Child on Child Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy

Date approved	10 July 2024
Review cycle	Annual; July 2025
Party responsible	Full Governing Body
Linked policies	Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy, E-safety Policy, Policy for Preventing & Tackling Bullying, Positive Mental Health Policy

Definition of child-on-child sexual abuse

The term includes:

- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault

- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks or jokes, and online sexual harassment (which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse)

- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or to cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm

- Sexting (also known as 'youth-produced sexual imagery' or sharing 'nudes' and 'semi-nudes')

What staff need to know

At the Swanage School, staff need to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'. They should address inappropriate behaviour as soon as it happens, as this can help prevent abusive/violent behaviour further down the line.

This is explained in paragraphs 447 and 448 of Keeping Children Safe in Education KCSIE 2023 which you should read alongside the Department for Education's advice on sexual violence and harassment.

Staff should be clear on:

- Our school's safeguarding policy and procedures
- Their role in preventing child-on-child abuse and responding to it if they believe a child may be at risk
- The indicators of child-on-child abuse, how to identify it and respond to reports
- The importance of challenging inappropriate behaviour between peers - if they do not, it can create an unsafe environment and lead to a culture that normalises abuse

Staff should also be aware that:

- Safeguarding issues can manifest in child-on-child abuse
- Technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues
- Children are at risk of both online abuse and face to face abuse, both of which can take place inside and outside of school
- Children can abuse their peers online through:
  - Abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages
  - Non-consensual sharing of indecent nude and semi-nude images and/or videos, especially around chat groups
  - Sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who do not want to receive such content
- Child-on-child abuse may be taking place, even if not reported

This is explained in paragraphs 24, 29 and 46 of KCSIE linked above.

Pupils should feel confident reporting abuse

The Swanage School have systems in place for pupils to confidently report abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment. They should know that we will treat their concerns seriously and that they can safely express their views and give feedback.

These systems should be:

- Well promoted
- Easily understood
- Easily accessible

We shall give pupils an open forum to talk things through, as such discussions can lead to increased safeguarding reports. We shall make them aware of the process and how any report will be handled, including when they have a concern about a friend or peer.

This is set out on pages 17 and 20 of the DfE's guidance on sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Responding to a report: process and risk assessment

Our response should be:

- Decided on a case-by-case basis
- Underpinned by the principle of a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, meaning it is never acceptable and it will not be tolerated

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a deputy will take the lead, supported by other agencies as required.

How to support the pupils involved

The victim

Victims of this abuse will likely find the experience distressing, which can affect their progress in school. This can be made worse if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school.

Students should be reassured that we will take them seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. Staff will keep victims a reasonable distance apart from the alleged perpetrator(s) on school premises, including at before and after-school activities.

How we support the victim will depend on:

- The age and developmental stage of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the potential risk of further abuse
- The needs and wishes of the victim

Be aware that:

- Victims may not disclose the whole picture immediately, so dialogue should be kept open and encouraged
- Girls are more likely to be victims and boys are more likely to be perpetrators
- There may be more than one perpetrator, which is why KCSIE refers to 'perpetrator(s)' rather than 'perpetrator'

See more in paragraphs 456 to 463 of KCSIE.

The alleged perpetrator(s)

It can be difficult to balance the need to safeguard the victim (and other children) with providing the alleged perpetrator(s) with an education and safeguarding support and implementing disciplinary sanctions.

The Swanage School will consider support (and sanctions) on a case-by-case basis. This includes:

- The age and developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator(s)
- The nature and frequency of the allegations and risk of harm to other children
- Any unmet needs that the alleged perpetrator(s) may have

Find further guidance in paragraph 464 of KCSIE.

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports

The DSL should consider whether the pupil and/or the person who made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this is a cry for help. If this is the case, it may be appropriate to make a referral to children's social care.

If we find that the report is deliberately invented or malicious, we would follow up in line with our behaviour policy.

Managing reports of sexual harassment / sexual violence

Overriding principles:

- All staff act in the best interests of the child
- Zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and sexual violence – it is never 'just banter', 'part of growing up' or 'just having a laugh'
- Follow general safeguarding procedures
- Immediate consideration should be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator

SH/SV reported by student either in person, via email or on school system

SH/SV reported by a third party (other student, parent, public, staff etc)

Log the incident on My Concern – even if the student does not want to continue with the report / info gathering. The victim's wishes about pursuing should be taken into account alongside other factors:

- Ages of those involved
- Nature of the SH/SV
- Developmental stages
- Power imbalances
- One-off or sustained
- Ongoing risks
- Links to CSE / CCE

Discuss particulars with the student

Create a written, dated and signed witness statement

Collect and preserve any available evidence

Text messages, images, videos, social media, CCTV etc

Collect witness statements

Speak to witnesses individually and without leading questions

Discussion with Safeguarding Team

False reports

If a report of SH/SV is found to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious:

- DSL to consider if it is a 'cry for help' and possibly refer to Social Care
- HT to consider disciplinary action against malicious reporters

Possible Outcomes:

1. Manage internally:
   - Education / restorative actions
   - Change of class groups
   - Meeting with parents
   - Social isolation
   - Exclusions
2. Referral to Early Help
3. Referral to Children's Social Care
4. Referral to Sexually Harmful Behaviour Team
5. Police involvement