FIVE ACRE WOOD SCHOOL

Growing and Learning Together

# Child on Child Abuse Policy

**November 2026**

**Article 19 - I have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated.**




**Article 34 – Nobody should touch me in ways that make me feel uncomfortable, unsafe or sad**




**Article 39 - I have the right to help if I have been hurt, neglected or badly treated.**



# Key Contact Personnel in School

Nominated Member of Leadership Staff Responsible for the policy: Sarah Costain

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Sarah Costain

Safeguarding Governor: Dr Shobha Ravindra

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## Key Contacts:

| | Name | Five Acre Wood contact information |
|---|---|---|
| **Designated Safeguarding Lead** | Sarah Costain | scostain@five-acre.kent.sch.uk |
| **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead** | Peggy Murphy<br>Tim Williams<br>Emma Athwal<br>Emma Russell<br>Laura Watts<br>Leanne Bowden<br>Demi Lockett<br>Jo O'Connor<br>Francesca Newman<br>Karen Robinson-Jones<br>Kirstie Hemingway<br>Matt Jones<br>Janine Hercock<br>Jaime Cronk | 01622 743925-Loose site<br><br>01634 566890-Snodland site |
| **Principal** | Peggy Murphy | pmurphy@five-acre.kent.sch.uk |
| **Safeguarding Governor** | Dr Shobha Ravindra | Contact through SLT admin |

**This policy will be reviewed <u>at least</u> annually, and following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedures**

# Five Acre Wood School Child on Child Abuse Policy

Child on child abuse is a behaviour by an individual or group, intending to hurt others physically, sexually, or emotionally. All staff should be aware of safeguarding issues around child-on-child abuse.

All staff receive training during induction in how to respond to concerns of this nature and the school's policy and procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse. All staff will receive at least annual training as part of the Safeguarding and Child protection refresher.

Child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for both the victim and alleged perpetrator.
As well as knowing how to respond to concerns, all staff know that child-on-child abuse is preventable, how to recognise behaviours, indicators of risk, and that timely, evidence based support can be key to preventing children from going on to commit abuse or violence.

Child on child abuse can:

- Be motivated by perceived differences e.g. on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other differences
- Result in significant, long lasting, and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to the victim; vulnerable adults are at particular risk of harm

Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs such as:

- Significant disruption in their own lives
- Exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering from abuse
- Educational under-achievement
- Involved in crime

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the priority, staff receive annual preventative training using the principles of PROACT-SCIPr-UK ®. Five Acre Wood school staff, alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead/s, must make robust judgements about each specific case.

**Responsibility:**

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), states that school Governors and leaders should ensure that:

> *All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing other children (including online). All staff should be clear about their school or college's policy and procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse.*
>
> *All staff should understand that even if there are no reports in their schools or colleges 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 if staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or deputy).*
>
> *It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children, many of which are listed below, that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable*

*behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.*

It also emphasises that the voice of the child must be heard:

*"Where there is a safeguarding concern, governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, all systems and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at heart."*

Child on child abuse is referenced in the Child Protection and Online safety policy. The sensitive nature and specific issues involved with child on child necessitate separate policy guidance.

At Five Acre Wood we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on the individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

At Five Acre Wood we recognise that children can abuse other children (including online). All staff have a clear understanding of the policy and procedures regarding child-on-child abuse.

Governing bodies should ensure that their child protection policy includes:

- Procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse
- The systems in place (and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously
- How allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with
- Clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported
- A recognition that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported
- A statement which makes clear there should be a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, and it should never be passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children
- Recognition that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys' perpetrators, but that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously

**Purpose of Policy:**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that children are not subject to child-on-child abuse. The policy also includes a planned and supportive response to the issues.

At Five Acre Wood we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Anti-Bullying

- Child Protection and online safety
- Health and Safety
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Behaviour and Physical Interventions
- Mobile Technology and Social media
- Sexual Violence and Harassment
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education

**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 is Working Together to Safeguard Children, highlighting that every assessment of a child, '*must be informed by the views of the child'* and within that '*It is important to understand the resilience of the individual child when planning appropriate services*. (Working Together to Safeguard Children) This is echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

**Abuse and harmful behaviour:**

It is necessary to consider:

- What abuse is and what it looks like
- How it can be managed
- What appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual
- What preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

- Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.
- Staff will not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and will not develop high thresholds before taking action.
- Staff are aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.
- Staff are aware of the added vulnerability of children and young people who have been the victims of violent crime (for example mugging), including the risk that they may respond to this by abusing younger or weaker children.

