



Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

2025-26

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Within the policy we use the terms victim and perpetrator.

'Victim' is a widely understood and recognised term, but not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim, or would want to be described that way. We will use any term the child feels most comfortable with when managing an incident

'Alleged perpetrator(s)' and 'perpetrator(s)' are widely used and recognised terms, but in some cases, abusive behaviour can be harmful to the perpetrator too. We will decide what is appropriate and which terms to use on a case- by-case basis.

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1. Aims

Aughton St Michael's CE Primacy School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all our children. We recognise that children may face different forms of abuse and we work together to protect children from harm. As well as being abused by adults, children can be abused by other young people. This is known as 'child on child abuse'. We are committed to preventing child on child abuse and will protect children that may be suffering, or at risk of suffering harm perpetrated by another child. We recognise that child on child abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up". We maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' and act in the best interests of the child at all times.

2. Definitions

Child-on-child abuse refers to any scenario where a child under the age of 18 abuses another child under the age of 18. It can take place online or offline. The children involved do not have to be the same age and the perpetrator may be older or younger than the victim. Child on child abuse could include (but is not limited to);

- bullying (including cyberbullying);
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;
- 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;
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm;
- sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery); and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.¹
- abuse within intimate personal relationships and/or teenage relationship abuse;

3. Purpose

This policy has been written to:

- ensure that our schools follow all statutory guidance and advice relating to child on child abuse;
- provide stakeholders with information about how our school works to prevent child on child abuse;
- provide stakeholders with information about how our school responds to concerns, disclosures and/or allegations relating to child on child abuse; and provide stakeholders with information about how our school continues to support victims of child on child abuse following the conclusion of an investigation.

4. Legislation and relevant documentation

This policy adheres to and should be read alongside the schools' Safeguarding and Child Protection policy. It should be read alongside our policies for Behaviour, Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), Anti-bullying and Online Safety.

This policy adheres to all statutory guidance and legislation, including (but not limited to):

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2025)
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- General Data Protection Regulations (2018)

Rather than duplicating content from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022) in this policy, it should be understood that our school will always refer to this document as the benchmark for all safeguarding practice.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Governors

The governors will:

- Uphold all responsibilities under the school Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and any other relevant statutory guidance.
- Ensure that the schools' Safeguarding and Child Protection policy includes all relevant information as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025).
- Ensure that policies (including this policy), procedures and training in the school are effective and comply with the law at all times.

Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- Uphold all responsibilities under the schools' Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and any other relevant safeguarding statutory guidance and legislation.
- Ensure that this policy and all other relevant policies are followed by all staff.
- Liaise with the Designated and Alternate Safeguarding Leaders about ongoing enquiries, particularly those under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations.
- Ensure that the school curriculum includes education opportunities to minimise incidents of child on child abuse.
- Ensure that the school site promotes positive behaviour and minimises the opportunity for child on child abuse.

Role of the Designated Safeguarding Leads and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- Uphold all responsibilities under the school Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and any other relevant safeguarding statutory guidance and legislation.
- Undertake any training required to uphold their post and the responsibilities outlined in this policy.
- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise for staff in relation to child on child abuse.
- Manage disclosures of and concerns about child on child abuse.
- Make referrals to Children's Services and the police as appropriate.
- Ensure that this policy is known, understood and used appropriately by all staff.

Role of all staff

All staff will:

- Uphold all responsibilities under the Schools Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and any other relevant safeguarding statutory guidance and legislation.
- Make referrals to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in cases where they suspect cases of child on child abuse or become aware of cases of child on child abuse.
- Be made aware that children can abuse other children and the forms that this abuse could take.
- Be clear as to the school policy and procedures on child on child abuse.
- Be made aware that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up".
- Report any concerns relating to child on child abuse to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.
- Receive training in how to respond appropriately to incidents of 'sexting'. Where incidents involve sexting or indecent images of children, members of staff will not view, download, print or share images. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be made aware of the incident immediately.

6. Training

We will ensure that all staff have been trained to recognise and respond to child-on-child abuse through our annual update training as well as regular review of this policy.

We recognise the gendered nature of child-on-child abuse and all staff understand that all child on child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

7. Procedures to minimise child-on-child abuse

At Aughton St Michael's CE Primacy School we recognise that some of our children may be more vulnerable to child on child abuse than others. For example, children who have already experienced abuse, those that have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), children living in care and children who are LGBTQ+ and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 may be more likely to face child on child abuse than other children.

Our staff are committed to doing all we can to minimise opportunities for child-on-child abuse. We do this by:

- Always maintaining the mindset that "it could happen here". Pupil voice is at the heart of our curriculum and our staff listen carefully to what our children say
- If a child says something to any adult which causes concern, then the adult should always escalate this immediately in keeping with this policy
- Keeping Safe and Healthy Relationships are taught through both our PSHE and RSHE curriculums
- We always take supervision of our children seriously and ensure that all areas of our site, both indoors and out are well supervised by adults who are vigilant
- We regularly talk to our children about the adults who are safe for them to talk to if they have any worries
- Records of incidents or concerns are logged, following our Record Keeping Policy, and these records are monitored to see if any patterns are occurring.
- Our curriculum has a wider range of materials available, to ensure this topic is regularly talked about and children know what is safe behaviour and what is not.

