

# St Agnes CE Primary School

## Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

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| Approved by:        | The Governing Body | Date: September 2026 |
| Last reviewed on:   | --                 |                      |
| Next review due by: | September 2027     |                      |

*Article 19 - Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone who looks after them. (UNCRC)*

*Article 28 & 29 - Every child has the right to an education in a safe environment that develops their personality, talents and abilities, and respects their human rights.*

## Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 states that governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes clear procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse and sets out how allegations of child-on-child abuse will be investigated and addressed. All staff must read Part 1 of KCSIE 2026 to ensure a consistent, whole-school understanding of safeguarding expectations.

Terminology throughout statutory guidance continues to use "child-on-child abuse" rather than "peer-on-peer abuse" to reflect that abusive behaviours do not only occur between children of similar ages or developmental stages.

While child-on-child abuse is an integral part of the main Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, St Agnes CE Primary School maintains this dedicated policy to detail specific prevention, intervention, and reporting procedures.

At St Agnes CE Primary School, we are committed to ensuring that any form of child-on-child abuse, harmful behaviour, or harassment is addressed immediately, consistently, and supportively. Our aim is to reduce harm, provide early intervention, and protect the emotional and mental well-being of every child involved. We recognise that child-on-child abuse is preventable, and prompt, evidence-based support can help prevent children from engaging in abusive or violent behavior.

## Definition

Determining whether an incident constitutes child-on-child abuse, bullying, or sexual experimentation involves professional judgement.

If a child or young person causes harm to another, it should not automatically be classified as abuse; fighting, peer conflict, and harassment between children may not always be safeguarding matters. However, it is appropriate to regard a child's behaviour as abusive if:

- There is a clear power imbalance (e.g., age, physical size, developmental stage, ability, or social influence);
- The perpetrator repeatedly causes or attempts to cause harm;
- There are concerns regarding intent or deliberate harm;

- The behaviour involves severe physical assault, threats, or the use/threat of a weapon; or
- The behaviour demonstrates harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), sexual harassment, or sexually violent acts.

If evidence suggests an intent to cause severe harm, it will be treated as abusive regardless of whether severe harm ultimately occurred.

## Prevention

St Agnes CE Primary School proactively minimizes the risk of child-on-child abuse by:

- Delivering a developmentally appropriate PSHE and RSHE curriculum that teaches healthy relationships, personal boundaries, consent, and rights;
- Explicitly challenging misogyny, sexism, and prejudice-based language or attitudes, recognizing their potential to escalate into sexual harassment or abusive behavior;
- Delivering a robust digital safety curriculum that covers online risks, including AI-generated imagery, deepfakes, online harassment, and cyberbullying;
- Maintaining robust internet filtering and monitoring systems, conducting annual reviews of these systems to ensure pupils are protected online in school;
- Ensuring accessible reporting channels so pupils know their concerns will be listened to, believed, and acted upon;
- Delivering targeted safety and assertiveness interventions for vulnerable pupils; and
- Completing comprehensive risk assessments and supervisory plans for pupils demonstrating risk-taking or harmful behaviors.

## Allegations Against Pupils (Safeguarding Indicators)

Allegations made against pupils that raise safeguarding concerns may involve physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, relationship abuse, exploitation, bullying, cyberbullying, or online abuse.

Safeguarding concerns are present if the incident:

- Involves an older or more powerful pupil targeting a younger or more vulnerable pupil;
- Involves serious harm, weapons, or a criminal offence;
- Creates risks for other pupils within or outside the school;
- Involves AI-generated explicit material, deepfakes, or digital abuse; or
- Indicates child criminal exploitation (CCE) or child sexual exploitation (CSE), including gang involvement or modern slavery indicators.

## Specific Forms of Child-on-Child Abuse

**Physical Abuse** Includes hitting, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing objects, hair pulling, or causing physical harm. It also includes serious physical assault or harm/threat of harm involving a weapon. Staff must understand the context and underlying causes of the behaviour before applying sanctions or support.

**Bullying & Cyberbullying** Bullying involves repeated, intentional, aggressive behaviour involving a power imbalance. Cyberbullying includes harassment or intimidation via electronic devices, social media, or online platforms. Under Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 and the Sexual Offences Act 2003, electronic harassment, menacing messages, or sending indecent images of under-18s may constitute criminal offences. In such instances, police involvement may be required.

**Sharing Nudes, Semi-Nudes, and AI-Generated Imagery** In line with KCSIE 2026 and UKCIS guidance, "nudes and semi-nudes" includes self-generated, forwarded, digitally altered, or AI-generated explicit content (such as deepfakes or synthetic imagery). Staff must follow the UKCIS framework *Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings* when responding to incidents. Children must never be made to feel criminalised when they are victims of image-based abuse.

**Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB), Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Violence** KCSIE 2026 outlines a continuum of sexual behaviour ranging from age-appropriate development to inappropriate, problematic, abusive, or violent acts.

- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, including sexual comments, taunts, unwanted touching, or online harassment.
- **Sexual Violence:** Sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, including sexual assault and forced sexual activity. Staff must recognize that unaddressed sexual harassment and misogynistic behavior can create an unsafe environment and escalate into sexual violence.

**Emotional Abuse** Includes verbal abuse, extortion, intimidation, threats, or stalking. Emotional abuse can severely impact a child's mental health, leading to self-harm or suicidal ideation.

**Teenage Relationship Abuse** A pattern of abusive behaviour (physical, emotional, sexual, or stalking) between young people in an intimate relationship.

**Child Exploitation (CSE / CCE)** Coercion or grooming of a child into sexual or criminal activity, including county lines, gang-related activity, modern slavery, or financial exploitation. Exploited children must be treated as victims requiring protection, even if they do not self-identify as being abused.

**Initiation / Hazing Rituals** Abusive or humiliating practices used as a condition for joining a group or peer network.

## Procedure for Responding to Child-on-Child Abuse

When a concern or allegation is reported:

1. **Record:** The staff member receiving the concern must log a factual record on CPOMS immediately without conducting an investigation.
2. **Refer to DSL:** The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed promptly.
3. **Assessment & Local Pathways:** The DSL will assess the risk, determine whether the concern meets statutory thresholds, and engage local Family Help or Multi-Agency Safeguarding arrangements (MASH) where appropriate.
4. **Police Involvement:** If a crime is suspected or a child is in immediate danger, the DSL will contact the police (or emergency services via 999).
5. **Parental Communication:** Parents/carers of both the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator will be informed, subject to safeguarding considerations.
6. **Risk Assessment & Support Plan:** The school will implement a risk assessment, supervision strategy, and targeted support plan for both children. Plans will be reviewed regularly.

## Equalities Statement

St Agnes CE Primary School is committed to equality, inclusion, and anti-discriminatory practice. We ensure that allegations are handled without prejudice regarding age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation.