



COUNDON COURT

Peer-on-Peer Abuse, Sexual Harassment and Violence Policy

**Links to Behaviour Policy, Anti Bullying Policy, Network Use
Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**

Agreed by Co-Head Teachers November 20201

Frequency of Review: Every 3 years (with in year modifications as required)

Date of Next Review: September 2023

Introduction

This policy will concentrate on peer-on-peer abuse in the context of sexual harassment and sexual violence, with reference to KCSIE 2021.

Coundon Court recognises that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers. We take this abuse as seriously as any abuse perpetrated by an adult - this includes verbal as well as physical abuse. Peer-on-peer abuse will not be tolerated at Coundon Court or described as 'banter' or as acceptable 'comments between friends'.

We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the early identification and appropriate management of peer-on-peer abuse, to proactively prevent peer-on-peer abuse and ensure students feel safe and supported within out school and community.

When peer-on-peer abuse is identified, we follow our Behaviour, Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children who have been affected by the situation.

Peer-on-peer abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Sending Nudes
- Upskirting
- Bullying
- Radicalisation
- Abuse in intimate relationships
- Children who display sexually harmful behaviour
- Gang association and serious violence (County Lines)
- Technology used for bullying and abusive behaviour¹

Some behaviours will need further reference to additional school policies, for example, Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policies, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Policy Development

This policy has been developed in consultation with:

- Co-Headteachers
- Senior Leadership Team
- Safeguarding Team

Aims

This policy will:

- State our strategies for preventing (proactive measures), identifying and managing peer-on-peer abuse.
- Take a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved. Acknowledging children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are also vulnerable and may have been abused by peers or adults including their parents/carers.

¹ For definitions of examples peer-on-peer abuse, see Appendix II.

Understanding Peer-on-Peer Abuse

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex or a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. The impact of this behaviour on children can be very distressing and have an impact on academic achievement and emotional health and wellbeing. Sexual harassment and sexual violence may also occur online as well as in person.

Context

In this policy we recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour (Harmful/Sexual Behaviour, HSB). We have looked at the NSPCC definition of HSB as: - "Sexual behaviours expressed by children...that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child...or adult."

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework>

We will also look at Simon Hackett's (2010) 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 – see table below-

NORMAL	INAPPROPRIATE	PROBLEMATIC	ABUSIVE	VIOLENT
Developmentally expected.	Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour.	Problematic and concerning behaviours.	Victimising intent or outcome.	Physically violent sexual abuse.
Socially acceptable. Consensual, mutual, reciprocal.	Socially acceptable behaviour within a peer group.	Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected.	Includes misuse of power.	Highly intrusive.
Shared decision making.	Context for behaviour may be inappropriate.	No overt elements of victimisation.	Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance.	Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator.
	Generally consensual and reciprocal.	Consent issues may be unclear.	Intrusive.	Sadism.
		May lack reciprocity or equal power.	Informed consent lacking or not able to be given by victim.	
		May include levels of compulsivity.	May include elements of expressive violence.	

Vulnerable groups

We recognise that all children can be at risk, however some groups are more vulnerable. This can include: experience of abuse within their family; living with domestic violence; young people in care; children who go missing; children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities); children who identify or are perceived as LGBT and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

Whilst national research tells us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers and, girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools this is not confined to girls. Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviour such as antisocial behaviour. Boys nationally report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs. We recognise that both boys and girls experience peer-on-peer abuse and that quite often in very different ways.

All staff should be aware of indicators, which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

Responding to Alleged Incidents Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

All reports of peer-on-peer abuse will be made on a case-by-case basis, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or their deputies, taking a leading role, using their professional judgement and being supported by other agencies such as social care or the police as required. We may call Social Care or the Early Help Team for advice. We may also call on Primary School DSLs if the case is historic.

The Immediate Response to a Report

- The DSL will be informed as soon as possible.
- Coundon Court will take all reports seriously and reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe.
- All staff will be trained to recognise and react appropriately to Peer-on-peer abuse. They will not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further, with the designated safeguarding team in the first instance (or social care).
- A written report will be made as soon after the disclosure as possible recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later.
- Where the report includes an online element, the school will follow safeguarding advice on searching, screening and confiscation. The staff will not view or forward images unless unavoidable and only if another member of staff (preferably the DSL) is present.

- All reports must be logged on CPOMS in real time. Where logging does occur later you must account for why it is recorded later as per Safer Working Practice.

Risk Assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputies) will make an immediate risk and needs' assessment on a case-by-case basis. The Risk and Needs Assessment should consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support;
- The alleged perpetrator; and
- All the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them.

