



Harris Church of England Academy

Policy

Child on Child abuse

To be tabled at Full Governing Body for Approval

Date Tabled:	Sept 2026
Review Date:	Sept 2027

Context and Definition

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

Peer on Peer Abuse as it was formally known was changed to Child on Child Abuse for 2022 to highlight that it can be perpetrated by a child of any age upon another child of any age; peer on peer suggested it happened between children of the same age.

All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers.

All staff should be aware of safeguarding issues from peer abuse including:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise
- Causing physical harm
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Misogyny, sexism and gender-based harassment
- Teenage Relationship Abuse – coercive and controlling behaviours
- Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)
- 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; 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 than physical. 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

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2026 states that:

‘Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of Child on child abuse and sets out how allegations of Child on child abuse will be investigated and dealt with’.

It also emphasises that the voice of the child must be heard:

‘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.’

Child on child abuse is referenced in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The sensitive nature and specific issues involved with Child on child necessitate separate policy guidance.

At Harris CofE Academy, we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behavior 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 wellbeing.

3. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out the school's principles and responses in regard to Child on Child abuse. To support staff in recognising this particular type of abuse some forms of Child on child abuse. The policy also includes a planned and supportive response to the issues.

At Harris CofE Academy, we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- 3.1 Anti-Bullying Policy
- 3.2 Child Protection Policy

4. Framework and Legislation

This policy is informed by the Children Act 1989, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. Harris CofE Academy recognises the importance of hearing the voice of the child and ensuring that children are seen, heard and kept at the centre of all safeguarding decisions. The wishes, feelings and lived experiences of children will be considered when determining the most appropriate support and intervention.

5. Abuse and harmful behavior

It is necessary to consider

- What abuse is and what it looks like
- How it can be managed
- What appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual
- What preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm

Abuse should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE, 2020). It is important to consider the forms of abuse that may take place and the subsequent actions required.

- Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.
- 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.

The alleged perpetrator is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. Evidence suggests that such children may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, may have witnessed or been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, may have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and be in need of protection. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the perpetrator must address their needs.

6. Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers 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.

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.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will respond in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Part 5: Child-on-child sexual harassment and sexual violence, alongside local safeguarding partnership procedures and advice from external agencies where appropriate.

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

with consideration of:

- Managing internally 65.1, page 27
- Early Help 65.2, page 28
- MAT referral 65.3. page 28
- Reporting to the police 64.4, Page 29

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 behavior and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is directed 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.

The academy recognises that misogyny, sexist language, gender stereotypes and gender-based harassment can be indicators of harmful sexual behaviour. Such behaviours will be challenged, recorded and addressed

appropriately and will never be dismissed as banter, part of growing up, having a laugh or boys being boys. Early identification and intervention can help prevent escalation into more serious incidents of sexual harassment or sexual violence.

6.3. Violence against women and girls

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) refers to acts of violence, abuse, harassment and coercive behaviours which disproportionately affect women and girls. The academy recognises that sexist attitudes, misogynistic language, gender-based bullying, sexual harassment and online abuse can contribute to a culture in which harmful behaviours are normalised.

The academy is committed to creating a culture where inappropriate behaviour, sexism, misogyny and gender-based harassment are challenged, recorded and addressed. Such behaviours will never be dismissed as banter, part of growing up, having a laugh, or boys being boys.

Staff will remain vigilant to indicators of harmful sexual behaviour and respond in accordance with safeguarding procedures, ensuring that children who have experienced harm are appropriately supported and that children displaying harmful behaviour receive suitable intervention and education.

6.4. Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour 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 deliberately excluding someone from a group on purpose.

6.5. Online Bullying / Cyber bullying

Online Bullying / Cyberbullying 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

6.6. Sharing nudes and semi-nudes

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes refers to the creation, possession or sharing of nude or semi-nude images and videos by children. Incidents may take place online, through social media, messaging services or other digital

platforms. Such incidents will be managed in accordance with current Department for Education guidance and safeguarding procedures.

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will follow the DfE and UKCIS guidance, sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people, alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

The academy recognises that emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), may be used to facilitate child-on-child abuse. This includes the creation, sharing or use of AI-generated sexual images, deepfakes, nudification technology and other forms of image-based abuse. All such incidents will be taken seriously and responded to as safeguarding concerns.

6.7. Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organization 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.

6.8. Discriminatory Behaviour and Prejudice-based 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.

6.9. 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.

7. Expected staff action

Staff should consider the seriousness of the case and make a quick decision whether to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately before taking any further in-school actions.

8. Recognising peer abuse

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:

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

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the facts. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved.

Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

8.1. Taking Action

- Always take complaints seriously
- Gain a statement of facts from the pupil(s)
- Assess needs of victim and alleged perpetrator
- Consider referral to Police or Social Care
- Contribute to multi-agency assessments
- Convene a risk management meeting
- Record all incidents and all action taken

8.2. Recording sexualised behaviour

- 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
- Follow the prompts on your safeguarding and child protection recording form
- Use proper names for body parts but record exactly any language or vocabulary used by the child. Use the child's exact words in quotation marks.
- Note where and when the incident happened and whether anyone else was around.

