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Child on Child Abuse Policy

June 2026

Review date: October 2027

Key safeguarding contacts

| Role | Name |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) | Emma Doyle |





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|----------------------|---|
| Deputy DSLs | Sarah Booker, Joel Edwards and Steven Owens |
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KCSIE 2025 alignment statement

At the time of ratification, this policy has been reviewed and updated to align with the current statutory safeguarding framework for schools in England, including Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, and current advice on information sharing, online safety, filtering and monitoring, the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, Prevent, and children missing education. It should be read alongside the academy's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, low-level concerns procedures and any local Nottinghamshire safeguarding partnership arrangements.





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1. Statement of intent

Harworth Church of England Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. We recognise that children can abuse other children and that child-on-child abuse (also referred to as peer-on-peer abuse) can happen both inside and outside school, face-to-face and online.

We adopt a child-centred, whole-school and preventative approach. We will never dismiss child-on-child abuse as banter, part of growing up, horseplay or a normal feature of childhood. All reports will be taken seriously, acted upon promptly and managed fairly, proportionately and with sensitivity.

As a Church of England academy, we believe every child is unique and made in the image of God. Every member of our school community must be treated with dignity, compassion and respect. Our response will protect children from harm, uphold their welfare, and support all children involved to access education and appropriate help.

- create a culture of mutual respect and vigilance;
- teach children what respectful, safe and unacceptable behaviour looks like;
- encourage reporting and make routes to help clear and accessible;
- identify, record and respond effectively to concerns, patterns and incidents;
- support children who are harmed, children whose behaviour causes concern, and any witnesses or affected peers;
- work closely with parents, carers and external agencies where appropriate.

2. Legal framework



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This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and current statutory/non-statutory guidance, including but not limited to:

- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Education Act 2002 (sections 175 and 157)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988 and Communications Act 2003, where relevant to online abuse
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (statutory guidance)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 (statutory guidance)
- Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners (May 2024)
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused (March 2015)
- Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (updated March 2024)
- Teaching online safety in schools (updated January 2023)
- Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales (2023, in force from 31 December 2023)
- Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools (current version at the time of ratification)
- Relationships Education / Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance (current version applicable at the time of teaching).

This policy should be read alongside the academy's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Attendance Policy, SEND Policy, allegations/low-level concerns procedures, staff code of conduct and filtering and monitoring arrangements.

3. Definitions

Child-on-child abuse means any form of abuse, exploitation, coercion or harmful behaviour by one child or group of children against another child or children under the age of 18. It can happen inside or outside school and can occur online or offline.

Abuse may be a one-off event or part of a pattern. It can be physically, emotionally or sexually harmful and may be motivated by protected characteristics, perceived differences, power imbalance, vulnerability or wider contextual factors.



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For the purposes of this policy, the terms “child-on-child abuse” and “peer-on-peer abuse” are used interchangeably.

Child-on-child abuse can include, but is not limited to:

- bullying, including prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying, racist abuse, and bullying related to sex, disability, religion, gender reassignment or sexual orientation;
- physical abuse, such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm;
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault;
- sexual harassment, including sexual comments, taunting, gestures, online sexual harassment, unwanted touching, sexualised jokes, upskirting and coercion;
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children;
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent;
- the consensual or non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes;
- initiation or hazing-type violence and rituals;
- online abuse, including image-based abuse, harassment, humiliation, impersonation, threats or coercive behaviour via digital platforms.

When considering sexual violence or sexual harassment, staff will remember that:

- sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between any children of any age and sex;
- such behaviour can exist on a continuum and may overlap;
- it can happen online and offline;
- sexual violence and sexual harassment are never acceptable and will never be tolerated or normalised.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Governing board / trust / proprietors

- Ensure safeguarding arrangements are effective, reviewed and compliant with current legislation and guidance.
- Ensure this policy is implemented and understood by staff, governors and volunteers.
- Ensure there is a suitably trained DSL and trained deputies, with sufficient time, status and resources to carry out their role.
- Ensure children are taught about safeguarding, healthy relationships, online safety and how to report concerns as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Ensure appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place, roles and responsibilities are identified, and effectiveness is reviewed at least annually.



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- Seek assurance that leaders record, review and act on patterns, trends and lessons learned.

Headteachers / senior leaders

- Promote a strong safeguarding culture and ensure staff know that “it could happen here”.
- Ensure staff induction and regular safeguarding updates include this policy, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, staff code of conduct, low-level concerns procedures, online safety and the identity of the DSL and deputies.
- Ensure the curriculum, behaviour systems and wider pastoral systems promote respectful behaviour and prevent abuse.
- Work with the DSL and external agencies where required and ensure decisions are recorded.

