

Child on Child Abuse Policy 2025 / 2026

Including sexual violence and sexual harassment between children

<i>Droitwich Spa High School</i> 	Policy review Date	September 2025
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	Who reviewed this policy?	Mr Jamie Broughton
	Date approved by Governing body	
	Name of Designated Safeguarding Lead Names of Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads	Mr Jamie Broughton Mrs Claire Moss Mrs Gemma Lloyd-Davies Mrs Laura Proust Mr Andrew Ward Mr Adam Kirk Mr Edward Rollit

This policy has been reviewed. To the best of our knowledge we do not feel it impacts negatively on any specific group or individual within our school community.



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1. Context and Definition

It is essential that **all our staff** understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, many of which are listed below, that are actually 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.

Droitwich Spa High School staff are advised to maintain an attitude of ‘**it could happen here**’. When concerned about the welfare of a child staff should always act in the **best** interests of the child.

Child on Child abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others.

All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. All staff should be aware of safeguarding issues from child on child abuse including:

- bullying (including online bullying)
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence and sexual harassment
- sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery); and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

This 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 e.g.:

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

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the first priority of any education setting, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging. School staff alongside their Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy, have to make their own judgements about each specific case and should use this policy guidance to help.

2. Responsibility

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024 all staff at Droitwich Spa High School will be made aware of systems within school that support safeguarding, and these will be explained to them as part of staff induction and annual Safeguarding training. Additionally, this will include the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2024 / 2025

It also states the following:

‘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



system and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.'

At Droitwich Spa High School, we 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 the impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

3. Purpose of the Child-on-Child policy

The purpose of this policy is to highlight best practice when dealing specifically with child-on-child abuse incidents, to inform all stakeholders of the school's responsibilities and, most importantly, to support students who experience forms of child on child abuse.

At Droitwich Spa High School, we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- 3.1 Anti-Bullying Policy (including Online Bullying)
- 3.2 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- 3.3 Managing Allegations / Whistleblowing Policy
- 3.4 Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- 3.5 Health & Safety Policy
- 3.6 Online Safety Policy

4. 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, 2023, highlighting that every assessment of a child, '*must be informed by the views of the child*'. This is echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2025 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

5. Abuse and harmful behaviour

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. It is important to consider the how abuse may take place and the subsequent actions required.

- Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.
- Children can abuse other children. This can include (but is not limited to): abuse within intimate partner relationships; bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.
- Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action.
- Staff should be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.
- Staff should be 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.
- Staff will also be made aware that the alleged perpetrator is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. They may be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and be in need of protection with any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the alleged perpetrator will address their needs.



6. Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between young people 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. These (physical, sexual violence and harassment, bullying, online bullying, sharing of nude / semi-nude images, initiation / hazing, prejudice behaviours, and teenage relationship abuse) have been summarised in Appendix D

At Droitwich Spa High School, with all incidents that cause Safeguarding concerns, we use CPOMS for to report and record all Safeguarding concerns, including child-on-child abuse, apart from dinner ladies and invigilators (they use a red paper referral). With any concerns around Harmful Sexual Behaviour, we use the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, 2nd Ed. 2019, NSPCC, UK, adapted from Hackett 2010, to support with the decision-making process at assessment stage – See Appendix B.

7. Recognising Child on Child abuse

Once the CPOMS Safeguarding referral has been received, an immediate assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:

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

8. Expected staff action

As a priority, staff are informed to consider the seriousness of the case and always inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead / Deputy Safeguarding Leads through a CPOMS Safeguarding referral (or a red paper referral for dinner ladies and invigilators) immediately before taking any further in-school actions.

The following is a summary of expected staff actions:

- take concerns and disclosures seriously
- Through advice from the DSL / DDSL, where appropriate, gain a statement of facts from the pupil(s)
- The Designated Safeguarding leads will assess needs of victim and alleged perpetrator
- The Designated Safeguarding leads will consider referral to Police or Social Care, where appropriate
- The Designated Safeguarding leads will contribute to multi-agency assessments, where appropriate



- The Designated Safeguarding leads will convene a risk management meeting, where appropriate
- The Designated Safeguarding leads will record all incidents / meetings, communications and actions on CPOMS.

