Marden High School

Child on Child Abuse

Policy and Guidance

Monitoring and Review

Updated December 2025

To be reviewed December 2026
Member of staff responsible- B.Reece.

This policy has been created in line with the following guidance,

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)

and must be read with the following policies for,

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy 2025

Please see the above policy for full details of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy DSLs and Locality Teams contact details

North Tyneside's children's social care Front Door service can be contacted on 0345 2000 109

In addition, please see

- Behaviour Management Policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Relationships and Sex (RSE) Policy
- PSHE policy
- E-safety policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) policy
- Sex and Relationships (SRE) Scheme of Work

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 outlines that

All staff should be aware safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child on child abuse.

This is most likely to include, but not limited to:

- *bullying (including cyberbullying);*
- *abuse in intimate relationships between peers*
- *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; ➢ causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;*
- *consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);*
- *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.*

- *Staff should be clear as to the school policy and procedures with regards to peer on peer abuse.*

Aims / Objectives

- To ensure that staff are able to recognise that children are capable of abusing each other, what child on child abuse is and the different forms it can take.
- That it is clear that this issue is abuse and will not be tolerated.
- To ensure staff are clear as to the school policy and procedures for managing allegations made against other children/young people.
- To ensure there are clear procedures linked to how all child/ren involved and affected will be supported in school.
- To ensure that safeguarding arrangements in school have in place procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse.
- To ensure our children are taught about safeguarding, including child on child abuse, through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum.

As set out in Part one of "Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2025", all staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' and not dismiss any examples of such behaviour as "banter".

Introduction

At Marden High School we believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Pupils should be free from harm which could include harm from other pupils.

As a school, we promote positive behaviour and encourage relationships based on respect, consideration and understanding of the needs of others.

We recognise that children and young people's behaviours can and do exist on a wide continuum from normal and developmentally appropriate to problematic. Behaviour is often a form of communication of need and that a child's problematic or inappropriate behaviour is a sign that s/he is upset and that something is not right.

Sometimes children feel unsafe or out of control, so they take inappropriate action over the things they do control, like being able to hurt or mistreat someone. Problematic behaviours in a child may be non-verbal techniques to try to get their unmet needs resolved.

However, we recognise that individual children's behaviour can have a negative impact on the wellbeing of others. Generally these incidents can be dealt with under our behaviour for learning policy and procedures which in most cases, impacts on and de-escalates incidents of unwanted behaviour. These cases are not generally seen as peer on peer abuse.

Identifying issues of child on child abuse

Child on child abuse is when problematic behaviours escalate causing issues to another child or children that are beyond the circumstances mentioned above and can appear to be abusive, violent or potentially breaking the law.
There is not always a clear boundary between incidents that could be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as behaviour issues. This is a matter of professional

judgement and circumstances involved in each case.

However, it may be appropriate to regard a young person's behaviour as abusive and considered a safeguarding issue if some of the following features are found.

- There is an imbalance in power causing a vulnerability (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned
- The pupil being complained about has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children
- There are concerns about the intention of the pupil being complained about
- The incident/s are of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence
- The incident/s raise risk factors for other children in the school and beyond

If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to another child or children, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

We recognise that some children may potentially feel unwilling to report peer on peer abuse. They may also potentially not recognise that they are being abused. School staff should assume that sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence are happening in the community, and therefore potentially in the school. They should be vigilant to examples of such behaviours and report any concerns to the Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputies.

The North Tyneside Safeguarding Children Board (NTSCB) thresholds offer further information and signposting to services to help practitioners distinguish developmentally appropriate and/or harmful behaviours. If at any stage you are worried that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, follow normal child procedures in school. (See child protection and safeguarding policy).

Examples of child on child abuse allegations

Examples of peer on peer abuse allegations could include:

- Physical Abuse
  - violence, particularly pre-planned
  - forcing others to use drugs or alcohol
  - gender based violence

- Emotional Abuse
  - blackmail or extortion
  - threats and intimidation

- Sexual Abuse
  - indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assaults
  - forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting
  - young people suffering from sexual exploitation themselves may be forced to recruit other young people under threat of violence

- Sexual Exploitation
  - encouraging other children to attend inappropriate parties,
  - photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts
  - upskirting

- Bullying
  - Including cyber bullying

- Radicalisation
  - Older pupils may attempt to recruit younger pupils using any of the above methods

This is not an exhaustive list but highlight the types of behaviours which could be classified as peer on peer abuse.

