Bensham Grove Nursery School

ADDENDUM to the Child Protection Policy:

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

# Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 states that ‘Governing Bodies and Proprietors should ensure they facilitate a whole school approach to safeguarding. This means involving everyone in the school, and ensuring safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development. Ultimately, all systems, processes and policies should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.’ Furthermore, ‘Where there is a safeguarding concern, Governing Bodies, Proprietors and school leaders should ensure the child’s wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. The school safeguarding policies and procedures should be transparent, clear and easy to understand for staff, pupils, students, parents and carers. Systems should be in place, and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children to confidently report, any form of abuse, exploitation or neglect, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and knowing they can safely express their views and give feedback.’

All staff are aware that children can abuse other children (child-on-child abuse) and that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online (extra familial harm). It is important that all staff recognise indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

All staff understand that even if there are no reports of this type of harm, it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such, it is important that if staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse they will speak to their Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy).

This means that ALL staff will take a ‘zero-tolerance’ approach to any unacceptable behaviour including ‘banter’ and will seek to prevent, challenge and take action so that all children understand that any concerns regarding their welfare and safety will be taken seriously. This will encourage and promote a culture of acceptable behaviour and a safe educational environment for all children.

All staff must ensure that they reassure any victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. No victim should ever be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should they ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

* bullying (including online bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
* Hate incidents and hate crimes which may also include an online element
* abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as teenage relationship abuse) which may also include an online element;
* physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse);
* Racism occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their skin colour, nationality, ethnicity, or cultural group. Racist behaviour can include verbal abuse, physical attacks, exclusion from activities or opportunities and microaggressions, which can be conscious and unconscious. It can occur in person or online;
* Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).
* Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) which is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive. HSB can occur online and/or face to face, and can also occur simultaneously between the two – and includes, for example:
* Sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include and online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence); and 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; threatening the described behaviour, whether in person or by digital communications;
* Sexual harassment which is ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school and can include sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, calling someone sexualised names, intrusive questions about a person’s sex life, and spreading sexual rumours, sexual “jokes” or taunting – suggestive looks, staring or leering – sexual gestures – physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone’s clothes, displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature and online sexual harassment which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
* Upskirting – which is a criminal offence, involving taking a picture or film under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their underwear, genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.
* Online sexual harassment – this may be stand-alone or part of a wider pattern of sexual violence and/or harassment. It may include: non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery), sharing of unwanted explicit content; revenge pornography, which is a criminal offence; sexualised online bullying, unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media, sexual exploitation, coercion and threats, and coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they are not comfortable with online.
* Misogyny – commonly defined as dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against girls and women. Misogynistic rhetoric is also commonly connected to extreme machoism or harmful ideas about masculinity which can impose damaging and unrealistic expectations and pressures on male students. There are concerns about such content being promoted or endorsed online, for example, by online influencers using TikTok or other social media platforms.
* Misandry – commonly defined as dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against boys and men.

(Farrer and Co. 2023).

 At Bensham Grove Nursery School we are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse.

In particular ensuring that school staff protect children by, wherever possible being aware of the nature and level of risk that children are exposed to, having a clear and comprehensive strategy specific to that child’s safeguarding context and having a whole school safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse. This policy is preventative in its response to child-on-child abuse by raising awareness of issues, supporting staff in identifying them with children, and providing appropriate response and intervention that is followed consistently across the whole school workforce. This policy will also encourage parents to share information about any risk of harm to their child and be clear on the school expectations of how this will be managed. (Farrer and Co. 2023)

All staff, Governors and Proprietors have signed to say that they have read, understood and agreed to work within this policy framework and parents have access to this policy.

This policy will be updated annually.

# Purpose and Aim

‘Research from Farrer and Co has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by other children, parents or adults in the community, prior to their abuse of another child/other children’. (Farrer and Co. 2023)

Children may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as child-on-child abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child-on-child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

At Bensham Grove Nursery School we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

* Child Protection Policy
* Data Protection Policy
* Record Keeping and Retention Policy
* Attendance Policy
* Behaviour Policy

# Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children’s Act 1989 that the child’s welfare is paramount. Another key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023, highlighting that “Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child, listen to what they say, observe their behaviour, take their views seriously, and work with them and their families and the people who know them well when deciding how to support their needs” (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023). This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 through ensuring procedures are in place in school to hear the voice of the child and to be mindful of the contexts children live in.