8.1 Recording sexualised behaviour

Staff are asked to -

- Be clear, explicit and non-avoidant, and avoid vague statements or euphemisms
- Record as soon as possible, as you can quickly forget or confuse detail on CPOMS or for invigilators and dinner ladies, via a Red Safeguarding referral.
- Follow the prompts on CPOMS / Red Safeguarding referral to assist making the Safeguarding referral
- Use proper names for body parts but record exactly any language or vocabulary used by the child, using the child's exact words in quotation marks.
- Note where and when the incident happened and whether anyone else was around.

8.2 Gather the Facts

Once the Safeguarding referral has been completed and sent, the Designated Safeguarding lead or Deputy Safeguarding Leads will 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.

8.3 Consider the Intent

The Designated Safeguarding Lead team will consider whether the incident / s have been deliberate or contrived for a young person to be able to harm another?

8.4 Decide on your next course of action

The Designated Safeguarding Lead team at Droitwich Spa High School, when appropriate and required, will refer to advice and guidance summarised Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to decide on the next course of action (for example, referral to the police, Childrens Services). The decision-making process is simplified in Appendix B, particularly the flow diagram and Part four: response to reports.

It may be the case that if the incident progresses to MASH and / or the police who intend to pursue the case further, Droitwich Spa High School will support a multi-agency approach and facilitate communication between agencies.

8.5 Informing parents/carers

At Droitwich Spa High School, we endeavour to inform parents / Carers face to face. However, this may be time consuming. If this is the case, the Designated Safeguarding Leads will make contact via the phone to inform them of the nature of the incident and the type of harm / abuse a young person may be suffering.

It may be the case that the child does not want to share the information with their parents / Carers. If this is the case, decisions will be made to Safeguard the child, using the Gillick and the Fraser guidelines. All decisions will be made in the best interests of the child. (See Appendix E for more information via the links)

The Designated Safeguarding Leads will, in all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident, encourage the young person to share the information with their parent / carer. However, the decision to contact parents / Carers will made by the Designated Safeguarding team and be made on a Risk Management / Safeguarding basis considering all factors summarised in Appendix C (age, location, witnesses, understanding, repetition)



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. The next steps summarised in Annex A (Hackett's 2010 continuum model and Part four: Response to reports) will be used to guide the Designated Safeguarding Leads at Droitwich Spa High School to provide appropriate support both the victim and the perpetrator.

9. Further points to consider

Further points to consider for the Designated Safeguarding Team are contained within Appendix C. In summary, they include

- What is the age of the children involved?
- Where did the incident or incidents take place?
- What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?
- What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?
- Repetition

10. Next Steps: Support for (alleged) victim and (alleged) perpetrator

10.1 For the young person who has been harmed (victim)

The support the child may require depends on the individual young person. At Droitwich Spa High School, we can offer the following forms of support as part of our Early Help Offer. We will always listen to the voice of the child when instigating support:

- School Counselling
- Onsite Advocacy referral
- Restorative justice conversations
- Peer group support.
- Mentoring
- PSHE / RSE 1:1 providing advice and guidance on normal / healthy relationships
- West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse support Centre referral
- Children's Services referrals
- MASH referrals
- School nurse referral
- Sexual Health Team referrals

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on online bullying, relationship abuse, assemblies etc.

10.2 For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour (perpetrator)

At Droitwich Spa High School, we are keen to support the (alleged) perpetrator by offering similar support as above but it is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. We will be aware that the young person may be 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.

Particular 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 may be important (depending on context) that the young person receives a consequence for their actions. 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, Droitwich Spa High School will seek a way to provide a suitable education).

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 (see Appendix A). Where appropriate, 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 those agencies involved (for example, police / Childrens Services / Family Support / Early Help) 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.

10.3 After care

At Droitwich Spa High School, following the incident / s, we recognise the importance for the child / children (both victim and perpetrator) to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. 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). For this reason, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

11. Preventative Strategies

Child-on-Child abuse can, and will, occur on any site even with the most robust policies and support processes. Droitwich Spa High 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 PSHE / RSE 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 via posters around school, displayed on our TVs, published in the Tutor Booklet and in newsletters to parents / Carers.

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.



12. Where to go for further information

- 12.1 [DfE: Statutory guidance: Working together to safeguard children, 2023](#)
- 12.2 [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 12.3 [DfE: Searching, screening and confiscation at school, January 2018](#)
- 12.4 [DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying, July 2017](#)
- 12.5 [DfE: Statutory guidance School exclusion, May 2024](#)
- 12.6 [DfE: Teaching Online Safety in Schools, June 2023](#)
- 12.7 [DfE: Behaviour and discipline in schools, July 2024](#)
- 12.8 [DfE: Mental health and behaviour in schools, November 2018](#)
- 12.9 [DfE: Children Missing Education, September 2024](#)
- 12.10 [DfE: Mental health and behaviour in schools, November 2018](#)
- 12.11 [UKCIS: Sexting guidance for schools, 2024](#)
- 12.12 [London Child Protection Procedures, 2024](#)
- 12.13 [Gov.uk: Equality Act 2010: advice for schools](#)



ANNEX A

Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment for children involved in harmful sexualised behaviour.

