

Parklea Primary School

CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE

POLICY

Updated: February 2025

Review date: February 2026

Parklea Primary School Child-on-Child Abuse

Guidance and Policy

This policy remains current and in line with the statutory guidance contained within Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

The policy has also been developed in consultation with Luton Council, Parklea Governors and shared with all parents via our website,

Aims

The policy will:

- Set out our strategies for preventing, identifying and managing child-on-child abuse.
- Take a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved.
- Acknowledging that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable and may have been abused by peer, parents or adults in the community.

What is Child-on-child Abuse?

Unfortunately, child-on-child abuse can and does happen in a whole range of settings that children attend and on occasions it often goes unseen because it might take place online, for example, away from the school or setting. As well as in school. Therefore, training for professionals to help them recognise the signs, and know what to do, is essential. All children are capable of abusing their peers, and this is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyber bullying)
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm or intimate touching
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- Causing humiliation or distress
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing or sharing. **At Parklea, mobile devices must be handed to the teacher at the beginning of the day and collected at home time**
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery; and
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

At Parklea we include child-on-child abuse in our schools' policies and procedures so we can provide and maintain high quality safeguarding and vigilance through staff training, procedures and practice. All staff are aware of this policy and ensure they are part of the everyday practice to protect children by providing a safe environment for children to attend and to model appropriate behaviour through our professional work relationships.

At Parklea we are proactive in looking out for child-on-child abuse. We expect our staff who are educating or caring for children to create an environment in which children and staff show respect for one another. We promote what language and behaviours are acceptable and what to do and who to speak to if they are worried or feel unsafe. It should be clear that child-on-child abuse will never be accepted or dismissed as 'children being children'.

Parklea Primary School takes a whole-school approach to keeping children safe. We set expectations that violence and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated, support children to have a good understanding of consent and healthy relationships and provide immediate support for both 'perpetrator' and 'victim' of abuse.

Vulnerable groups and what the evidence shows

We recognise that all children can be at risk, however we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable.

This can include children or young people who:

- Have experience of abuse within their family
- Are living with domestic violence
- Are young people in care
- Are children who go missing
- Are children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities)
- Are gender questioning or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

At Parklea we consider:

- Our procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse
- What is in place to encourage/support/facilitate disclosures of child-on-child abuse
- How allegations are recorded, investigated and dealt with
- What processes are in place to support 'victims', the child alleged to have caused harm (perpetrator) and any other children affected
- Recognition of the gendered, race or religious nature of child-on-child abuse but recognising that all forms of this behaviour are unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Prevention

Parklea Primary School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, pupils and parents about this issue. This will include training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how we prevent, identify and respond to it. Also to promote positive and safe relationships through our values and curriculum offer and behaviour expectations. This includes sharing information about our school community as follows:

Contextual Safeguarding:

- The identification and classification of specific behaviours
- The importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing
- Educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum
- Pupils 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 child-on-child abuse.

Engaging parents on this issue by:

- Talking about it with parents, both in groups and one to one
- Asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the school address those risks
- Involve parents in the review of school policies and lesson plans; and encouraging parents to hold the school to account on this issue.

We shall also:

- Ensure that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the school's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who maybe in need of additional support
- Challenge the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom)
- Collaborate with Governors and the Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, pupils 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
- Create conditions in which our pupils can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships
- Create a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to
- Respond to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately.

As well as having strategies for dealing with incidents, we also consider what we can do to foster healthy and respectful relationships between boys and girls by promoting this through our Relationship and Sex Education and Personal Social Health and Economic curriculum. We also have a clear set of values and standards, and these will be upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life. This will also be underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and values-based curriculum content. Our curriculum is developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering SEND children and their cognitive understanding), and tackle such issues as:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- What respectful behaviour looks like
- Consent
- Gender roles, stereotyping, and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong; and
- Addressing cultures of sexual harassment.

We deliver and promote this through our assemblies and Jigsaw which is our planned, high-quality, Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) and Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum. Children at Parklea access a program of age-appropriate weekly activities.