Risk assessments will be written and saved by the DSL, logged on CPOMS and be kept under review. The DSL (or a deputy) will ensure they have engaged with MASH as appropriate.

Action Following a Report of Sexual Violence and/or Sexual Harassment

Following an incident we will consider-

- The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including: whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;
- The ages of the children involved;
- The developmental stages of the children involved;
- Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse;
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff; and other related issues and wider context?

Follow Up Actions

While the school establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police:

- The perpetrator will be removed from any classes they share with the victim and be kept safe and supported (if appropriate to be on site) within our CLC area during lesson and association time.

- We will consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport to and from the school.

These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator.

Options to Manage the Report

Manage internally

- In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, we may decide that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally. We would utilise our Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies and provide pastoral support through the Phase Teams, including when appropriate, protective behaviour mentoring through the CLC. This decision will be made based on the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. **All decisions, and discussions around making these decisions will be made by the LT, Phase Leads (in discussion with the DSL) or the designated Safeguarding Team, and recorded using the appropriate documentation and logged on CPOMS.**
- In line with the above, we may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from Early Help. Early Help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.
- Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to the MASH following agreed protocol.

Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or a deputy, will be working alongside, and cooperating with, the relevant Lead Social Worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.

Reporting to the Police

Any report to the police will generally be made through the MASH as above. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (and their deputies) will follow established processes for referrals.

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is: pass on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.

Where a report has been made to the police, the school will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the relevant agencies to support all children involved (especially potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought in order to help us.

Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator, we will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the school take do not jeopardise the police investigation.

The End of the Criminal Process

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the school will update its risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all children. We will consider any suitable action, following our Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding Policy. If the perpetrator remains in school we will be very clear as to our expectations regarding the perpetrator now they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions we think are reasonable and proportionate about the perpetrator's timetable and access across the school site, as well as the journey to and from school.

Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other pupils or students in the school, we will ensure all children involved are protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online). Where cases are classified as "no further action" (NFA'd) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, we will continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. We will continue to support all parties in this instance.

Support for Children Affected by Sexual-Assault

Support for victims of sexual assault is available from a variety of agencies (see Appendix 1). We will support the victim of sexual assault to remain in school but if they are unable to do so we will enable them to continue their education elsewhere. This decision will be made only at the request of the child and their family.

If they are moved we will ensure the new school is aware of the ongoing support they may need. The DSL will support this move. We will work closely with the Local authority admissions department.

Where there is a criminal investigation the alleged perpetrator will be removed from any shared classes and association spaces with the victim and we will also consider how best to keep them a reasonable distance apart on

the school premises or on school transport. This is in the best interest of the children concerned and should not be perceived to be a judgement of guilt before any legal proceedings.

Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, we may take suitable action, if we have not already done so. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other pupils or students). Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, we may, if we have not already done so, consider permanent exclusion.

Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school, the principle would be to continue keeping the victim and perpetrator in separate areas of the school and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school premises and transport to and from the school site. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.

Reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment will, in some cases, not lead to a report to the police (for a variety of reasons). In some cases, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault or sexual harassment are reported to the police and the case is not progressed or are reported to the police and ultimately result in a not guilty verdict. None of this means the offence did not happen or that the victim lied. The process will have affected both victim and alleged perpetrator. Appropriate support will be provided to both as required and consideration given to sharing classes and potential contact as required on a case-by-case basis.

All the above will be considered with the needs and wishes of the victim at the heart of the process (supported by parents and carers, as required). Any arrangements should be kept under review.

It is important to hold a non-judgmental approach throughout the process. The perpetrator is also likely to be a victim and should be supported as such.

Physical Abuse

While a clear focus of peer-on-peer abuse is around sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be abusive. These are equally not tolerated and if it is believed that a crime has been committed, will be reported to the police and appropriate agencies. The principles from our Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any police investigation will need to take priority.

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can assess the alleged behaviour and respond appropriately with reference to our Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policies. This could include, for example, whether the behaviour is:

- is socially acceptable
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time
- is socially acceptable within the peer group
- is problematic and concerning
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning
- involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour
- involves a misuse of power

Online Behaviour

Many forms of peer-on-peer abuse have an element of online behaviour including behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting. Policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour can be found in –

CC Behaviour Policy, Anti- Bullying policy, Network Use Policy, and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)

Prevention

Coundon Court actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of peer-on-peer abuse by:

- Educating all Governors, Leadership Team, staff, students, and parents about this issue. This will include training all Governors, Leadership Team and staff on the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it, this includes:
 - 1 Contextual Safeguarding
 - 2 The identification and classification of specific behaviours
 - 3 The importance of taking seriously all forms of peer-on-peer abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of peer-on-peer abuse is ever dismissed as banter, play fighting or teasing.
- Educating children about the nature and prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse via their Personal Development curriculum, discussion in tutor time / assemblies and through the wider curriculum.
- Students are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse.

