



Child-on-Child Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance
including Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children

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1. Introduction

1.1 York College is committed to the early identification, intervention against and prevention of all forms of child-on-child abuse, both in and out of College. We commit to:

- a. The protection and safeguarding of young people. The College community should be aware of the complexities of the risks which students may face and create and embed a clear and comprehensive policy which is suited to all safeguarding needs.
- b. All staff understanding and practising their responsibilities of their commitment to its whole-College approach in response to child-on-child abuse.
- c. Recognition that this policy has been created to prevent child-on-child abuse, rather than adopting a reactive approach to child-on-child abuse as a response to an alleged serious incident.
- d. Recognising national and heightened concerns about these issues – particularly in light of the [Everyone's Invited](#) platform (2021) and the even greater need to ensure that College students are safe at all times. This policy is central to this approach.
- e. Encouraging parents to participate in our procedures so that if a student is made to feel unsafe by the behaviour of one of their peers, they should inform the College immediately so that immediate and proportionate action can be taken.

1.2 This is the over-arching policy for any issue that could constitute child-on-child abuse. It should be read alongside the following:

- Safeguarding Young People and Vulnerable Adults (Child Protection) Policy
- Values and Behaviour Strategy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Student Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

1.3 This policy does not use the terms 'perpetrator' or 'abuser'. York College actively adopts a safeguarding approach to all those involved in allegations of, or concerns about, child-on-child abuse. Research shows that some young people who engage in such abuse have sometimes been victims of it themselves, and are therefore vulnerable, and that context is vital in assessing such harmful behaviour, and in deciding any sanctions which may apply.

1.4 This policy refers to 'students' or 'young people' who are both defined as being under 18 years old, but it also reflects the College's commitment to a wider approach to safeguarding. We recognise that there may be additional considerations in relation to students who are over 18, or under 16, regarding how local agencies or partners

respond. In addition, the College's approach to student-produced sexual imagery will differ, depending on the age of the students involved.

1.5 This policy will be reviewed annually (and at any other time during the course of the year as necessary) to ensure that it consistently addresses the risks to which students are being, or may be, exposed. Staff and students will be involved in the review of the policy to inform the assessment of the impact and effectiveness of the policy during the previous year.

1.6. This policy builds on [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges](#) (September 2021), [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (September 2022), [Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding children \(UKCCIS\)](#), the NSPCC's and Research in Practice's [Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework](#), Hackett's [Sexualised Behaviour Continuum](#) and [Sharing nudes and semi nudes: advice for education settings](#).

2. What is Child-on-Child Abuse?

Child-on-child abuse is defined as 'any form of physical, sexual and emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships, both intimate and non-intimate' (Abuse between young people: a contextual account (Routledge 2017)).

2.1. All staff should be aware that child-on-child abuse takes many forms. This is most likely to include, but is not limited to:

- a. Bullying (including cyberbullying)
- b. Physical abuse
- c. Sexual abuse
- d. Sexual violence and sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment.
- e. Upskirting; which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.
- f. Sexting.
- g. Initiation / hazing type violence and rituals.
- h. Gender-based violence.
- i. Relationship abuse (including domestic violence) where abuse takes place within existing intimate relationship(s).
- j. Non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and videos.

2.2. All child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. Staff must be aware that young people may be abused out of College but should not minimise the potential risks of child-on-child abuse within College too.

2.3. We recognise that child-on-child abuse must be addressed based on the context in which it occurs. Contextual safeguarding recognises an approach which

understands the harm and abuse to which young people can be exposed beyond their families.

- 2.4. As the College operates a contextual approach to safeguarding, it recognises the need to work alongside a Local Safeguarding Partnership, rather than just referring young people to it.

