

Child on Child Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy

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Review cycle	Annually in September in line with KCSIE: September 2025
Party responsible	Full Governing Body
Linked policies	Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy, E-safety Policy, Policy for Preventing & Tackling Bullying, Positive Mental Health Policy

This policy will be reviewed **annually** and in response to significant incidents or changes in statutory guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

Definition of child-on-child sexual abuse

- "Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) includes a range of inappropriate or abusive sexual acts which can have serious long-term impacts. It can manifest as physical or verbal abuse, sexual assault, inappropriate touching, or coercive sexual acts. Notably, harmful sexual behaviour includes grooming, manipulation, or exploitation for sexual purposes and can also take place online. It is essential to recognise that this behaviour is not acceptable, and all incidents should be addressed swiftly, using appropriate safeguarding measures."

This 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 2024](#) 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

Training for all staff on child-on-child abuse:

- All staff will receive regular training on identifying, preventing, and responding to child-on-child abuse, including harmful sexual behaviour.
Training will focus on;
 - recognising the early signs of abuse,
 - how to respond appropriately,
 - how to support children involved.

Specific emphasis will be placed on online abuse and how technology plays a significant role in child-on-child abuse.

- The Swanage School recognises that a child or young person may disclose incidents of child-on-child abuse to any member of staff. To ensure appropriate responses and support, all staff will receive training on the importance of maintaining clear, accurate, and timely records of any such incidents. This training will also include guidance on how to handle disclosures sensitively and in line with safeguarding procedures.

Staff should 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.

When responding to reports of child-on-child abuse, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will undertake a thorough **risk assessment** of the situation, considering:

- The age, developmental stage, and needs of both the victim and the perpetrator(s)
- The severity and frequency of the alleged abuse
- Any ongoing risks to the victim, other children, or the community
- The impact of technology and online platforms This assessment will guide the appropriate response and the involvement of other agencies, where necessary.

Record-keeping

- **The Swanage School will follow pre-existing record-keeping protocols** to ensure that all incidents are documented thoroughly, including the **case details, the actions taken**, referrals to external agencies and **outcomes**. These records are vital for safeguarding and for any future referrals to social services or other agencies.
- All reports and incidents of child-on-child abuse will be logged on the school's safeguarding system (**My Concern**), with full details recorded about the nature of the abuse, actions taken, and any ongoing monitoring or interventions. Detailed records will be kept confidentially and reviewed regularly to identify patterns of concern that may require further safeguarding interventions.
- If requested by Police, school records can be shared.

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.

Support for the victim should be tailored to their individual needs, considering their age, developmental stage, and the impact of the abuse. This includes access to counselling services, ongoing monitoring of their wellbeing, and ensuring a **safe space** within the school to discuss any concerns. Pupils should be regularly reassured that their safety and wellbeing are our priority.

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.

For the alleged perpetrators, it is important to consider **early intervention**, the need for **therapeutic support**, and the potential role of restorative justice processes where appropriate. The alleged perpetrator(s) will also be offered support to understand the consequences of their behaviour, with a focus on **restorative practices**. This will be offered in the form of referrals to specialist external agencies, with consent being sought from parents prior to referrals being made.

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
- The school will ensure that any sanctions imposed are proportionate and supportive of long-term behavioural change.

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

Upon receiving a report of sexual violence or harassment, staff should:

- Ensure immediate safeguarding of the victim and alleged perpetrator(s), including taking steps to prevent further harm (e.g., separating students, providing support).
- Log all incidents in **My Concern**, including the victim's wishes and any additional context such as online abuse or the severity of the incident.
- Consider the **risk of further harm** and whether the victim or perpetrator should be kept apart within the school premises, including during before- and after-school activities.