Our Child-on-Child Abuse policy is cross referenced with other policies such as the whole school behaviour policy, the anti-bullying policy and the online safety policy (cyberbullying and sexting). We are clear and robust about the strategies contained within those policies and how such behaviour will be managed and addressed at Parklea. All staff at Parklea familiarise themselves with the statutory guidance and our school policies related to this Child-on-Child Abuse policy. Individual trained professionals know, understand and, most importantly, use our school safeguarding policies to make sure that children feel safe and are protected.

Protecting children in and out of school

At Parklea, we assess where there are discreet spaces on our premises to ensure they are regularly monitored to keep the environment and children safe. It's equally important we think about children's safety outside of the school gates and any extra-familial risks. Things we consider include:

- Ensuring discreet areas in the school are supervised
- Being aware of any unsafe spaces in our local area
- Being aware of children who attend clubs or activities outside of school and whether they are safe?.

Our safeguarding officers are aware of incidents of child-on-child abuse, harassment or violence involving children in the local park or other places where young people congregate. Contextual information like this is assessed and shared in a multi-agency forum so risks can be fully assessed and shared with the relevant families or agencies.

The immediate response to a report of child-on-child abuse – what we will do:

- The school will take all reports seriously and will reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe. All staff have been trained to manage a report
- Staff will not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the school leaders, staff teams, the designated safeguarding lead or social care). Staff will, however, only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it
- It is important to explain that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them, and this should be explained in such a way that avoids alarming or distressing them
- A written report will be made as soon after the discussion as possible, only recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later
- Assess the needs of the victim and child alleged to have caused harm
- Assess if there are any patterns of behaviour.

We make sure that any child affected by child-on-child abuse are getting the help they need. A typical response will involve:

- The family
- Any other professionals who know or have had contact with the child
- Children's social care, if appropriate.

Any forms of sexual abuse may involve:

- Children's social care
- Any specialist services that support children who demonstrate harmful sexual behaviour
- The police.

Multi-agency Approach

Parklea Primary School actively engages with our local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse and work closely with Luton Borough Council children's social care, other schools, and/or other relevant agencies.

The relationships the school builds with these partners are essential to ensuring that the school is able to prevent, identify early and appropriately manage cases of child-on-child 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 pupils/students can access the range of services and support they need quickly.
- c) To support and help inform our local community's response to child-on-child 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 pupils/students.

Parklea Primary School actively refer serious concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse to Luton Borough Council children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies.

Useful definitions used by professionals in the context of safeguarding

Sexual Harassment

This can be defined as 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. In the context of this guidance this means in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated.

It can include:

- Sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names
- Sexual "jokes" or taunting
- Touching another child's 'private part'.

Sexting

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others or sends sexually explicit messages. They can be sent using mobiles, tablets, smartphones, laptops - any device that allows you to share media and messages. This is also known as youth produced sexual imagery. **At Parklea, children are not permitted to have a mobile device brought from home, in their possession, at school or when representing the school on visits.**

Sexual Assault

A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

It is important to know that:

- The age of consent is 16
- A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- Sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

Consent

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. At Parklea, we discuss consent and define it as the right not to be physically touched, without consent, especially when playing games.

Children also learn they have private parts to their body and those areas should not be touched by other children.

It is important that we consider the above in broad terms. We expect children to play together, however, if a child does not wish to have physical contact, then we teach the children to be assertive, but kind and say 'No'. We want to create an atmosphere that, if nonconsensual physical behaviour is not challenged, then it can normalise inappropriate behaviours.

Initiation/hazing

Hazing or initiation ceremonies refers to the practice of rituals, challenges, and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group. Hazing is seen in many different types of social groups, including gangs, sports teams and school groups. The initiation rituals can range from relatively low-level pranks to protracted patterns of behaviour that rise to the level of abuse. Hazing may include physical or psychological abuse. It may also include nudity or sexual assault.

Contextual Safeguarding

All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) should be considering the context within which incidents and/or behaviours occur. This is known as contextual safeguarding, which simply means, assessments of children, will consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare.