Hindhayes Infant School

Child on Child Abuse Policy

September 2026

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

Approved on: _____

Signed: _____

Role: _____

1. Introduction: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 states that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure there are appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare. These should include individual schools having an effective child protection policy which:

- should describe procedures which are in accordance with government guidance;
- refer to locally agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements put in place by the three safeguarding partners;
- include policies as reflected elsewhere in Part two of this guidance, such as online safety, child on child abuse and SEND.

Our staff have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking, alcohol abuse, deliberately missing education and sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery) put children in danger. Our staff are aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child on child abuse.
This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together 2018, highlighting that every assessment of a child, should 'reflect the unique characteristics of the child within their family and community context' (Working Together, 2018:28). This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools & settings to hear the voice of the child and to be mindful of the contexts children live in.

4.Children with Special Educational Needs: Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can face additional safeguarding challenges. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- Being more prone to peer group isolation than other children;
- The potential for children with SEND being disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

To address these additional challenges, schools and colleges should consider extra pastoral support for children with SEND and disabilities particularly when investigating any form of child on child abuse.

2.Purpose and Aims: Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as child on child abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child on child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues. At Hindhayes we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy: The Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Online Safety Policy, Children Missing from Education Policy Behaviour, Relationship Policy and the Positive Handling Policy.

3.What is Child on child Abuse: All staff are aware that children can abuse another child. Child on child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate) This may include but it is not limited to the following:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element, which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- Abuse in intimate relationships between peers
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- Up skirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals, which could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group, and may also include an online element

Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives and spaces in which they spend their time. Any response to child on child abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of child on child abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's experiences. This can be done by adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that our response to incidents of child-on-child abuse takes into account any potential complexity. Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and what it looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm. Abuse is abuse and 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). Research suggests that child on child abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure will also be different. As a result, schools need to explore the gender dynamics of child on child abuse within their settings & recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender imbalanced environments (Farrer & Co. 2017).

5.Measuring the behaviour: It can be useful to think about measuring the behaviour by considering it within the following circumstances around the incident e.g.

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

Behaviour which is not abusive at first may potentially become abusive quickly or over time. Intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour which may be displayed by a child is vital and could potentially prevent their behaviour from progressing on a continuum to become problematic, abusive and/or violent - and ultimately requiring (greater/more formal) engagement with specialist external and/or statutory agencies.

6.Expected action taken from all staff: All staff should be alert to the well-being of children and young people and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child on child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ (Farrer & Co. 2017). Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator of the harm, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm. 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 a true, accurate account of the facts around what has happened, so that nothing is forgotten. 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. For example; do not use the word perpetrator, this can quickly create a 'blame' culture & leave a child labelled. In all cases of child on child abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm & consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters. Staff should also be mindful of contextual safeguarding and that wider safeguarding concerns may influence the child's account of the event(s). Alongside this peer pressure and the impact of sharing information about the incident(s) may also influence a child's account.

7. What Next? Gather the facts: In cases specifically relating to Sexual violence and sexual harassment, part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2026 states that two members of staff (one being the Designated Safeguarding Lead) should be present to manage the report, where possible. In all circumstances, staff need to 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. The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the young people to tell you what happened. Only interrupt the young person from this to gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?) A full and clear record of exactly what the young person has said in their own language should be made and stored. **Consider the intents:** Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another? **Decide on the next course of action**: If from the information that you gather you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also). This action would, in most circumstances be undertaken by the Designated Safeguarding Lead but in the event of their absence the referral can be made by another member of staff. If this is the case, once social care has been contacted and decided on what will happen next, you will be informed on your next steps. If social care 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 also. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take. It may also be that social care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case you may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, you agree with the decision, you may then be left to inform parents. **Inform the parents**: If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care you have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then you need to inform the parents as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents. Parents would not be informed if by doing so the child was put at further risk of significant harm.
Additional Support: In dealing with an incident of this nature if the answers are not always clear cut or staff are concerned that there is risk involved, staff will seek the support of Children's Social Care through the DSL advice line

8. Points to consider

What is the age of the children involved? Is there an 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 this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other concerns are raised e.g. the location of the incident. **Where did the incident or incidents take place**? Was it in an open, visible place to others? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area? **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 what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying e.g. regular and repetitive? **What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?** Did they know/understand what they were 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? **Has the behaviour been repeated?** Did it persist after it had been discussed/resolved?

9. Outcomes: The outcome of the investigation will follow our local threshold guidance. Therefore, either a referral has been made to either the police/social care for a full investigation (tier 4). It may have resulted in Children's Services undertaking a further assessment (Tier 3) or as a school/setting you may have identified additional services/intervention that are non-statutory and in which case completed an early help assessment (Tier 2). It may be that on investigation; a decision has been made to handle the incident (s) internally and which case the school may implement a risk assessment plan (Tier 1). In any of the above outcomes the school has a duty of care to manage the education needs of both children/young people in which case a risk assessment plan may be needed irrespective of the outcome.

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.

10. Providing Support:

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 groups/relationships with other young people 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 PHSE and SMEH 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.

For the Young Person Who Has Displayed Harmful Behaviour: In this circumstance 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 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 whilst off site. Even following the conclusion of any investigation, 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 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. The school may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as suspension or internal suspension a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour

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). In which case, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

11.Disciplinary Action Our school will need to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including (a) to ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour; (b) to demonstrate to the child/children and others that child on child abuse can never be tolerated; and (c) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children. However, these considerations must be balanced against the child's/children's own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action our School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the child on child abuse and the causes of it. Our school will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognising that even if this is ultimately deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this policy may still be required. Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the School.

12. Review of Circumstances Following any incident of harm, it is necessary for our School to consider if anything could have been done differently. This demonstrates how proactive the school is in continually reviewing our policies and systems in effectively keeping children safe.

Preventative Strategies: it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of child on child abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way. Firstly, and most importantly for schools and settings is recognition that child on child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff. This can be supported by ensuring that each school/setting has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This can be strengthened through a strong and positive 'curriculum for life' 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.

At Hindhayes Infants our curriculum for life incorporates:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- What respectful behaviour looks like
- Consent
- Gender roles, stereotyping and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment

To enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure the whole workforce and governing body feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is necessary for whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to young people in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice. It is incredibly important that staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a young person seeking no further help or advice.

Parents need to be informed and included in policy forming, lesson plans and through open and frank conversations, training/courses about what child on child abuse is and how the school and setting will be tackling it. This can help to alleviate any concerns and worries and create a joined-up approach. It is important that signposting is available to young people in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer.

It is useful to have a resource board with support services on a wide range of issues so young people can seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of child on child abuse. It is useful to ensure young people are part of changing their circumstances and that of the procedures within schools. Having a pupil voice and encouraging young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour' will go far in helping to create a positive ethos in school and one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

Multi agency working can consolidate in house procedures in schools/settings. By accessing advice, support and guidance, effective decisions can be made in collaboration to improve outcomes for children who may be at risk of harm. Seeking advice and guidance can act as a preventative measure so that the right course of action is taken at the earliest opportunity. It is also necessary that our school actively refers concerns and allegations of child on child abuse where necessary to front door services/children's social care and the police where appropriate. This is particularly important because child on child abuse can be a complex issue, and even more so where wider safeguarding concerns exist. It is often not appropriate for one single agency (where the incident cannot be managed internally) to try to address the issue alone – it requires effective partnership working.

Schools which excel at tackling bullying or child on child abuse have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. This culture extends beyond our classrooms to the corridors, the dining hall, the playground, and beyond the school gates. Values of respect for staff pup and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school therefor, preventing unacceptable behaviours.