This means:

- a. We will be aware of, and will seek to understand the effect that wider social contexts can have on young people
- b. We are committed to creating a safe culture within College by implementing all the policies and procedures that address child-on-child abuse
- c. We are committed to creating healthy relationships and attitudes to gender, sexuality and all forms of difference
- d. We will provide training for staff and students on potential bias and stereotyping and commit to an inclusive approach for all members of our College community
- e. We will commit to identifying potential geographical 'hotspots' on the College site which could be risky for students, thus improving the pre-existing College environment for students
- f. These 'hot spots' can also include certain cohorts and friendship clusters
- g. We will be alert to, and monitor, changes in students' behaviour, wellbeing and attendance

3.1 How widespread is Child-on-Child Abuse?

Research suggests child-on-child abuse is one of the most prevalent forms of abuse affecting young people in the UK. Firmin and Curtis (2015) suggest that more than 40% of teenage girls aged between 13 and 17 have experienced sexual coercion.

3.2 When does behaviour become problematic or abusive?

Sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, as suggested by Professor Simon Hackett (2010); from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is 'harmful sexual behaviour'. The term has been widely adopted in child protection and is used in this advice. Harmful sexual behaviour can occur online and/or offline and can also occur simultaneously between the two.

When considering harmful sexual behaviour, ages and the stages of development of the students involved are critical factors. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference for example.

To respond appropriately, we need to understand where a young person's behaviour falls on this spectrum. Below is Professor Hackett's model which demonstrates the range of sexual behaviour which can be presented by young people. It is not exhaustive but offers a means by which we can understand this behaviour and react to it sensitively and proportionately.

Sexual behaviours continuum model, Hackett (2010)

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmentally expected • Socially acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problematic and concerning behaviour • Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected • No overt elements of victimisation • Consent issues may be unclear • May lack reciprocity or equal power • May include levels of compulsivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given • May include elements of expressive violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour • Sadism

4. Are some students more vulnerable than others to child-on-child abuse?

4.1 The influence of peers is possibly the most significant factor in a young person's social development and, as such, anyone can be subject to child-on-child abuse. However, there are certain groups who may be more at risk than others. For example, those with protected characteristics such as:

- Those who are socially isolated from their peer-group
- Those who are questioning their sexuality and identity
- Those with SEND needs: and we should be careful not to assume that indicators of possible abuse relate only to their specific learning needs and are not investigated beyond this assumption
- Those with different ethnicity, race or religious beliefs

5. How can we create a whole College approach to preventing child-on-child abuse?

5.1 York College is actively committed to education for its community – staff, students, parents, governors and volunteers – in raising awareness of, identifying, and preventing, child-on-child abuse. This will include:

- an understanding of contextual safeguarding
- the identification of specific behaviour, including online activities, by encouraging young people to use social media responsibly and encouraging them to identify and

manage digitally abusive behaviour

- ensuring that even low-level concerns are followed up and never dismissing any form of concern as 'banter' or 'teasing'
- educating young people about the widespread nature of child-on-child abuse. This includes tutorial/PSHE/RSE lessons about consent but also in the wider College curriculum where equality and respect should be promoted at all times.

5.2 Students should be regularly informed about the harmful effects of this abuse and the vulnerabilities of those who experience it, alongside possible reasons for such behaviour.

5.3 Students should be clear about what actions to take if they witness such abuse and that College operates a zero-tolerance approach to such incidents.

5.4 Parents should also be involved via public events and face-to-face meetings to promote this policy. They should also be regularly consulted as to their view of perceived risks to students and how the College can most effectively address them.

6. Promoting a positive culture

6.1 The entire College community – governors, staff, volunteers, students and parents/carers should work together to promote a positive culture of tolerance and respect amongst all its members.

6.2 Every member of the community has a part to play in ensuring that abusive behaviour is never acceptable and that everyone contributes to creating this safe environment.

6.3 Students should feel able to share their concerns in an open and non-judgemental environment and that staff are trained to develop these trusting relationships.

6.4 Staff should respond to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately. This involves informing the College's safeguarding team so that they can spot concerning trends and patterns in behaviour and offer additional support. This is achieved via regular safeguarding meetings involving cases both in and out of College.