8. Responding to concerns or disclosures of child-on-child abuse

Aughton St Michael's CE Primacy School takes child on child abuse seriously and will respond to all concerns or disclosures of child-on-child abuse immediately. If a member of staff has a concern about child-on-child abuse, or if a child discloses child on child abuse to them, they will refer this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.

Upon receiving a concern, report or disclosure of abuse, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will decide what further action is necessary. Dealing with the allegation or disclosure will be given the highest priority and their immediate attention. The actions taken will be dependent on the type of child-on-child abuse and the severity of the incident disclosed. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will take contextual factors into account when managing this process.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy DSL) will always consider the following;

- the wishes of the victim and their parents in terms of how they want to proceed. The victims will be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered;
- the nature of the alleged incident, including: the level of coercion or threat, whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;
- both the chronological and developmental ages of the children involved;
- any power imbalance between the children, including consideration of the age of children and whether children have special educational needs or disabilities;
- the impact on the victim;
- if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse; and

- if there are ongoing risks to the victim, other children or school staff.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the Designated Safeguarding Lead may:

- Seek further information from those involved and witnesses.
- Undertake a risk assessment to ascertain steps necessary to safeguard the victim, alleged perpetrator, adults and other children.
- Decide to manage the concern internally.
- Organise a meeting with relevant staff and agencies to assess risk and agree a safety plan.
- Refer the victim and/or the perpetrator to local services for Early Help.
- Refer the case to Children's Services via a MASH referral.
- Liaise with social workers working with the children involved (if applicable).
- Make a referral to the police.

Supporting the victim

Aughton St Michael's CE Primacy School recognises that child on child abuse has a significant impact on young people, and victims are likely to need ongoing support. Appropriate support will be put in place for victims of child-on-child abuse whilst an investigation is taking place and following the initial response. Support will continue for as long as it is needed and will be reviewed regularly to ensure the victim is receiving appropriate care.

The school will do everything we can to maintain the victim's normal routine.

We will do everything we can to protect the victim from further bullying and harassment as a result of their disclosure. A named adult will be allocated to support the victim and they will ensure regular support is in place for the victim. We will agree with the victim who the adults are that they feel safe to talk to and we will ensure that regular communication is in place with the child's parents and/or guardians so they are fully briefed of the school's actions.

If a victim of child-on-child abuse moves to a new setting, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will share the necessary information to ensure that support for the child continues.

Supporting the alleged perpetrator

Aughton St Michael's CE Primacy School has a responsibility to ensure that an alleged perpetrator continues to receive a suitable education and will consider a range of options in continuing their educational provision.

We recognise that children who perpetrate child on child abuse may be being abused themselves. Our school will continue to safeguard the alleged perpetrator and provide them with support.

A plan to reduce the risk posed by the alleged perpetrator will be put in place as part of the risk assessment made following the alleged abuse. The school may choose to impose a sanction or punishment on the alleged perpetrator following an incident of child-on-child abuse. Any actions will be determined on a case-by-case basis and we will follow the schools' Good Behaviour Policy in determining the level and severity of sanction.

If the alleged perpetrator moves to another School, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will share information as necessary to safeguard the individual and other child at the new setting.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will take advice from children's social care, specialist services and the police as necessary.

9. Record-keeping

Members of staff will follow the procedures for recording a disclosure outlined in Aughton St Michael's CE Primacy School's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

10. Parents and Carers

Parents and carers will be informed of incidents unless sharing information puts a child at greater risk of harm.

Children will always be encouraged to speak to parents or carers about child-on-child abuse. We always encourage our children to speak out to stay safe and praise children and reinforce this on an individual basis.

Appendix A: Further Resources

Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool <https://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/>

Harmful sexual behaviour between children and young people, NICE

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng55>

NSPCC Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1657/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework.pdf>

Preventing and Tackling Bullying Advice (2017), HM Government

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

What to do if you are worried a child is being abused (2015), HM Government

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419604/What_to_do_if_you_re_worried_a_child_is_being_abused.pdf

Sexting: How to respond to an incident. An overview for all teaching and non-teaching staff in schools and colleges, UKCCIS

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/647389/Overview_of_Sexting_Guidance.pdf

Sexting in schools and colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people UKCIS

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/759007/6_293_9_SP_NCA_Sexting_In_Schools_FINAL_Update_Jan17.pdf

School Exclusion Statutory Guidance (including changes to the exclusion process during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>

Behaviour and discipline in schools (2016), Department for Education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-and-discipline-in-schools>