At Bensham Grove Nursery School we are committed to the following described preventative strategies to protect and support children from child-on-child abuse.

# Preventative Strategies for Schools

## Recognition

At Bensham Grove Nursery School we have appropriate strategies in place in order to prevent the issue of child-on-child abuse rather than responding reactively.

At Bensham Grove Nursery School we recognise that child-on-child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms and that even if incidents are not being reported it does not mean that they are not happening. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting children to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff. This involves staff analysing any incidents for trends, patterns and identifying any areas around the site that may appear to be ‘less safe’.

Staff will also have access to regular CPD and training to ensure a consistent approach to managing child-on-child issues. All staff should also be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. (KCSIE, 2022).

## School Culture and Ethos and ‘Zero-Tolerance’ Approach

In Bensham Grove Nursery School we take a ‘zero-tolerance’ approach to abuse, harm or bullying between children and this is clearly expressed in our school’s ethos and values and will be shared with all school partners including children, parents and carers.

## A Safe Environment to Share Concerns Alongside a Positive Curriculum

It is therefore important that in school there is an open environment where children feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This will be strengthened through a strong and positive PHSE/SMSC/RSE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced-based and discriminatory behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. The curriculum will be tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of individual children, including children who are victims of abuse and children with special educational needs or disabilities.

All staff are made aware that children may not feel ready, or know how, to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected and they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. E.g., children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability or language barriers. This will not prevent staff from having professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL (or Deputy) if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.

Therefore, to enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure that Governing Bodies or Proprietors feel confident that the whole workforce are supported and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of children including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is necessary for whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to children in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice. This is in line with school’s legal obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty) and local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a child seeking no further help or advice. Systems are in place and they are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children to confidently report, any form of abuse, exploitation or neglect, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and knowing they can express their views and give feedback.

## Involve Parents

In Bensham Grove Nursery School we ensure open two-way communication is available through a variety of platforms so that both parents and staff are working together to deal with any issues.

## Partnership Working

Multi agency working can consolidate in house procedures in school. By accessing advice, support and guidance, effective decisions can be made in collaboration to improve outcomes for children who may be at risk of harm. Seeking advice and guidance can act as a preventative measure so that the right course of action is taken at the earliest opportunity. It is also necessary that we actively refer concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse where necessary to Local Authority Children’s Social Care and the police where appropriate. This is particularly important because child-on-child abuse can be a complex issue, and even more so where wider safeguarding concerns exist. It is often not appropriate for one single agency (where the incident cannot be managed internally) to try to address the issue alone – it requires effective partnership working (Farrer and Co. 2022).

Schools which excel at tackling bullying (child-on-child abuse) have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. That culture extends beyond the classroom to the corridors, the dining hall, the playground, and beyond the school gates including travel to and from school. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest. (Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017).

# Child-on-Child Abuse Explained Further

For these purposes, child-on-child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships and wider peer associations. Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including: bullying and physical abuse, (KCSIE, 2022). Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives and spaces in which they spend their time. Any response to child-on-child abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of child-on-child abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's lived experiences. This can be done by adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that school’s response to alleged incidents of child-on-child abuse takes into account any potential complexity (Farrer and Co. 2022).

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm. This means adopting a whole school community approach by ensuring all staff: are aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school and/or can occur between children outside of these environments (KCSIE, 2022), understand how a child’s wider context may have impact on them; contribute to creating a strong safeguarding culture in school by following policies that address child-on-child abuse and harmful attitudes; promoting positive and healthy relationships and attitudes to difference (including gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability), hotspot mapping to identify risky areas in school, training on potential bias and stereotyped assumptions; being alert to and monitoring changes in children’s behaviour and/or attendance, challenging poor threshold decisions about children at risk of harm in extra-familial settings as well as referring concerns about contexts to relevant local agencies. (Farrer and Co. 2022)