Date: _____

Name of perpetrator / alleged perpetrator: _____

Name of victim / alleged victim: _____

Basic information	
Referrer Name and role	
Referrer Contact details (email address and phone number)	
Name of school(s) for victim(s)	
Name of school(s) for child/ren alleged to have caused harm	
Did incident occur on school premises? If not where did the incident occur?	

CONSIDERATIONS	RISK (CONSIDER VICTIM, CHILD ALLEGED TO HAVE CAUSED HARM, OTHER PUPILS AND STAFF)	RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)	ACTIONS TO REDUCE RISK	REVISED RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)
What is the incident? Who was involved? Where did it happen				
Does this incident constitute a crime? Assault, sexual assault, rape, sharing of indecent images of children, etc etc. As such has this been referred to the police?				
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.				



Is there an actual or perceived threat from the child alleged to have caused harm to the victim and/or others?				
Is either the victim or the child alleged to have caused harm at risk of physical harm as a result of this incident (for example, bullying or 'retribution' by peers)?				
Do they share classes?				
Do they share break times? Do they share peer/friendship groups?				
Do they share transport to/from school?				
Are they likely to come into contact with each other (or anyone else involved in/with knowledge of the incident) outside of school?				
How can such contact be limited?				
Is there a risk of harm from social media and gossip?				

Further action taken by the school or college: Please complete for each child involved.

Action	YES/NO	Date
Police informed		
Referral to MASH		
Referral to external support services		
Referral to internal support services		
Referral to CAMHS		
Referral to early help		
Other		



Action	YES/NO	Date
Police informed		
Referral to MASH		
Referral to external support services		
Referral to internal support services		
Referral to CAMHS		
Referral to early help		
Other		