7 Multi-agency working

7.1 York College actively engages with its Local Safeguarding Partnership in relation to child-on-child abuse and works closely with York City and North Yorkshire Children's Services, the police and other relevant agencies in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's procedures, as well as with other schools and Colleges.

7.2 These relationships are essential in preventing, identifying, and appropriately handling, child-on-child abuse. It is also important for students and staff to understand the referral pathways which are available in the local area and for students to be able

to access them quickly. This information is available on the student portal.

7.3 Working together with local agencies is crucial in supporting and helping to inform the local community about the College's response to child-on-child abuse, as well as allowing for an understanding of any underlying trends and patterns of behaviour which are emerging in this wider context.

7.4 Often, child-on-child abuse cases are complex and where the incident cannot be managed by the College itself, it is imperative that effective partnership working is involved, especially when wider safeguarding concerns exist.

8 General Principles

8.1 All concerns and allegations of child-on-child abuse must be handled promptly, sensitively, and appropriately.

8.2 All responses should:

- Include a detailed and factual report of the concerns and allegations in the wider context in which they occur
- Assess whether it is appropriate for the police or Children's Services to carry out a thorough investigation
- Treat all young people involved as a potential risk. This should also include the young person who is allegedly responsible for the abuse as they may have unmet needs and be at risk themselves
- Ensure that a safeguarding response is in place for both the young person who has allegedly been abused, and anyone who is alleged to be responsible for it and understand that sanctions may need to be applied for the latter

8.3 Take into account that:

- the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for all those involved and address the impact of wider contexts, such as peer groups, family, College environment, local community, previous experiences of crime and victimisation and the young person's online presence
- in order to mitigate risk, changes may need to be made to some of the above
- the DSL or DDSL should discuss any referral with the young person and their parents/carers before it is made and obtain consent. This may not be possible if a referral has to be made immediately, however the College should manage the young person's expectations of information sharing and keep them and their parents/carers informed of developments where appropriate and safe to do so
- the wishes of the young person who has allegedly been abused must be taken into account and given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding an investigation and how they will be supported
- the wishes of the student alleged to have caused harm should also be taken into account regarding decisions in investigations and how they will be supported

- Support and protection will also be provided to students alleged to have caused harm or, in to apply a balanced safeguarding approach to both parties

9. What should be done if a student (child) is suspected of being at risk of being abused by another student (child), or that a student (child) may be at risk of abusing, or is abusing another student (child)?

9.1 All the above factors should be discussed with the DSL or DDSL immediately who will adhere to the College's Safeguarding and Vulnerable Adults (Child Protection) Policy and then agree a course of action.

9.2 Where a young person is suffering, or is likely to suffer, a referral to Children's Services should be made (and to the police, if appropriate) immediately.

9.3 Anyone can make a referral. If it is not made by the DSL or DDSL, they should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made.

9.4 If a student speaks to a member of the staff about child-on-child abuse, the member should listen in a non-judgemental way and offer understanding and sensitive responses regardless of whether the student discloses being harmed or causing harm.

10. How will College respond to concerns about, or allegations of, child-on-child abuse?

10.1 The DSL or DDSL will discuss with the reporting member of staff and, where necessary, take immediate steps to ensure the safety of all young people affected.

10.2 Where allegations concern the sharing of images of children on-line, the DSL or DDSL should consider what urgent action can be taken. They should seek specialist help in preventing the images spreading further and remove the images.

10.3 In such cases, the DSL or DDSL should use their professional judgement to assess the nature and seriousness of the alleged behaviour (from both parties) and determine whether the alleged behaviour should be dealt with internally or whether external support is required (from The Internet Watch Foundation, for example).

10.4 In borderline cases, the DSL or DDSL may want to consult with YCC or NYCC Children's Services, North Yorkshire LADO and other relevant agencies in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's procedures on a no-names basis, to plan the appropriate response.

10.5 Where the DSL or DDSL believes, or suspects, that a young person is being subjected to abusive or violent behaviour, they should contact Children's Services and/or the police immediately, and certainly within 24 hours of being made aware of the alleged behaviour.