Research suggests that child-on-child abuse remains a serious concern affecting children in the UK (Farrer and Co, 2022). Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as ‘banter’ or ‘part of growing up’. Research suggests that child-on-child abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. It is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators, but all child-on-child abuse must be taken seriously (KCSIE, 2022). Barriers to disclosure will also be different. As a result, schools need to explore the gender dynamics of child-on-child abuse within their settings and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender imbalanced environments (Farrer and Co. 2022). It is critical to be aware of the role that inequality and discrimination can play in child-on-child abuse. Socio-economic inequality within a school or college can increase bullying, and racial and ethnic minority status can be a risk factor for victimisation by peers. Children from minoritised groups are at much higher risk for poor health and behavioural outcomes as a result of discriminatory bullying. (Farrer and Co, 2022)

It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

## Children with Special Educational Needs

Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. These can include:

* assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child’s disability without further exploration;
* being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children;
* the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
* communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

To address these additional challenges, schools and colleges should consider extra pastoral support for children with SEND or certain medical conditions particularly when investigating any form of child-on-child abuse.

(KCSIE, 2022)

## Adultification

This is a form of racial prejudice in which children from minoritised groups are treated as more mature than they actually are by a reasonable social standard of development. This may lead to failure to recognise victims of child-on-child abuse and to respond appropriately to the experiences of children from minoritised ethnic groups. Whilst adultification can impact all children in certain ways it is important that there is an acknowledgement that it specifically affects Black children. (Farrer and Co, 2022)

At Bensham Grove Nursery School the specific needs of all our children will be considered and supported in all incidents.

## Language

For the purposes of this policy the language used will refer to ‘victims’. It is a widely recognised term; however all children may not recognise themselves as a victim or want to be described in this way. The term alleged perpetrators will also be used, this is to ensure that children are not given ‘labels’ about their behaviour unfairly and without any full and thorough conclusive investigation and because they themselves found the abusive behaviour harmful or may have been a victim of previous harm.

The language used is to support victims so that they understand that they will always be believed, supported, listened to and taken seriously. The language used to children and parents in the reporting of any incidents that may have occurred could impact on any future rehabilitation of children following any investigations that may occur. The use of certain words can be both inflammatory and distressing for children and their parents, so care will be taken in the discussion of incidents with parents to ensure they are factual and accurate.

## Types of Abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between children and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

### Bullying (including Cyberbullying, Prejudice-Based and Discriminatory Bullying)

The new definition of bullying is, ‘a person who habitually seeks to harm or intimidate those who they perceive as vulnerable’. (Taken from the Oxford, Cambridge and Collins Dictionary, updated 2018)

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour.

(Preventing and Tackling Bullying July 2017)

### Prejudiced-Based and Discriminatory Bullying (including hate incidents and hate crimes which may also include an online element)

The term prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both and online, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular, prejudices to do with disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual). This can also be described as a hate incident or crime.

### Physical Abuse e.g., (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling etc.)

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a child has engaged in such behaviour, including accidently before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

### Racism

Racism occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their skin colour, nationality, ethnicity, or cultural group. Racist behaviour can include verbal abuse, physical attacks, exclusion from activities or opportunities and microaggressions, which can be conscious and unconscious. It can occur in person or online

# Measuring the Behaviour

Simon Hackett’s continuum of behaviour (taken from Farrer and Co. 2022) can be a useful guide to measure the behaviour that has occurred and consider the circumstances around the incident (s).

The continuum looks at whether it:

* is socially acceptable
* involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time
* is socially acceptable within the peer group
* is problematic and concerning
* involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g., related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
* involves an element of coercion or pre-planning
* involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power
* involves a misuse of power

Behaviour which is not abusive at first may potentially become abusive quickly or over time. Intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour which may be displayed by a child is vital and could potentially prevent their behaviour from progressing on a continuum to become problematic, abusive and/or violent - and ultimately requiring (greater/more formal) engagement with specialist external and/or statutory agencies.

# Expected Action Taken for All Staff

All staff will be alert to the well-being of children and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ (Farrer and Co. 2022).

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and alleged perpetrator of the harm, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm.

Firstly, all staff will need to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. It is important for all staff to deal with a situation of child-on-child abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get a true, accurate account of the facts around what has happened, so that nothing is forgotten. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and confidentially and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. For example; do not use the word perpetrator, this can quickly create a ‘blame’ culture and leave a child labelled.

In all cases of child-on-child abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to children and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Staff will also be mindful that wider safeguarding concerns may influence the child’s account of the event(s). Alongside this peer pressure and the impact of sharing information about the incident(s) may also influence a child’s account.

## Gather the Facts

The most appropriate member of staff with the best relationship with the child should be the person alongside the child who wishes to disclose wherever possible. However, staff should always be aware that children may choose to disclose to any member of staff that they feel most comfortable with and therefore all staff need basic training in managing disclosures.. Staff must also be aware that an initial disclosure to a trusted adult may only be the first incident reported, rather than representative of a singular incident and that trauma can impact memory and so children may not be able to recall all details or timeline of abuse.

In all circumstances, staff need to speak to all the children involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account. The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the children to tell you what happened. This involves listening carefully to the child, reflecting back, using the child’s language, being non-judgemental, being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed and not asking leading questions. This means only interrupting the child to gain clarity with open questions, ‘where, when, why, who’. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?) Then, a full and clear record of exactly what the child has said in their own language should be made (and no individual interpretation of the facts made which could impact on the disclosure) after the child has finished the disclosure, so the child feels listened to and stored following each school/setting’s own recording protocols (paper or electronic systems).

## Consider the Intent (Begin to Risk Assess)

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a child to be able to harm another?

## Decide on Your Next Course of Action

If from the information that school gather’s we believe any child to be at risk of significant harm, a safeguarding referral to Local Authority Children’s Social Care will be made immediately. This action, in most circumstances, will be undertaken by the Designated Safeguarding Lead but in the event of their absence the referral can be made by another member of staff. If this is the case, once Local Authority Children’s Social Care has been contacted and made a decision on what will happen next then school will be informed of the next steps.

If Local Authority Children’s Social Care and the police intend to pursue this further, they may ask to interview the children in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to also. It is important for school to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

It may also be that Local Authority Children’s Social Care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case school/DSL may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, school agrees with the decision, school may then be left to inform parents.

## Confidentiality and Anonymity

Any staff member taking a report should never promise confidentiality as it is very likely that it will be in the best interest of the victim to seek advice and guidance from others in order to provide support and engage appropriate agencies. Ultimately, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) will have to balance the victims wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children.

## Informing Parents

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from Local Authority Children’s Social Care school have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then parents should be informed as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents. Parents would not be informed if by doing so the child was put at further risk of significant harm.

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then school will encourage the child to share the information with their parent or share it with parents on their behalf (they may be scared to tell parents that they are being harmed in any way). Where school can evidence are acting in the best interests of the child we would not be criticised, however this would be the case if school actively breached the rights and choices of the child.

The best way to inform parents is face to face. Although this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a child may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

## Points to Consider (Risk Assessment):

### The Wishes and Feelings of the Victim

It is important to understand how the victim wants to proceed to allow as much control as is reasonably possible over the decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed.

### What is the Age and Development of the Children Involved?

How old are the children involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? (In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following)). Any imbalance of power and control must be considered.

### Are There Any Additional Vulnerabilities inclusive of any minoritised children?

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Therefore, care must be taken to ascertain any changes in mood or behaviour without attributing that to the child’s condition. Every effort must be made to overcome barriers to communication and ensure the voice of the child is heard. This includes any child that may be minoritised due to their life circumstances.

### Where Did the Incident or Incidents Take Place?

Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so, was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?

### What Was the Explanation by all Children Involved of What Occurred?

Can each of the children give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the children involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one child different from another and why?

### What is Each of the Children’s Own Understanding of What Occurred?

Do the children know/understand what they are doing? E.g., do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the child’s explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the child have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other child?

In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If school are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, advice will be sought immediately from Local Authority Children’s Social Care.

### Repetition

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

### Ongoing Risks

Are there any ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school, college or other setting staff?

### Contextual Safeguarding/Extra Familial Harm

Is there any other related or wider context involving the child, including any links to child sexual exploitation or child criminal exploitation?