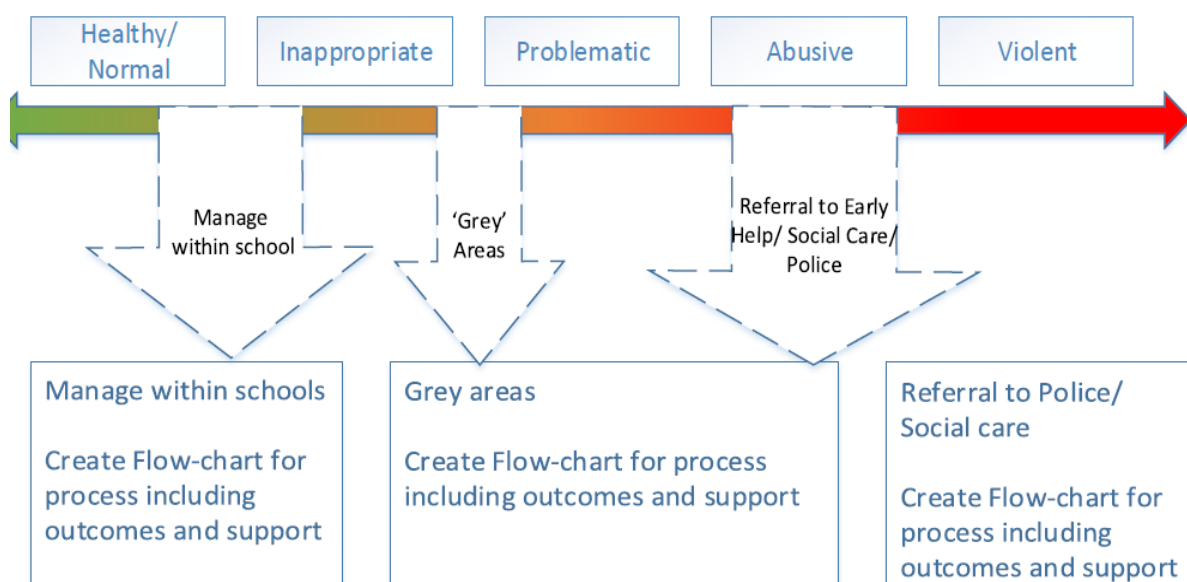
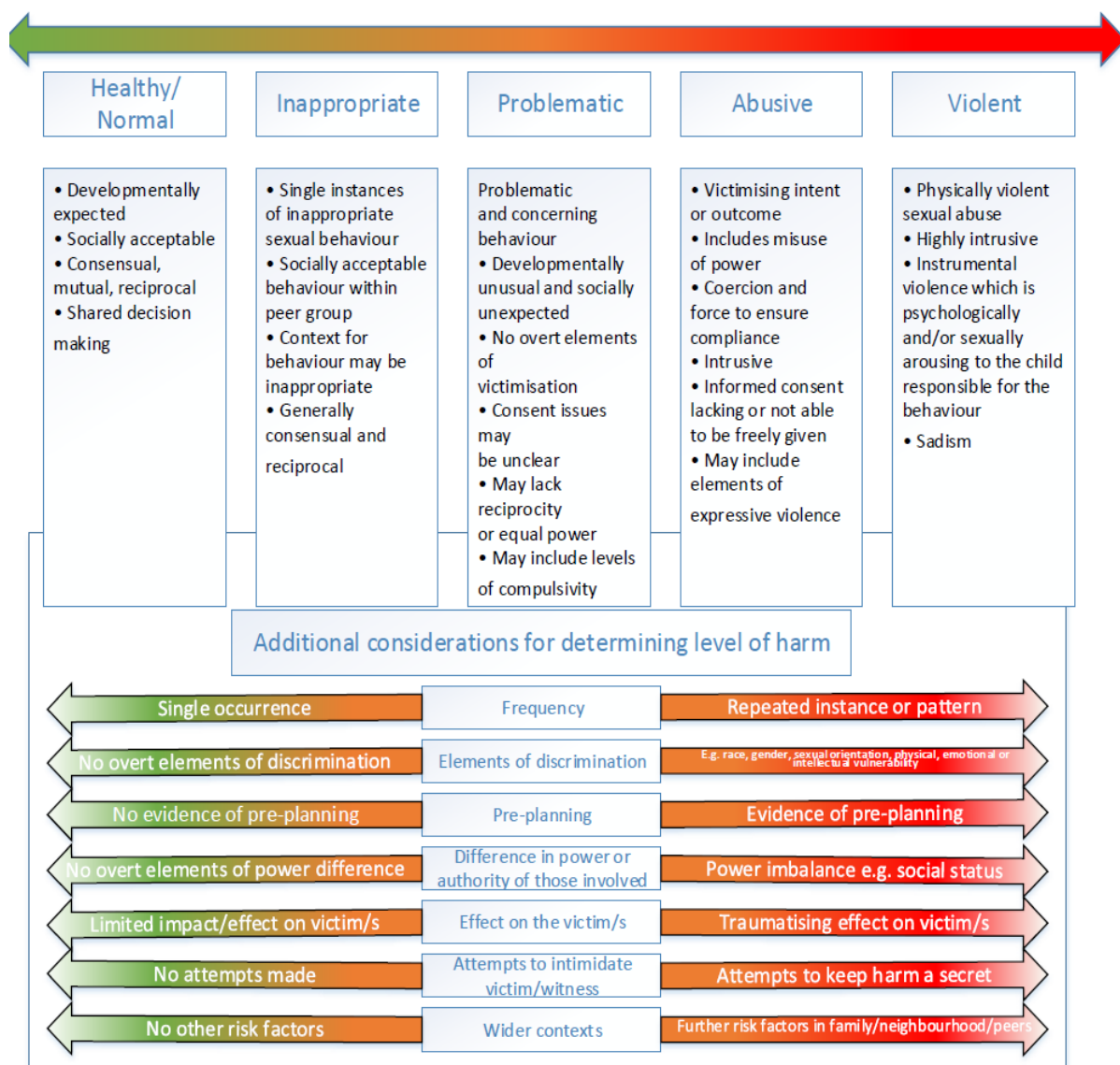


