



Moorlands Primary School Child-on-child Abuse Policy

Reviewed by Governors September 2026

Next review September 2027

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[Updated] Statement of intent

[Moorlands Primary School](#) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every pupil, both inside and outside of the school premises, and is aware that abuse against children can be inflicted by other children. We implement a whole-school preventative approach to managing child-on-child abuse, ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils is at the forefront of all action taken.

This policy sets out a clear and consistent framework for delivering this promise, in line with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

[Updated] It will be achieved by:

- Creating a culture of mutual respect amongst all pupils.
- Teaching pupils about behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable.
- Identifying and making provision for any pupil that has been subject to abuse.
- Ensuring that members of the governing board, the headteacher and staff members understand their responsibilities under safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, are alert to the signs of child-on-child abuse, and know to refer concerns to the DSL.
- Ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are transparent, clear and easy to understand for staff, pupils and parents.
- **[Updated]** Creating a culture where all concerns are taken seriously, never dismissed as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'just having a laugh', and are responded to promptly and appropriately.

The DSL is [Vanessa Bennett](#). In the absence of the DSL, child protection matters will be dealt with by [Meena Davies](#), [Zoe Ferguson](#), [Claire Baxter](#).

[Updated] Legal framework

[Updated] This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- **[New]** Children's Wellbeing and School's Act 2026
- DfE 'Working together to safeguard children'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education'

The policy also has regard to the following non-statutory guidance:

- DfE 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'
- DfE 'Information sharing'
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and UK Council for Internet Safety 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: how to respond to an incident (overview)'
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and UK Council for Internet Safety 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'
- National Police Chief's Council 'When to call the police: guidance for schools and colleges'

[Updated] This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- **[Updated]** Mobile Devices Policy
- Children Missing from Education Policy
- Low-level Safeguarding Concerns Policy

[Updated] Definitions

[Updated] “**Child-on-child abuse**” is defined, for the purposes of this policy, as any form of abuse that occurs between children. It can take place inside and outside of school, online or offline, and may involve a single child or a group of children abusing another child or group of children.

[Updated] “**Harmful sexual behaviour**” refers to developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children which is harmful or abusive, and which may be harmful to the child displaying the behaviour as well as those affected by it. It may occur online, offline, or both simultaneously.

This policy will use the following terms to describe pupils involved in child-on-child abuse:

- **Victim(s)** – the individual(s) against whom the abuse has, or has allegedly, been inflicted.
- **Perpetrator(s)** – the individual(s) exhibiting abusive behaviour against their peers.
- **Alleged perpetrator(s)** – individual(s) against whom a report of abusive behaviour has been made, where guilt has not yet been ascertained.

[Updated] Please note: The use of the word 'alleged' does not mean that the pupil in question is not guilty of child-on-child abuse, that the school does not believe the allegation, or that the allegation will not be taken seriously. Staff will recognise that the school has safeguarding and educational responsibilities towards all pupils involved, including those alleged to have displayed harmful behaviour. Staff will also keep in mind that, in some cases, the abusive behaviour will have been harmful to the perpetrator as well. Victims will be reassured that use of the term 'alleged perpetrator' is not an attempt to discredit their allegation.

Staff will also be conscious of the fact that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim or would want to be described this way. Staff will be prepared to use any term which the individual child is most comfortable. Staff will think very carefully about terminology when speaking in front of pupils, and the use of appropriate terminology will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

[Updated] Roles and responsibilities

[Updated] The governing board has a duty to:

- **[Updated]** Ensure that the school complies with its statutory safeguarding and child protection duties.
- **[Updated]** Hold the school to account for its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the arrangements published by the safeguarding partners.
- Guarantee that the policies, procedures and training opportunities in the school are effective and comply with the law at all times.
- Guarantee that the school contributes to multi-agency working in line with the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.
- Confirm that the school's arrangements for handling child-on-child abuse take into account the procedures and practices of the LA as part of the inter-agency safeguarding procedures.
- Appoint a member of staff from the SLT to the role of DSL as an explicit part of the role-holder's job description.
- Appoint one or more deputy DSLs to provide support to the DSL, ensuring that they are trained to the same standard as the DSL, and that the role is explicit in their job description(s).
- Ensure that the DSL has the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post.
- Ensure the DSL is given the additional time, funding, training, resources and support needed to carry out the

role effectively.

- Make sure that pupils are taught about child-on-child abuse, including online , through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum.
- **[Updated]** Ensure that staff members receive appropriate training to support all pupils, including those who may be more vulnerable to bullying, discrimination or abuse, e.g. pupils who are LGBTQ+.
- Ensure the school has clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible risk of harm in pupils, including clear routes to escalate concerns and clear referral and accountability systems.
- Guarantee that there are procedures in place to handle pupils' allegations against other pupils.
- Ensure that appropriate disciplinary procedures are in place, as well as policies pertaining to the behaviour of pupils.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to child-on-child abuse.
- Make sure that pupils' wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide to protect individual pupils.
- Guarantee that there are systems in place for pupils to express their views and give feedback.
- Ensure that all governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) training at induction that is regularly updated, in order to equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place are effective and support the delivery of a robust, whole-school approach to safeguarding – this training should include, amongst other things, the expectations and responsibilities on staff in relation to filtering and monitoring.