10.6 The DSL or DDSL will discuss the allegations with the external agency and then agree a plan which may include:

- management of the case internally but with help from external agencies, where appropriate
- the College contributing to an inter-agency early help assessment to enable the young person's and those of their families, needs to be targeted
- refer the young person(s) to Children's Services for a Section 17 (Child in Need) or a Section 47 (Child Protection) statutory assessment as appropriate
- report alleged criminal behaviour to the police. (There may be some circumstances where it is not appropriate to report such behaviour, however, and all cases will be treated on an individual basis, and in conjunction with their wider context.)

11.Safety Plans

11.1 The College will carry out a safety plan regarding:

- any young person who is considered to have behaved abusively or violently
- any young person who has allegedly been abused directly or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another student
- any young person who is deemed at risk from another young person in the judgement of the DSL or DDSL
- any young person who has been alleged to have caused harm or abuse

11.2 If a child is considered to have behaved inappropriately, but not in a violent or abusive fashion, the DSL or DDSL will apply their professional judgement in the context of the young person's individual needs and context, to ascertain whether it would be appropriate to contact Children's Services and carry out a Safety Plan.

11.3 If there is any concern that a young person may be being abused by another young person, a consultation with Children's Services should be carried out.

11.4 Where other young people have witnessed alleged abuse or violent behaviour, the DSL should assess the risk to them and consider whether a safety plan would be appropriate for their needs.

12. Sharing of information, data protection and record keeping

12.1 When responding to allegations of abuse, or concerns about abuse, the College will:

- normally consult external agencies in to best decide how to share information about the concerns or allegations affecting students, their parents, staff and other individuals involved
- record all necessary information for all the participating agencies and respond to the concerns or allegations within a safeguarding context
- a record of the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including external agencies, is kept in the data protection audit

- ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and only use it for the agreed legal purpose
- consult, and act in accordance with, its safeguarding and data protection duties

12.2 We recognise that this will contain sensitive personal data and will be treated accordingly as per our Staff Data protection Policy.

13. Disciplinary Action

13.1 The College will consider disciplinary action for any young person involved in child-on-child abuse, directly or indirectly. However, if there are police proceedings underway, or they are pending, it is crucial that the College works in partnership with the police and/or Children's Services.

13.2 Even if external agencies are not involved, the College may still need to consider sanctions in order to ensure positive behaviour in the future. This may include the young person taking responsibility for their actions and realising the gravity of them, thus demonstrating to other students that child-on-child abuse will never be tolerated.

13.3 Before deciding on any action, the College will always consider its duty to safeguard all young people in its care.

13.4 It should also take into account the underlying reasons for any abusive behaviour and the severity, and the causes of any abuse suffered by a young person.

13.5 Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and in cases where the safety and wellbeing of other students is at risk.

14. How can College seek to improve its approach to contextual safeguarding?

14.1 The College will continue to work to embed its approach to contextual safeguarding by involving the whole College community in its strategies and approach.

14.2 It should regularly review its practices by asking such questions as:

- What protective factors and influences exist in College to prevent child on child abuse and how can we strengthen and highlight them?
- what protective factors and influences exist in College to prevent child-on-child abuse and how can we strengthen and highlight them?
- does the College's physical environment and the students' journeys to and from College contribute to this abuse and how can we mitigate this risk?
- how can the College mitigate the risk posed by the online environment and encourage a positive and safe use of digital technology?
- do wider gender norms, equality issues and/or societal issues contribute to the abuse?
- does the abuse indicate a lack of staff training in particular areas and how can these

needs be met?

- how have similar cases been handled in the past? What effect have they had, and what has been learned from them?
- are distinct patterns and trends emerging from the way in which the College handles these cases which can then be fed into future staff training?
- are these issues occurring in other local schools and Colleges and is there the need for a multi-agency response to them?
- what has the College learned from past cases which can be addressed via the tutorial/PSHE/RSE curriculum?
- are there lessons to be learned from the way in which the College engages with parents concerning child-on-child abuse cases?
- have certain types of young people been highlighted by cases of abuse and should the College be working with them to build confidence and teaching them how to identify and manage child-on-child abuse?
- should the College have intervened earlier and in a different manner?
- has the student voice been heard with regard to developing an on-going strategy to avert child-on-child abuse?

14.3 College will work with local agencies (where necessary) to deliver on this plan as part of its wider approach to contextual safeguarding.

APPENDIX 1: Definition of Sexual Violence

From Consultation document Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges: Proposed advice for governing bodies, proprietors, headteachers, principals, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding leads (September 2021)
It is important that schools and colleges are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way.

When referring to sexual violence in this advice, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual violence. For the purpose of this advice, when referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

Rape:

A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: they intentionally penetrate the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with their penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration:

A person (A) commits an offence if: they intentionally penetrate the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of their body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault:

A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: they intentionally touch another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

What is consent?

Consent is having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, for example, to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom.

Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs.

APPENDIX 2: Safety Plan

CONSIDERATIONS	RISK (CONSIDER VICTIM, CHILD ALLEGED TO HAVE CAUSED HARM, OTHER STUDENTS AND STAFF)	RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)	ACTIONS TO REDUCE RISK	REVISED RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the incident? • Who was involved? • Where did it happen 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this incident constitute a crime? Assault, sexual assault, rape, sharing of indecent images of children? Has this been referred to the police? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it necessary to limit contact between the children involved? Refer to KCSiE and DFE guidance on sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools and colleges. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an actual or perceived threat from the child alleged to have caused harm to the victim and/or others? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is either the young person that has been harmed or the young person alleged to have caused harm at risk of physical harm as a result of this incident (for example, bullying or 'retribution' by peers)? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they share classes? 				

CONSIDERATIONS	RISK (CONSIDER VICTIM, CHILD ALLEGED TO HAVE CAUSED HARM, OTHER STUDENTS AND STAFF)	RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)	ACTIONS TO REDUCE RISK	REVISED RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they share break times? • Do they share peer/friendship groups? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they share transport to/from College? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they likely to come into contact with each other (or anyone else involved in/with knowledge of the incident) outside of College? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can such contact be limited? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a risk of harm from social media and gossip? 				

Appendix 3

Useful contacts - Useful guidance can be found in:

NSPCC's and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework:

www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/publications/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework.pdf

The Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool can also be very helpful in identifying sexual behaviours by children www.brook.org.uk/our-work/the-sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool

Simon Hackett's harmful sexual behaviours toolkit <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/harmful-sexual-behaviour> framework

Useful Publications and Websites Government Publications Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>

Keeping Children safe in Education -

www.gov.uk/government/publications/keepingchildren-safe-in-education

Preventing youth violence and gang involvement

www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-schools-and-colleges-on-gangs-and-youthviolence

Preventing and tackling bullying in schools

www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying

Other useful documents

Peer-on-peer abuse Farrer & Co - Peer-on-peer abuse toolkit, guidance on peer-on peer abuse policy and template peer-on-peer abuse policy www.farrer.co.uk/Global/Peer-on-peer%20abuse%20toolkit%2014.pdf

Preventing abuse among children and young people-guidance from Stop it Now

www.stopitnow.org.uk/files/stop_booklets_childs_play_preventing_abuse_among_children_and_young_people01_14.pdf

What is Age appropriate? <http://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/what-is-age-appropriate>
Brook Traffic lights <https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/using-the-sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool>

Online sexual harassment Project deSHAME- Digital Exploitation and Sexual Harassment Amongst Minors in Europe Understanding, Preventing, Responding
<https://www.childnet.com/our-projects/project-deshame>

Sexism It's Just Everywhere- a study on sexism in schools –and how we tackle it

<https://ukfeminista.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Report-Its-just-everywhere.pdf>

Relationship Education , Relationship and Sex Education HMSO

www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-se