Recognising the risk

At Marden High School we take peer on peer abuse as seriously as abuse by adults and ensure any identified risks and issues are subject to the same child protection procedures.

School staff should never dismiss child to child abusive behaviour as normal or as "banter" between young people or wait for the development of high thresholds before taking action. We recognise that although all children are potentially vulnerable to abuse by their peers, some children are more vulnerable such as those children, receiving statutory care/support or known to have experienced harm, abuse or exploitation with a disability, ill-health or developmental difficulties – including mental ill health and special educational needs in households or families with characteristics that may indicate higher levels of risk such as poverty, young carers or domestic violence who are vulnerable or of concern by virtue of their identity or nationality – including LGBTQ+ children and young people and refugees

Children's Commissioner Vulnerability report 2018

It is also recognised that the abuse between children may happen beyond the school environment and information technology can often be used for abusive behaviour between young people. This is known as contextual safeguarding.

> *Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.*

The Contextual Safeguarding Network

Evidence suggests that such children displaying harmful behaviours may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, may have witnessed or been subjected to physical or
sexual abuse, may have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences.

Our school will always consider that the pupil being complained about is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. They may therefore be suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm and in need of protection themselves. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the pupil being complained about must also address their individual and specific needs.

Prevention

It is not enough to respond to incidents as they arise. At Marden High School we strive to create an environment that actively discourages abuse and challenges the attitudes which underlie it. This is supported by our RSE policy and curriculum.

Action/s to be taken

As mentioned, pupil to pupil incidents are usually managed through our behaviour management policies and procedures. However when allegations against other pupils are of such a serious nature they raise safeguarding concerns, it could be considered as potential child to child abuse and normal safeguarding procedures should apply.

Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (Mrs Reece) or a Deputy DSL (Mrs Charlton and Mr Anderson)

- The DSL will contact the Front Door to discuss the case including all children involved. The DSL will follow through any actions and outcomes of the discussion and will make any appropriate referrals to children's social care which could be for the child/ren affected *and/or* the pupil being complained about.
- (As outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, if the DSL or Deputy DSL are not available consider speaking to a member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from the Front Door. If this happens, any action taken should be shared with DSL or deputy as soon is practically possible).
- The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussions and any actions/outcome and will keep a copy in the pupil files (all pupils involved in the allegation)
- If the allegations indicate a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police should be contacted at the earliest opportunity. However, in school we are mindful that the age of criminal responsibility in England is 10 years old meaning that children under 10 can't be arrested or charged with a crime. There are other punishments that can be given to children under 10 who break the law. Further advice can be sought regarding this from agencies involved.
- Parents, of both the pupil being complained about and the child/ren affected should be informed and kept updated on the progress of any referrals, actions and/or interventions. Further advice can be sought regarding this from agencies involved.
- If the case does not meet thresholds for others services to be involved, school will continue to deal with the matter using the school's usual disciplinary procedures.
- The needs and wishes of the affected child/ren should be taken in to account as much as is reasonably possible but DSLs and deputy DSLs will also need to consider if they have suffered significant harm and the need to protect others. Affected pupils should be offered support from specialist services.
- In situations where the school considers an ongoing safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan. The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow up evaluation with everyone concerned.

If the incident/s are of a sexual nature, school staff will follow the guidance in "KCSIE 2025" and additional guidance can be found on sexting or youth produced imagery in the document Sexting in schools and colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people

The guiding principles for dealing with these situations are outlined below:

- Basic safeguarding principles should apply throughout.
- The needs of the child/ren affected *and* the needs of the pupil being complained about must be considered separately.
- The pupil being complained about is likely to have considerable unmet needs and actions must include addressing this person's behaviour and its causes.
- All agencies involved must consider whether the pupil being complained about poses a risk to other children in including but not limited to school, the community or online ● There should be a co-ordinated approach by children's social care, education and health agencies. No agency should start a course of action that has implications for any other agency without appropriate consultation.
- School will only engage staff and agencies who are required to support the children involved and/or be involved in any investigations.