The DSL and deputy DSLs

- Lead safeguarding practice relating to child-on-child abuse.
- Receive, assess and manage reports, referrals and risk assessments.
- Liaise with children’s social care, the police, health, the local authority designated officer (where relevant), the local safeguarding partnership and other agencies.
- Keep safeguarding knowledge, local thresholds and referral pathways up to date.
- Oversee record keeping, support plans, information sharing and transfer of safeguarding files when a child moves setting.
- Provide advice and support to staff, and ensure patterns and themes are identified and addressed.

All staff

- Maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour, language and attitudes immediately and consistently.
- Never ignore, minimise or dismiss a concern, disclosure or pattern.
- Report all safeguarding concerns to the DSL / deputy DSL without delay and record them accurately.
- Understand that downplaying abuse contributes to a culture of unsafe behaviour.
- Follow the school’s safeguarding, behaviour, whistleblowing and online safety requirements.





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5. A whole-school approach to child-on-child abuse

The academy will take a whole-school approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse. Safeguarding will be visible in policy, curriculum, staff training, behaviour systems, supervision, site safety, online safety and our work with parents and carers.

We will promote a culture in which children know that harmful behaviour is not acceptable and that they can speak to a trusted adult. We will make reporting routes known and accessible, and we will respond to incidents regardless of whether they took place in school, on transport, in the community or online. We recognise that abuse can be influenced by wider contextual safeguarding factors, including peer groups, community spaces, transport, social media and online environments. Risk assessments and responses will therefore consider environmental as well as individual factors.

6. Prevention through curriculum, culture and systems

Curriculum and pastoral work

- Teach respectful relationships, consent, boundaries, privacy, body autonomy, stereotypes, equality, online safety, image sharing, bullying and how to seek help in an age-appropriate way.
- Use Relationships Education / RSHE, collective worship, computing, PSHE, assemblies and pastoral work to revisit key safeguarding messages.
- Ensure teaching is age and stage appropriate for primary-aged children and responsive to local need and emerging risk.

Culture and language

- Use a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence, sexual harassment, discriminatory abuse, misogynistic, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic or racist language.
- Avoid language that minimises abuse, for example “banter”, “just having a laugh”, or “boys will be boys”.
- Reinforce that reporting abuse is protective and courageous, not “snitching”.

Online safety, filtering and monitoring

- Maintain appropriate filtering and monitoring systems, with clear roles for senior leaders, DSLs, governors and IT support.
- Review filtering and monitoring provision at least annually and whenever risk, technology, practice or pupil need changes.
- Ensure DSLs understand the filtering and monitoring systems and that concerning alerts are acted upon appropriately.



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- Teach children how to stay safe online and respond promptly to incidents involving devices, platforms or digital content.

Children who may be more vulnerable

- Staff will remain alert to the fact that some children may face additional barriers to reporting or may be disproportionately affected by abuse.
- This can include children with SEND, children who are LGBT+ or perceived to be LGBT+, children who are absent or missing education, children with social workers, children in care, previously looked after children, and children affected by discrimination or domestic abuse.
- We will avoid assumptions and ensure support is tailored to individual communication, SEND and pastoral needs.

7. Reporting concerns and disclosures

Children can report concerns to any trusted adult, their class teacher, the DSL / deputy DSL, or via any published safeguarding / worry systems used by the academy. Staff and volunteers must report concerns immediately to the DSL / deputy DSL.

Any member of staff taking a report will:

- listen carefully, reassure the child and take the report seriously;
- make clear that the concern must be shared with the safeguarding team and, where necessary, other agencies;
- avoid leading questions or investigating;
- record the facts accurately, using the child's own words where possible, and distinguish fact from professional opinion;
- report to the DSL / deputy DSL without delay.

For incidents involving nudes or semi-nudes, staff must:

- report immediately to the DSL / deputy DSL;
- not view, copy, print, save, forward or share imagery;
- not ask a child to show, send or delete imagery;
- follow the school's child protection procedures and the current UKCIS guidance.

8. Responding to allegations and managing reports

The DSL / deputy DSL will make an initial decision about the school's response, informed by the wishes of the child, the nature of the concern, the age and developmental stage of the children involved, power imbalance, context, any pattern of behaviour, wider safeguarding concerns and the safety of all children involved.



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The school will always consider whether a report constitutes a child protection matter and whether children's social care and/or the police should be involved. We will follow local threshold guidance and seek advice where required.

The likely management pathways are: internal management, early help, referral to children's social care, and/or reporting to the police. A school approach will never replace action needed to safeguard a child or investigate a possible crime. Where sexual violence or sexual harassment is reported, the school will:

- take the report seriously and act promptly;
- ensure the alleged victim is supported and kept safe;
- avoid assumptions or victim-blaming;
- consider the safety and welfare of the alleged perpetrator as a child in need of support as well as behaviour management;
- take immediate steps to manage contact between children where needed, including in shared classes, social times, transport and online spaces;
- record the rationale for decisions and keep these under review.

Where a report is made by a friend, witness or staff member, it will be treated with the same seriousness as a direct disclosure.

9. Risk and needs assessment

The DSL / deputy DSL will complete an immediate risk and needs assessment for any report of sexual violence and will consider a risk assessment for sexual harassment or other serious incidents on a case-by-case basis. Risk assessments will be proportionate, child-centred and regularly reviewed.

Risk assessments will consider the needs and safety of the child who has experienced harm, the child whose behaviour is alleged or known to have caused harm, and any other children affected, including siblings, friendship groups, classmates and witnesses.

The assessment may include consideration of contact arrangements, supervision, class groupings, social spaces, transport, online access, communication plans and specialist support. Risk assessments will not replace referrals to social care or police where these are required.

10. Support for children involved

Support for the child who has experienced harm

- A trusted adult and clear support plan will be put in place where appropriate.
- The child's wishes, feelings, safety and educational access will be central to decision-making.
- Support may include pastoral support, counselling, ELSA / mental health support, social care involvement, external specialist services, timetable adjustments, safe spaces or changes to movement and supervision.



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Support for the child whose behaviour has caused concern

- The school will consider safeguarding, welfare and behaviour together.
- Support will address the reasons for the behaviour where possible, including unmet need, trauma, exposure to harmful content or abusive experiences.
- Appropriate sanctions may be applied in line with the Behaviour Policy and exclusions guidance, taking account of safeguarding risk, proportionality and any police or children's social care advice.

Support for other children

- Support will also be considered for witnesses, siblings, friendship groups and other children affected by the incident or subsequent rumours / online activity.
- The school will act to prevent retaliation, bullying, harassment and victimisation.

11. Record keeping, confidentiality and information sharing

All concerns, discussions, decisions, actions and reasons for decisions will be recorded clearly and promptly in line with the school's safeguarding recording systems and data protection requirements.

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis with people who need it in order to safeguard and support children. We will comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR; however, staff are reminded that data protection law does not prevent the sharing of information where this is necessary to keep children safe.

The school cannot promise confidentiality to a child who discloses abuse. Staff will explain this sensitively and keep the child updated about next steps as far as appropriate.

Parents / carers will usually be informed unless doing so would place a child at greater risk or prejudice a police / social care investigation. Such decisions will be made by the DSL, with agency advice where needed.

12. Monitoring, review and linked policies

- This policy will be reviewed at least annually and earlier if legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements or school context change.
- Training, induction, safeguarding briefings, incidents, records, pupil voice and audits will be used to evaluate implementation and identify any themes or required actions.
- Linked policies include: Child Protection and Safeguarding, Behaviour, Online Safety, Anti-Bullying, Attendance, RSHE / Relationships Education, SEND, low-



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level concerns, allegations against staff, staff code of conduct, whistleblowing and acceptable use / mobile device procedures.





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Appendix 1 - Safety plan / risk assessment template

This safety plan should be completed with professionals supporting the child and their family. The child should be involved in an age-appropriate way and the plan should be non-punitive, proportionate and reviewed regularly. Suggested review frequency: at least every 12 weeks, and sooner if risk changes or there is a further incident.

Child's name:

Date of birth:

Year group / class:

Date completed:

Present at meeting:

- 1. Overview of concern / incident(s):**
- 2. Known triggers and contextual factors (in school, online, home, community, transport):**
- 3. Risks to the child / other children / staff:**
- 4. Immediate safety actions required:**
- 5. Supervision / movement / class / social time arrangements:**
- 6. Online safety / device / filtering / monitoring actions:**
- 7. Support for the child who has experienced harm:**
- 8. Support / intervention for the child whose behaviour has caused concern:**
- 9. Support for witnesses / affected peers:**
- 10. Parent / carer communication plan:**
- 11. External agency involvement / referrals made:**
- 12. Review date and success indicators:**

Appendix 2 - Sexualised behaviour / child-on-child abuse recording form



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To be completed by the member of staff who witnessed the incident or received the report, with safeguarding support where necessary.

Form number / CPOMS entry ref:

Date / time / location:

Name(s) of child / children involved:

Any known vulnerabilities or relevant safeguarding history:

Detailed factual account of what was seen / heard / reported (use exact words where possible):

Any use of force, coercion, secrecy, planning, threats or power imbalance:

Online element / devices / platforms involved:

Immediate action taken:

Who was informed and when:

Child / children's presentation and response:

Parent / carer response (if informed):

Risk assessment completed? Yes / No

Referral to DSL / social care / police / other agency:

Further action / support agreed:

Completed by:

Role:

Date: