix A - Examples of Further Resources

Somerset Safeguarding Children's Board

[Effective Support for Children and families in Somerset](#)

The following links are designed to help professionals working with children to identify, categorise and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours by children:

- NSPCC's and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework:  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2016/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework/>  
which contains the continuum model proposed by Simon Hackett (2010), and provides schools with information about what to expect from local partnerships.
- NSPCC guidance on the stages of normal sexual behaviour:  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/healthy-sexual-behaviour-children-young-people/>
- NSPCC:  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour/research-resources/>
- Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool:  
<https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/the-sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool>
  - University of Bedfordshire – Contextual Safeguarding Network; What is contextual safeguarding:  
<https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk>

## Appendix B - Contact details for local agencies and summary of referral pathways

### Useful Contacts

Consultation Line for Children's Safeguarding Leads', 0300 123 3078

Somerset Direct (Children's and Adult's) 0300 123 2224

- CAMHS Telephone Advice Line (12.00pm to 2.00pm Monday to Friday)
- Mendip 01749 836561
- South Somerset 01935 384140
- West 01823 368368
- GP's and Lead Professionals (9.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday)
- Early Help Advice Hub 01823 355803
- Emergency Duty Team (EDT) 0300 123 2327
- getset Mendip 01458 833017
- getset Sedgemoor 01278 446771
- getset South Somerset 01935 848942
- **getset Taunton and West Somerset 01823 322508 / 01643 70030**
- Prevent – Regional Police Prevent Team 01179 455536/539
- [channelsw@avonandsomerset.pnn.police.uk](mailto:channelsw@avonandsomerset.pnn.police.uk)
- LGBT - stonewall.org.uk
- Somerset Drug and Alcohol Service (SDAS) 0300 303 8788
- Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (SIDAS) 0800 694 9999
- Somerset Partnership Integrated Therapy Service 0303 033 3002(9.00am to 12.00pm, Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri)

Somerset Support for Education (SSE)

<http://www.supportservicesforeducation.co.uk/>

Includes Education Welfare, Governance, eLIM, Traveller Education and Property & Grounds services.

## Appendix C - Referral Pathway

SSCB referral routes Somerset Safeguarding Children Board The SSCB has a statutory duty to co-ordinate how agencies work together to safeguard and promote the well-being of children and young people in Somerset and to ensure the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.

### Report a child at risk

If you are worried about a child or young person who could be in danger please contact

- Children's Social Care on 0300 123 2224
- by email at [childrens@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:childrens@somerset.gov.uk)
- or the police - You can contact the police directly by dialling 101 and they will discuss with Children's Social Care what action should be taken. In an emergency always contact the police by dialling 999.

If you would like to speak to a social worker outside of office hours please phone the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 0300 123 23 27.

We will always deal with any calls in the strictest confidence. If you suspect child abuse:

- Do listen to the child
  - Do take what the child says seriously
  - Do act quickly
  - Do share your worries with Children's Social Care, the police or the NSPCC - they are there to help you
  - Do continue to offer support to the child
  - Don't delay
  - Don't probe or push the child for explanations
  - Don't assume that someone else knows and will help the child. You must act
  - Don't be afraid to voice your concerns, the child may need urgent protection and help
- Safeguarding is everybody's business.

## Appendix D Youth Produced Sexual Imagery Policy

Whilst professionals refer to the issue as 'sexting' there is no clear definition of 'sexting'. According to research, many professionals consider sexting to be 'sending or posting sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobiles or over the internet.' Yet, recent NSPCC research has revealed that when children are asked 'What does sexting mean to you?' they are more likely to interpret sexting as 'writing and sharing explicit messages with people they know.' Similarly, a recent ChildLine survey has revealed that many parents think of sexting as flirty or sexual text messages rather than images.

This policy only covers the sharing of sexual imagery by children. Creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of under-18s is illegal, and therefore causes the greatest complexity for schools (amongst other agencies) when responding. It also presents a range of risks which need careful management.

On this basis, this policy introduces the phrase 'youth produced sexual imagery' and uses this instead of 'sexting'. This is to ensure clarity about the issues this advice addresses.

### What is youth produced sexual imagery?

'Youth produced sexual imagery' best describes the practice because:

- 'Youth produced' includes children sharing images that they, or another child, have created of themselves.
- 'Sexual' is clearer than 'indecent'. A judgement of whether something is 'decent' is both a value judgement and dependent on context.
- 'Imagery' covers both still photos and moving videos (and this is what is meant by reference to imagery throughout the policy).

### What types of incidents are covered by this policy?

Yes:

- A child creates and shares sexual imagery of themselves with a peer (also under the age of 18).
- A child shares sexual imagery created by another child with a peer (also under the age of 18) or an adult.
- A child is in possession of sexual imagery created by another child.

No:

- The sharing of sexual imagery of children by adults constitutes child sexual abuse and schools should always inform the police.
- Children sharing adult pornography or exchanging sexual texts which do not contain imagery.<sup>45</sup>
- Sexual imagery downloaded from the internet by a child.
- Sexual imagery downloaded from the internet by a child and shared with a peer (also under the age of 18) or an adult.

### Disclosure

Disclosure about youth produced sexual imagery can happen in a variety of ways. The child affected may inform a class teacher, the DSL in School, or any member of the School staff. They may report through an existing reporting structure, or a friend or parent may inform someone in School or colleague, or inform the police directly.

All members of staff (including non-teaching staff) should be aware of how to recognise and refer any disclosure of incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery. This will be covered within staff training and within the School's child protection policy.

Any direct disclosure by a child should be taken very seriously. A child who discloses they are the subject of sexual imagery is likely to be embarrassed and worried about the consequences. It is likely that disclosure in School is a last resort and they may have already tried to resolve the issue themselves.

### Handling incidents

All incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery should be responded to in line with the School's child protection policy.

When an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery comes to a member of staff's attention:

- The incident should be referred to the DSL as soon as possible.
- The DSL should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate School staff.
- The DSL will follow the procedures and guidance set out in Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding children.
- There should be subsequent interviews with the children involved (if appropriate).
- Parents should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the child at risk of harm.
- At any point in the process if there is a concern a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.

### Education

Teaching about safeguarding issues in the classroom can prevent harm by providing children with skills, attributes and knowledge to help them navigate risks. The School will provide children with opportunities to learn about the issue of youth produced sexual imagery, as part of its commitment to ensure that they are taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities – as also referred to in the School's online safety policy.