The alleged perpetrator is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. Evidence suggests that such children 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. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and be in need of protection. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the alleged perpetrator **must** address their needs.

**Types of abuse:**

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers 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.

**Physical abuse:**

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

**Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse:**

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the **intent** to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour, and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is intended towards.
Sexually harmful behaviour may include:

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse
- sexting
- online activity

**Bullying:**

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

To be considered bullying, the behaviour **must** be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power**: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Repetition**: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

**Online Bullying:**

Online bullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, e-mail, chat rooms etc.) to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

Online bullying can take many forms

- Abusive or threatening texts, emails, or messages
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites
- Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- Stealing someone's online identity
- Spreading rumours online
- Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms, or games
- Developing hate sites about another person
- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Encouraging a young person to self-harm
- Pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

**Sexting:**

The term 'sexting' relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content; these are created and sent electronically. They are often 'shared' via social networking sites and instant messaging services.

The Guidance government guidance on Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: how to respond to an incident (overview) Published 23 December 2020 guidance must always be followed.

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: how to respond to an incident (overview) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

**Initiation/Hazing:**

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are several different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies. The ceremony welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

**Prejudiced Behaviour:**

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – for example 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.

**Teenage relationship abuse:**

Teenage relationship abuse is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive

behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner. This abuse may be child sexual exploitation.

**Expected staff action:**

Staff at Five Acre Wood School will report concerns to the DSL or one of the Deputy DSL's. The concern will be logged on Myconcern. DSL's will decide upon the next course of action and will advise accordingly.

**Recognising child-on-child abuse:**

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consideration given to:

- Chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved and if either pupil has SEND
- Difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
- All alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident
- Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
- What was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery
- The effect on the victim
- Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret
- The child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred
- Whether this was a one-off incident, or longer in duration

A situation of child-on-child abuse will be managed immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive, or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

**Taking Action:**

- Always take complaints seriously
- Gain a statement of facts from the pupil(s)
- Assess needs of victim and perpetrator including SEND
- Consider referral to Police or Social Care
- Contribute to multi-agency assessments
- Convene a risk management meeting
- Record all incidents and all action taken

**Gather the Facts:**

Speak to all the young people involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account. Ask the young people to tell you what happened. Use open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the

incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?). Do not interrogate or ask leading questions.

**Consider the Intent:**

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another? The staff at Five Acre Wood School are aware that pupils with SEND may present with behaviours, as a result of their needs, and may not have intent or have deliberately contrived the situation. A broad view of the pupils individual needs will have to be considered to determine intent.

**Course of action:**

If staff believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately; they will follow the school's Child Protection and online safety policy.

If the police intend to pursue this further, they may ask to interview the children / young people in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

**Informing parents/carers:**

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

Is the pupil 13+ and does not want to share with parents? Use the 'Gillick' test and the 'Fraser' guidelines.

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines/

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then the school should encourage the young person to share the information with their parent/carer (they may be scared to tell parents/carers that they are being harmed in any way).

**Points for DSL's/ staff to consider:**

What is the age of the children involved?

How old are the young people 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.

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 area?

What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?

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

What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?

Do the young people 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 young person'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 young person understand the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

**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?

**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 young person who has been harmed:**

The support they require depends on the individual needs of the young person. 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 young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people, or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PHSE that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment 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 young person who has displayed harmful behaviour:**

It is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person 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.

Support from identified services may be necessary through an Early Help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that the young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one-to-one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education elsewhere.

It may be that the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others, in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

The school may also choose a sanction therefore such as exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

**Long term support:**

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help. 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 young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). How this will be implemented will be dependent on the pupils needs and in collaboration with parents and other relevant agencies.

**Preventative Strategies:**

Five Acre Wood school has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. There is a strong and positive PHSE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced 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 school makes sure that 'support and report' signposting is available to young people.

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) guidance is for all schools in England. The guidance can help inform curriculum planning which can provide a safe forum to explore such concerns.

**https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education**

Staff at Five Acre Wood School receive training raising awareness on child-on-child abuse they will not dismiss issues as being 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare those to their own experiences of childhood. Staff will consider each issue and everyone before taking action.

Young people are part of changing their circumstances and, through school council and pupil voice for example, we encourage young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour'. We involve pupils in the positive ethos in school; one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

**References:**

- DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017 (last updated July 2026) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying

- DfE: Statutory guidance: Keeping children safe in education last updated September 2026)
  Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK

- DfE: Statutory guidance: Working together to safeguard children 2026
  Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK

- Safeguarding in Education - Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (kscmp.org.uk)