The headteacher has a duty to:

- Safeguard pupils' wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.
- Ensure that the policies and procedures adopted by the governing board, particularly concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect, are followed by staff members.
- Provide staff, upon induction, with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, part one and, where appropriate, Annex A of KCSIE, the Behaviour Policy, the Children Missing from Education Policy, online safety training, and the identity of the DSL and any deputies.

- Ensure staff receive training on recognising indicators of abuse and handling disclosures or concerns about a pupil.

The DSL has a duty to:

- Understand and keep up to date with local safeguarding arrangements.
- Act as the main point of contact with the three safeguarding partners and the child death review partner.
- Make the necessary child protection referrals to appropriate agencies.
- Understand when they should consider calling the police, in line with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) [guidance](#).
- Liaise with the headteacher to inform them of safeguarding issues and ongoing enquiries.
- Liaise with the deputy DSL(s) to ensure effective safeguarding outcomes.
- Act as a source of support for pupils who have been abused by, or who have abused, other pupils.
- Lead the school in taking a preventative approach to child-on-child abuse.

[Updated] Other staff members have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard pupils' wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.
- Provide a safe environment in which pupils can learn.
- Act in accordance with school procedures with the aim of eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to child-on-child abuse.
- Maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.
- Be aware of the signs of abuse and understand that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school, inside and outside the home, and online.
- Adhere to the early help process and understand their role in it.
- Understand and adhere to the procedure to follow in the event that a child confides they are being abused by a peer.

- Understand that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful.
- Understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding issues.
- Support social workers in making decisions about individual children, in collaboration with the DSL.
- Maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality when dealing with individual cases and always act in the best interest of the child.
- **[Updated]** Understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours and not dismissing abusive behaviour as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'just having a laugh'.
- Build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.
- Keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of safeguarding concerns, decisions made, and whether or not referrals have been made, and understand the purpose of this record-keeping.
- **[New]** Report all concerns relating to child-on-child abuse to the DSL (or deputy DSL) without delay and never assume that somebody else has already acted.

[Updated] Types of child-on-child abuse

Staff will familiarise themselves with the forms that child-on-child abuse can take, including but not limited to:

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which may involve actions such as hitting, throwing, burning, drowning and poisoning, or otherwise causing physical harm to another child.

Sexual abuse

A form of abuse involving sexual activity between children – sexual abuse, for the purposes of this policy, is divided into two categories: sexual violence and sexual harassment.

“Sexual violence” encompasses the definitions provided in the Sexual Offences Act 2003, including rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, i.e. non-consensual sexual touching, and causing another child to engage in sexual activity without consent, e.g. forcing someone to touch themselves sexually.

[Updated] **“Sexual harassment”** refers to any sexual behaviour that could violate another child's dignity, make them

feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated, and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment, including:

- Sexualised jokes, taunting or comments.
- Physical behaviour, e.g. deliberately brushing against someone.
- Online sexual harassment, including:
 - Upskirting.
 - Sexualised online bullying.
 - Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media.
 - Sexual threats or coercion.
 - **[New]** The creation or sharing of AI-generated or AI-altered nudes and semi-nudes.

[Updated] The “**making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes**” can also constitute sexual harassment. This includes the consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nude or semi-nude images and/or videos involving children, including images that have been generated or altered using AI.

This includes content depicting:

- Another child posing nude or semi-nude.
- Another child touching themselves in a sexual way.
- Any sexual activity involving another child.
- Someone hurting another child sexually.

[Updated] Staff will be aware that the making, possessing and sharing of nudes and semi-nudes involving children may constitute a criminal offence. Incidents will be managed in accordance with the school's procedures for handling the making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

[Updated] Bullying

[Updated] Bullying may constitute child-on-child abuse where it is abusive, persistent or causes significant harm to the victim.

Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:

- Verbally
- Physically
- Emotionally
- Online (cyberbullying)

Bullying will generally be handled in line with the Anti-bullying Policy; however, particularly severe instances will be handled in line with this policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

[Updated] Online abuse

[Updated] This involves the use of technology, the internet, social media, online gaming platforms, messaging services and AI-enabled technologies to harass, threaten, intimidate, exploit or abuse another child. Instances of online abuse will be managed in line with this policy, the Online Safety Policy and the Anti-bullying Policy.