8.3. Gather the Facts

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. Ask the young people to tell you what happened. Use open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?). Do not interrogate or ask leading questions.

8.4. Consider the Intent

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?

8.5. Decide on your next course of action

If you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm, you MUST report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately; they will follow the school's Child Protection Policy.

If MAT and the police intend to pursue this further, they may ask to interview the young people in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to.

It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

8.6. Informing parents/carers

The best way to inform parents/carers is face to face. Although this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents/carers whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

Is the pupil 13+ and does not want to share with parents? Use the 'Gillick' test and the 'Fraser' guidelines.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines/>

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then the school should encourage the young person to share the information with their parent/carer (they may be scared to tell parents/carers that they are being harmed in any way).

9. 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?

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 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?

10. Next Steps

- Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure abuse does not reoccur and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

10.1. For the young person who has been harmed

- What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends; in which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer group relationships or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required. Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PSHE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.
- If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

10.2. For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

- It is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is 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 is important that the young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. 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, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education elsewhere.

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. 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 of those agencies involved including risks to the young person and their parents/carers. 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.

The school may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion/ for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

10.3. After care

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue 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 occur in any setting, even where there are robust safeguarding systems and effective support mechanisms in place. Harris CofE Academy recognises the importance of a proactive, whole-school approach to preventing child-on-child abuse and fostering a culture of safety, respect and inclusion.

The Academy promotes an open and supportive environment in which children feel safe, listened to and confident to report concerns. Pupils are encouraged to speak to a trusted adult about anything that is upsetting, worrying or making them feel unsafe, and are regularly reminded of the support and reporting mechanisms available to them.

Prevention is embedded throughout the curriculum and wider life of the school. Through PSHE, collective worship, assemblies, computing / IT, online safety education and wider safeguarding activities, pupils are taught about:

- healthy and respectful relationships;
- consent and personal boundaries;
- equality, diversity and inclusion;
- prejudice-based harm and discrimination;
- bullying and cyberbullying;
- misogyny, sexism and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG);
- harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual violence;
- online safety, including the risks associated with social media, image sharing, artificial intelligence (AI), deepfake technology and digital exploitation.

The Academy promotes an inclusive and anti-discriminatory culture where all forms of abuse, harassment, discrimination and harmful behaviour are recognised, challenged and addressed. Staff will never dismiss abusive behaviour as banter, part of growing up, having a laugh, or boys being boys, and will respond to concerns in line with safeguarding procedures.

Pupil voice plays a key role in the Academy's safeguarding culture. Through mechanisms such as the School Council, pupil surveys, safeguarding forums and student leadership opportunities, pupils are encouraged to contribute to the development of a safe and respectful school environment. The Academy actively seeks and responds to pupil feedback when evaluating safeguarding practice and developing preventative strategies.

Through these measures, the Academy aims to ensure that all pupils understand acceptable behaviour, recognise unhealthy or abusive behaviours, know how to seek help and support, and feel empowered to contribute to a culture in which child-on-child abuse is not tolerated.

12. Risk Assessments

Where child-on-child abuse has occurred, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will consider whether a safeguarding risk assessment is required. Risk assessments will be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the incident and will consider the needs and safety of all children involved, including the child who has experienced harm, the alleged perpetrator and, where appropriate, the wider pupil body.

Risk assessments will take account of:

- the nature of the incident and any ongoing risks;
- the wishes, feelings and wellbeing of the child who has experienced harm;
- the ages and developmental stages of those involved;
- any previous concerns, patterns of behaviour or vulnerabilities;
- risks presented within the school environment, including unstructured times and shared spaces;
- the support, supervision and intervention required to reduce risk and prevent recurrence.

Risk assessments will be reviewed regularly and amended where circumstances change or further information becomes available.

13. Where to go for further information

13.1. DfE: Statutory guidance: Working together to safeguard children 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

13.2. DfE: Statutory guidance: Keeping children safe in education 2018

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

13.3. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 - Part 5: Child-on-child sexual harassment and sexual violence

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

13.4. DfE: Searching, screening and confiscation at school

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>

13.5. Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (DfE/UKCIS).

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/>

13.6. DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017

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

13.7. DfE: Statutory guidance School exclusion

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>

13.8. DfE: Relationship and Sex Education Current guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sex-and-relationship-education>

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/pshe/relationships-education-rse-health-education>

13.9. DfE: Behaviour and discipline in schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-and-discipline-in-schools>

13.10. DfE: Children Missing Education <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrenmissing-education>

13.11. DfE: Cyberbullying: Advice for Head teachers and school staff

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment>

13.12. DfE: Mental health and behaviour in schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>