- They are regularly informed about the School's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of peer-on-peer abuse.

- Engaging parents on this issue by:
 - 1 Talking about it with parents;
 - 2 Asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child;
 - 3 Involving parents in a consultation of School policies;
 - 4 Encouraging parents to hold the School to account on this issue.

- Ensuring that all peer-on-peer abuse issues are fed back to the School's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who maybe in need of additional support.
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom);
- Working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff, students and parents / carers to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the school community;
- Creating conditions in which our students can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships;
- Creating a culture in which our students feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to; and
- Responding to cases of peer-on-peer abuse promptly and appropriately.

Multi-Agency Working

Coundon Court actively engages with its local partners in relation to peer-on-peer abuse, and works closely with, Coventry Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), children's social care, local police link officers and/or other relevant agencies, and other schools.

The relationships the school has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the School is able to prevent, identify early and appropriately handle cases of peer-on-peer abuse. They help the school to-

- To develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in its local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist;
- To ensure that our students can access the range of services and support they need quickly;
- To support and help inform our local community's response to peer-on-peer abuse;
- To increase our awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in our local area to enable us to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by our students.

The school actively refers concerns/allegations of peer-on-peer abuse where necessary to Coventry MASH, Children's Social Care, and/or other relevant agencies. All concerns are logged on CPOMS. Children resident out of county but attending a Coventry/Warwickshire school /academy will be reported to their home MASH or

equivalent Social Care. In cases involving children who are subject to risk, harm and abuse and who have LAC status, the children's social worker must be informed and a coordinated approach to address any incidents or concerns will be required.

Appendix

I. Support for Young People, parents/carers – Local and National

MASH

https://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/31/children_and_families/2186/coventrys_multi_agency_safeguarding_hub_mash

Child and Adolescent mental Health services (CAMHS)

<https://www.covwarkpt.nhs.uk/service-detail/health-service/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-camhs-13/>

Rape Crisis Centre's can provide support for children over 13 who have experienced sexual violence.

NSPCC helpline for people who experienced sexual abuse in education

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2021/sexual-abuse-victims-schools-helpline/>

Support for staff in school - Useful Websites and Government Publications

NSPCC – Harmful sexual behaviour framework

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework>

Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges>

Keeping Children safe in education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Preventing youth violence and gang involvement

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-schools-and-colleges-on-gangs-and-youth-violence>

Preventing and tackling bullying in schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

Sexting in schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

NSPCC – Harmful sexual behaviour

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sex-relationships/sexual-behaviour-children/>

What is age appropriate?

<https://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/what-is-age-appropriate>

Online sexual harassment

<https://www.childnet.com/our-projects/project-deshame>

II. Glossary of Key Terms

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is "harmful sexual behaviour". The term has been widely adopted in child protection and is used in this advice. Harmful sexual behaviour can occur online and/or offline and can also occur simultaneously between the two. Harmful sexual behaviour should be considered in a child protection context.

Hazing/Initiation

The practice of rituals, challenges, and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group.

Sexual Harassment

This can be defined as 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. In the context of this guidance this means in the context of child on child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

It can include

- Sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;
- Sexual "jokes" or taunting;

Sexting

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others or sends sexually explicit messages. They can be sent using mobiles, tablets, smartphones, laptops - any device that allows you to share media and messages. This is also known as youth produced sexual imagery The UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) Education Group has published Advice for Schools and Colleges on Responding to Sexting Incidents www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexting-in-schools-and-college

Upskirting

This 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 now a criminal offence and may constitute sexual harassment. Cases of 'up skirting' have a mandatory requirement for being reported.

Sexual Violence

In this guidance this refers to sexual violence in the context of child on child sexual violence. Children can and do abuse other children. Sexual violence covers a spectrum of behaviour. It can refer to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2013. This includes: -

- *Rape*: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
- *Assault by Penetration*: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault

A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Consent

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

It is important to know that: -

1. A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity.
2. The age of consent is 16.
3. Sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

It is also important to differentiate between consensual sexual activity between children of a similar age and that which involves any power imbalance, coercion or exploitation. Due to their additional training, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) should be involved and leading the school or college response. If in any doubt, they should seek expert advice.

It is important that schools and colleges consider sexual harassment in broad terms. Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates an atmosphere that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.