[Updated] Discriminatory behaviour

[Updated] Discriminatory behaviour encompasses abuse inflicted on a pupil because of their protected characteristics, e.g. race, religion or belief, sex, disability, sexual orientation. The school also recognises that some pupils, including those with SEND, may be at increased risk of abuse or discrimination.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, schools will not tolerate unlawful discrimination against pupils because of any protected characteristics they may have.

Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children

This involves a romantic partnership between children in which one or both partners are emotionally, physically or sexually abusive to the other (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse'). This could include:

- Repetitive insults.
- Controlling behaviour, e.g. preventing a child from socialising with others or deliberately isolating them from sources of support.
- Sexual harassment.
- Threats of physical or sexual abuse.

The school will manage intimate partner abuse in the same way as a case of abuse between any other children, i.e. via the processes outlined in the 'Handling allegations of abuse against pupils' section of this policy, and in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

[Updated] A whole-school approach to tackling child-on-child abuse

The school will continue to involve all members of the school community, including the governing board, staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders, in creating a whole-school approach to child-on-child abuse.

The governing board will ensure that keeping children safe and protected from harm, including child-on-child abuse, is central to all policies and procedures implemented across the school. The school will ensure that procedures for handling child-on-child abuse are transparent, clear and understandable, and are readily accessible to any member of the school community who wishes to access them.

[Updated] The school will implement a contextual safeguarding approach to child-on-child abuse and will take into account incidents that occur inside and outside of school, online and offline – including where it occurs concurrently. Wider environmental factors that may be present in a pupil's life will also be considered.

The headteacher will ensure that all staff receive adequate training on handling child-on-child abuse.

[Updated] School culture

[Updated] The school will prioritise cultivating a safe and respectful environment amongst pupils, ensuring that all pupils are aware that the school will not tolerate child-on-child abuse of any kind and will respond promptly, proportionately and appropriately to all concerns.

The school will promote respectful interactions amongst pupils, and all staff will model appropriate and respectful behaviour. Staff will take care to avoid normalising harmful behaviour, particularly harmful sexual behaviour, e.g. by refraining from the use of phrases such as 'boys will be boys' or describing such behaviour as 'just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up', as these phrases can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and normalised abuse.

[Updated] The school will ensure that wider societal factors that exacerbate the problem of child-on-child abuse are reflected in its approach to creating a preventative culture. This means that individuals who may be more vulnerable to abuse, including girls, LGBTQ+ pupils, pupils with SEND, pupils who are CLA and PCLA, and pupils with social workers, will be given additional support from an early stage. The school will also ensure that pupils who may be at increased risk of displaying harmful behaviour, e.g. due to abusive home situations or difficulties managing their emotions, receive appropriate support and intervention.

The school will manage all intervention for pupils that show early signs of harmful behaviour, or early signs of being the victim of harmful behaviour, in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

[Updated] Support before statutory intervention

[Updated] Upon receiving notice of a concern or incident, the DSL or deputy DSL will advise whether the children involved in a child-on-child abuse incident require referral to children's social care services (CSCS) or would benefit from support before statutory intervention, including universal services, community-based Early Help, or the targeted early help level of Family Help. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis following consideration of all available information, with the aim of preventing concerns from escalating and improving outcomes for the children involved.

[Updated] The rationale for the decision to provide support before statutory intervention as opposed to a referral to CSCS will be recorded on CPOMS.

[Updated] The school will ensure that DSLs and deputy DSLs are suitably trained in local arrangements for support before statutory intervention, including community-based Early Help and the targeted early help level of Family Help, and are able to access further advice and support where required.

[Updated] The school will ensure that pupils who show early signs of harmful behaviour, or who may be at risk of experiencing child-on-child abuse, are considered for support before statutory intervention, including universal services, community-based Early Help, or the targeted early help level of Family Help, where appropriate, in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and local safeguarding arrangements.

Curriculum

The school maintains the position that education surrounding respectful and healthy attitudes and behaviour towards others is the best way to combat child-on-child abuse in the school. All staff, not just teaching staff, will be responsible for passing this knowledge on to pupils.

In order to prevent child-on-child abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, the school will educate pupils about abuse, its forms and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

[Updated] The school will also ensure that pupils are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. The school will also teach a planned programme of evidence-based [RSHE](#), delivered in regularly timetabled lessons and reinforced throughout the whole curriculum. Such content will be fully inclusive, age and stage of development appropriate, especially when considering the needs of pupils with SEND, and tackle issues such as the following:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Boundaries and consent
- Stereotyping, prejudice and equality
- How to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour

- LGBTQ+ identities and relationships
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- **[New]** The risks associated with online abuse, including the making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, AI-generated or AI-altered intimate images, and harmful online content
- The concepts of, the laws relating to, and how to access support for the following:
 - Sexual consent
 - Sexual exploitation
 - Abuse
 - Grooming
 - Coercion
 - Harassment
 - Rape
 - Domestic abuse