Annex B

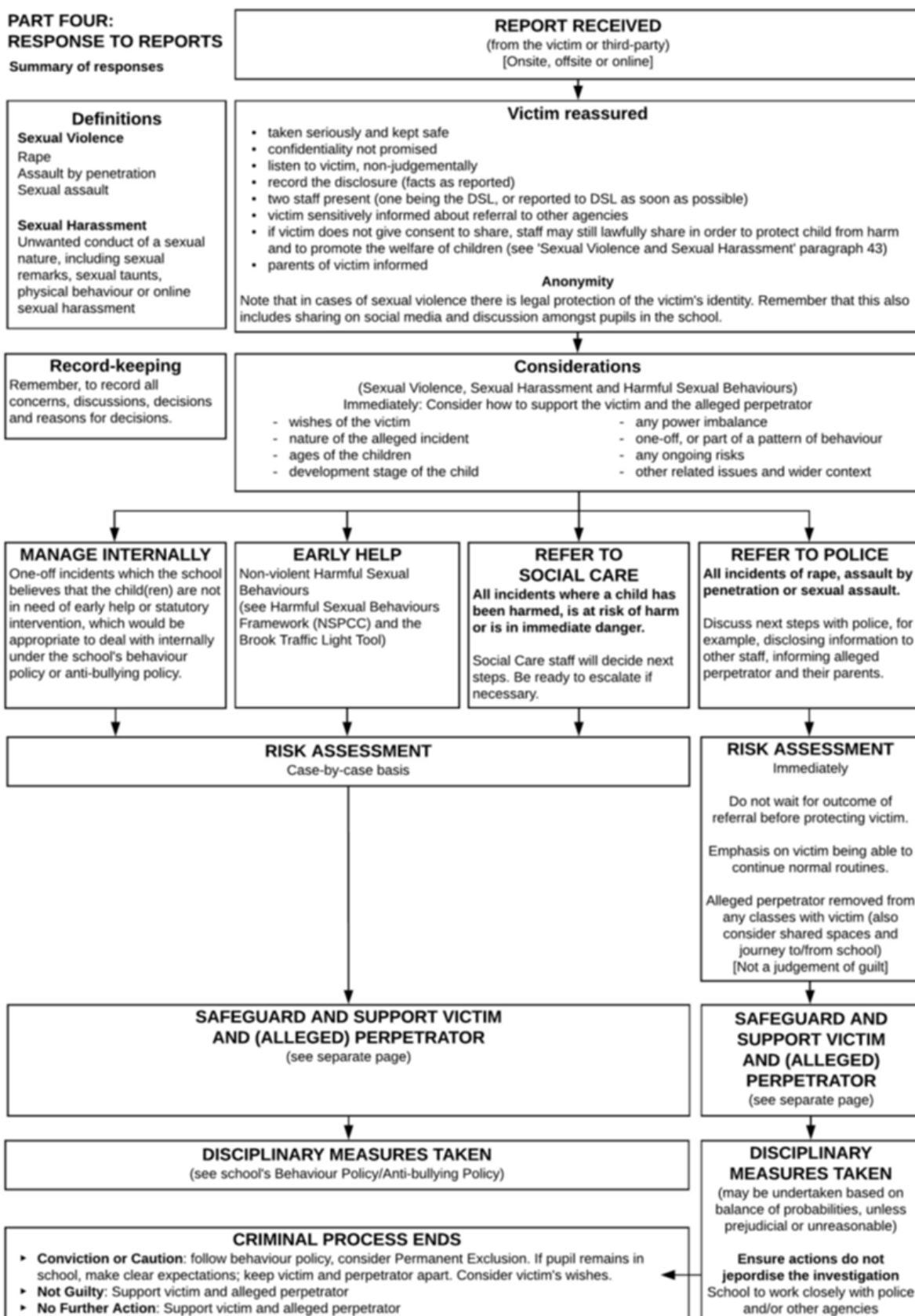
Hackett (2010) has proposed a continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant:

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
• Developmentally expected • Socially acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Problematic and concerning behaviours • 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	• Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim • May include elements of expressive violence	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator • Sadism





**PART FOUR:
RESPONSE TO REPORTS**
Summary of responses



Appendix C

1. Points to consider

9.1 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.

9.2 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 particular area?

9.3 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 also 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?

9.4 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 have an understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

9.5 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?



Appendix D

6.1 Physical abuse

This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

6.2 Sexual violence and sexual harassment

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead / Deputy Safeguarding Leads through a CPOMS Safeguarding referral (or a red paper referral for invigilators or dinner ladies).

The DSL will follow the DfE Guidance within the Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 document.

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

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.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them
- Upskirting: where someone takes a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.

6.3 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.

In order 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.

6.4 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

6.5 Sexting / Sharing nude or indecent imagery

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.

Upskirting: 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 cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

6.6 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 a number of 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.

6.7 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.

6.8 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.

Appendix E

[NSPCC | Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines](#)