Risk Assessment from KCSIE, 2022 (all risk assessments should consider:)

* The victim, especially their protection and support
* Whether there may have been other victims
* The alleged perpetrator
* All the other children at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrators or from future harms and
* The time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer.

# Outcomes

The outcome of the investigation will follow local threshold guidance. Therefore, either a referral has been made to the Local Authority Children’s Social Care for a full investigation (tier 4). It may have resulted in Local Authority Children’s Social Care undertaking a further assessment (Tier 3) or as a school we may have identified additional services/intervention that are non-statutory and in which case completed an early help assessment (Tier 2). It may be that on investigation, a decision has been made to handle the incident (s) internally, in which case the school may implement a risk assessment plan (Tier 1).

In any of the above outcomes, school has a duty of care to manage the education needs of both children in which case a risk assessment plan may be needed irrespective of the outcome.

# Next Steps

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

## For the Child Who Has Been Harmed (Victim)

Victims may not display the whole picture immediately. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged. Therefore, school will remain alert to the possible challenges of detecting those signs and show sensitivity to the needs of the child irrespective of how overt the child’s distress is.

What support they require depends on the individual child. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends. In which case it is necessary that this child continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the child may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other children.

If the child feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment/safety plan can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

## For the Child Who Has Displayed Harmful Behaviour (Alleged Perpetrator)

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the child has behaved in such a way. It may be that the child is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an early help referral and the child may require additional support from family members.

# Record-Keeping

Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse…, and in promoting children’s welfare, including in relation to their educational outcomes. Schools have clear powers to share, hold and use information for these purposes.

At Bensham Grove Nursery School arrangements are in place that set out clearly the processes and principles for sharing information within the school or college and with local authority children’s social care, the safeguarding partners and other organisations, agencies, and practitioners as required. Information will be shared as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children, whether this is when problems are first emerging, or where a child is already known to the local authority children’s social care. The Data Protection Act 2018, and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) place duties on schools and to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure. Under the Data Protection Law, legitimate safeguarding concerns about a child allow school and professionals to record, share and retain even the most sensitive personal data as necessary to support school policies (even when it is not feasible to obtain consent. (Farrer and Co, 2022)

# After Care

It is important that following the incident the children involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the children do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). In which case, regular reviews with the children following the incident(s) are imperative.

# Safety Planning

Safety planning is a positive way of supporting a child who may benefit from a planned approach; this may be either the alleged victim or the alleged perpetrator. Safety plans support the child by considering the behaviours that may be risky and plan ways to manage triggers and to seek support from adults and peers. They are inclusive of parents and staff and are a planned intervention to support children in feeling secure in the school, helping children identify behaviours that may leave them feeling anxious or at risk and have strategies that they can apply to keep themselves feeling safe. The language of safety planning is more positive than risk assessment and can give security to the child that a joined up approach is being followed by all in school. Safety Plans are available via PGSF.

# Disciplinary Action

Taking disciplinary action and still providing support are not mutually exclusive actions. In some circumstances, the school may need to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including (a) to ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour; (b) to demonstrate to the child/children and others that child-on-child abuse can never be tolerated; and (c) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children. However, these considerations must be balanced against the child's/children's own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action school will always consider its duty to safeguard all children from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the child-on-child abuse and the causes of it.

# Review of Circumstances

Following any incident of harm, it is necessary for the school to consider if anything could have been done differently. Use of PG:SF proforma for internal lessons learnt, can support in identifying under the business model of PG:SF what identified changes within school needs to occur. This demonstrates how proactive school is in continually reviewing its policies and systems in effectively keeping children safe.

**This policy has been heavily supported by the key document:**

Farrer and Co: Addressing child on child abuse: a resource for schools and colleges, 2023.

<https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/clients-and-sectors/safeguarding/addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf>

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

* Bensham Grove Nursery School’s Child Protection Policy 2023 and the local safeguarding partnership arrangements.

This policy template has been developed and supported by the following:

* DFE: Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

* DFE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies. July 2017

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf>

* Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

* Sharing nudes and semi nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people, December 2020

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/609874/6_2939_SP_NCA_Sexting_In_Schools_FINAL_Update_Jan17.pdf>