



CLAYESMORE

CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY

Responsible:	Deputy Head Pastoral
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1. Introduction

Clayesmore School recognises that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. This includes verbal abuse as well as physical abuse. Child-on-child abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as part of 'banter' or 'growing up.'

We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse within Clayesmore and beyond.

In cases where child-on-child abuse is identified, we will follow our child protection procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation.

We recognise that child-on-child abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

- Bullying and shaming
- Sharing of nudes (formerly sexting)
- Upskirting
- Abuse in intimate relationships
- Physical assault (groping)
- Shouting abuse
- Spreading rumours

- 'Banter'
- Cyber bullying and /or abuse
- Radicalisation
- Child Sexual exploitation
- Gang association and serious violence (including County Lines)

Some of these behaviours are handled with reference to the Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Online Safety Policy.

This policy concentrates on child-on-child abuse in the context of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in KCSiE 2025 and should be read in conjunction with Pan Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding procedures.

2. Policy Development

The policy has been developed in consultation with SLT, Governors, staff, parents and students

3. 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 peers, parents or adults in the community.

4. Understanding child-on-child abuse

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex or a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or a group of children.

The impact of this behaviour can be very distressing and have an impact on academic achievement and emotional health and wellbeing.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence may also occur online in the form of pornography, grooming, sharing of nudes/semi-nudes, cyberbullying, and the spread of misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories..

5. Vulnerable Groups

We recognise that all children can be at risk, however, some groups are more vulnerable. Vulnerabilities can include: experience of abuse within family; living with domestic violence; young people in care; children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities); children who identify as or are perceived as LGBT and/or have any other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

Research tells us that girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers and they are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching, but this is not confined to girls. We recognise that abuse may happen inside or outside of school, and we will take steps to safeguard pupils in both instances.

Some children who do not report intimate relationship abuse may display other behaviour, such as antisocial behaviour. We recognise that both boys and girls experience child-on-child abuse but that they may do so in gendered ways.

6. Child-on-child abuse and boarding

The unique nature of boarding may mean that children could be at greater risk of child-on-child abuse incidents as children share overnight accommodation. To reduce the risk of child-on-child abuse within the boarding house pupils are reminded frequently about the importance of respecting each other's space. Boarders are moved around termly, depending on the year group, to ensure no two children share significant time together.

Boarding houses are supervised by Matrons, two resident members of house staff and a team of tutors.

Boarding houses are secured overnight with unique entrance codes.

7. Responding to alleged incidents and responding to reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment

When a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment is made staff should follow the school safeguarding policy and report to the DSL. The DSL or Deputy DSL will take the lead and report to other agencies such as social services or the police as required.

- Clayesmore School will take all reports seriously and will reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe
- Staff are trained to report using MyConcern

- Staff must not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the DSL, or social care), but staff will only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it.
- A written report will be made as soon as possible after the interview recording the facts as presented by the child. The child will not be asked to write anything down. This will be made on MyConcern.
- Where the allegation includes an online element, we follow the Search and Confiscation policy. Where reports include images or online content, staff must not view or forward images unless it is unavoidable to safeguard the child. If viewing is unavoidable, it should be carried out by a member of the safeguarding team and another member of staff must be present; images must not be copied, printed or stored beyond recording the fact of their existence. Staff are signposted to the UKCIS guidance on sharing nudes and semi-nudes (March 2024)
- We will investigate allegations of child-on-child abuse made about incidents that occur outside school grounds when appropriate.
- In all cases, the DSL will be informed as soon as possible.

8. Risk Assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case by case basis. The risk and needs assessment should consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support
- The alleged perpetrator
- All the other children (and if appropriate, adults and staff) at Clayesmore

The DSL will consider whether allegations indicate group-based child sexual exploitation, serious violence or organised exploitation (including County Lines). The school will record and regularly review patterns and trends of child-on-child incidents and share relevant intelligence with local partners to inform prevention activity.

Risk assessments will be stored on MyConcern

9. Action following a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment

We will consider:

- The wishes of the victim and how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment
- The nature of the alleged incidents, including whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour
- The ages of the children involved
- The developmental stages of the children involved
- Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, mature or more confident? Does the victim have a learning difficulty or a disability?
- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, school staff; other related issues?

10. Follow up actions

- Depending on considerations above, the DSL will usually contact the Family Support & Advice Line / ChAD: 01305 228558 (professionals)
- **Children Sharing a Classroom**
 - The perpetrator will usually be removed from classes they share with the victim
 - We will consider how best to keep the victim and the alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises and transport
 - These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgement on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator

11. Options for Management

1. **Internally:** In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, we may decide that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally. We may use the anti-bullying policy and pastoral support. Parents will be involved where appropriate. The decision to keep the incident internal will be made based on the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All decisions and discussions around making this decision will be recorded on MyConcern. Incidents of sexual violence or harassment will be recorded on the Behaviour Log.
2. **Early Help:** It may be that children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from Early Help. This means providing help as soon as a problem emerges. It might be that counselling is appropriate.

3. **Refer to Social Care and/or Police:** Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm or is in immediate danger the DSL will make a referral via the Family Support & Advice Line / ChAD: 01305 228558 (professionals) following the referrals process and contacting the police when advised to do so.

Further information and advice on these processes can be found in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, Part 5.

And are summarised in this [flowchart](#), taken from the Safeguarding Handbook, from Safeguarding in Schools.

12. Prevention

Clayesmore School actively seeks to raise awareness of and to prevent all forms of child-on-child sexual violence or sexual harassment by education and training the whole school community about these issues. This will include training all governors, SLTs, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse and how to identify and respond to it.

The school will maintain records of DSL/DDSL training and encourage staff to take recognised courses (for example NSPCC sharing-nudes training). The DSL will ensure the school checks for new DfE guidance (including RSHE and gender-questioning guidance) and updates the policy accordingly.

Training will include:

1. Contextual safeguarding
2. Being able to identify and recognise specific behaviours and attitudes
3. Understanding the imperative of taking all forms of child-on-child abuse seriously, no matter how low level they may seem and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing.
4. Educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum
5. Using a variety of inside and outside speakers to address issues such as gender bias, respect and consent.
6. Students are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse.
7. Students are aware of the NSPCC Helpline for the victims of sexual abuse in schools [tel: 0800 136 663](tel:0800136663)
8. Students understand the school's approach to such issues, including its zero tolerance approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse.
9. Students take part in policy making and educating and supporting each other.

10. Engaging parents on the issue through information letters, policy forums, discussion groups and outside speakers.
11. Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse incidents or issues are fed back to the DSL so they can see and address trends and provide support to students when necessary.
12. Challenging gender bias and other attitudes that are underlying within the culture.
13. Working with governors, staff, parents and students to promote positive values and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect among all members of the school community.
14. Maintaining a culture in which students feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgemental environment and know that they will be listened to.
15. Respond promptly and appropriately to cases of child-on-child abuse.

13. Multi Agency Working

Clayesmore actively engages with local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse and works closely with Family Support/Advice line: Professional's Telephone Number: 01305 228558 and 01305 228866 (families/public) in the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership and also with the Dorset Police.

These relationships help us to ensure that we are able to prevent, identify early and appropriately handle cases of child-on-child abuse. They help us to:

- Understand referral pathways and routes to early help
- Ensure our students have access to support
- Inform ourselves of new trends and emerging risks in our local area or the country as a whole.