



North Ridge High Specialist Support School

PEER ON PEER ABUSE POLICY April 2021

Under the public sector equality duty, all schools/academies must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; to advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it and to foster good relations across all protected characteristics. This means schools/academies must take into account equality considerations when policies are being developed, adopted and implemented.

Our school ethos

Each member of our school community is recognised for their individual personality strengths and areas for development. Our school logo is "Do your best". We believe that each one of us can contribute to our school community by always doing our best yet not necessarily having to be the best! We are very proud that staff and pupils always work hard and strive to achieve. There is a very strong approach to team work by staff and pupils. All hard work and achievements however small or great are recognised through awards, certificates. This is done on a weekly basis to maintain the motivation of all our staff and pupils.

We value the opinions of all members of our community. Our pupils are encouraged to express their thoughts and views and challenge ideas. Parents are welcome in school and their views are also requested on a regular basis. Our parents group meets on a regular basis. We are a UNICEF Rights Respecting Gold Award School

At North Ridge High school we want all pupils to feel safe and to learn. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through our PHSCE programme and targeted teaching e.g. Safer Internet day.

We have a pupil friendly safeguarding and anti-bullying policy and students are taught how to report any concerns they have. All concerns no matter how small they may seem are treated seriously. We record all concerns and any actions taken on CPOMS.

All pupils complete an annual Pupil Safeguarding Questionnaire and we use this information to make positive changes.

Any allegation of peer on peer abuse is recorded accurately on CPOMS. We also record any actions taken and outcomes.

Through training we ensure that all staff recognise that students are capable of abusing their peers. The senior leadership team and governing body are responsible

for ensuring that procedures exist to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and consider how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with. There is a clear procedure on how victims of peer on peer abuse will be supported.

All staff are aware of peer on peer abuse. This is most likely to include, but not limited to, bullying (including cyber bullying), gender-based violence, sexual violence and sexual harassment, up skirting (which is now a criminal offence), physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, pulling hair, sexting and initiating /instigating violence and rituals. These issues will be addressed through our school curriculum and assemblies throughout the year.

All staff are expected to refer to HM Government guidance 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused – Advise for practitioners' for further help in identifying signs and symptoms of student abuse and neglect. This guidance is emailed to all staff. Staff members who are concerned that a student might have been / being abused by another student should follow safeguarding and child protection procedures and report to the DSL.

In respect of sexual violence and sexual harassment between students, the school takes a proactive approach to prevent such incidents from taking place. Throughout school, safeguarding is taught as part of our curriculum. We appreciate that whilst adults in school are working hard to keep students safe, students also play a large part in keeping themselves and their peers safe from abuse and neglect. An age-appropriate curriculum is delivered in school to build capacity amongst our students in their understanding of particular issues, and what actions they can take to be safe. We have an 'appropriate use of toilet' policy and this is displayed for staff and students to see. We use NSPCC 'Pants' rule to teach pupils about keeping safe.

We incorporate healthy relationships, people who help us, British values etc. into our curriculum time in an age appropriate way for the year groups in school. Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is taught through the school timetable, in line with DfE guidance and the national curriculum.

Students are taught to understand the issue and meaning of consent as delivered in the RSHE curriculum.

Students will be made aware of what constitutes unreasonable pressure from peers to engage in risk-taking or inappropriate behaviour, and of how to report their concerns. Allegations of abuse by a peer will be treated as seriously as allegations of abuse from an adult, it should never be dismissed as normal behaviour.

Robust systems have been established in school for dealing with safeguarding concerns. All allegations of abuse and neglect, whether suspected or known will be treated seriously and confidentially. Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up". We will respond and manage any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment in line with guidance added to KCSIE 2020 and within the MSP website.

Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Peer on Peer Abuse

When an allegation is made by a student against another student, or about a peer on peer incident they have witnessed or been a part of, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern. If there is a safeguarding concern the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be informed.

1. The member of staff will listen to the disclosure, using open language and demonstrate understanding without judgement.
2. The school and the Designated Safeguarding Lead will also take account of the wider context in which the alleged incident(s) of peer on peer abuse took place, for example the physical environment of the school; route/travel to and from school; online environment and gender norms
3. A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances.
4. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should contact Advice and Guidance Line 0161 234 5001 to discuss the case.
5. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a referral where appropriate.
6. If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place the police will become involved.
7. Parents, of both/all the student/s concerned with the disclosure/allegation and the alleged victim/s, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral.
8. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in the Secure Safeguarding Records. We record all concerns and any actions on CPOMS.
9. If the allegation highlights a potential risk to the school and the student, the school will follow the school's behaviour policy and procedures and take appropriate action.
10. In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan.
11. The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.
12. Where a disclosure or allegation indicates that indecent images of a student or students may have been shared online, the DSL will consider what line of action is to be taken in line with the Online and Digital Safeguarding Policy and whether or not devices are to be confiscated, the police contacted, Advice and Guidance Line informed and if the images have been uploaded to the internet what specialist help may be required for the images to be removed.

Throughout the process it is important that we support both the victim, perpetrator and any other students affected. We will use our student voice resources to gain their view and will identify an appropriate adult in school that they can talk to should they have any concerns.

All information is handled in accordance with the school's GDPR Policy, which is written in line with HM Government guidance – 'Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to students, young people, parents and carers, July 2018', and the 7 principles of information sharing within that document.

When incidents of sexual violence and sexual harassment occur the schools response is ultimately decided on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking the lead role, using their professional judgement. Incidents of peer-on-peer abuse may need to be dealt with in various ways. Incidents of bullying will be dealt with via the schools or behaviour policy. Incidents which take place outside of school may need to be addressed in school however the school are clear that where professional advice needs to be sought

from external partners, it will be. The schools Designated Safeguarding Lead will consult children's social care on matters relating to the safety and welfare of a student and will consult the police in respect of matters relating to a possible crime. The school will put a proportionate and supportive package of care in place for those affected.

School leaders are aware that detailed advice to support schools and colleges has been published. The advice is available and includes, what sexual violence and sexual harassment look like, important context to be aware of, related legal responsibilities for schools and colleges and advice on a whole school or college approach to preventing student on student sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Responding to reports of sexual violence/harassment

[Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges, May 2018](#)

There are four likely scenarios for schools and colleges to consider when managing any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment.

1. Manage internally

In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, the school may take the view that the students concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising their behaviour policy and by providing pastoral support.

Whatever the school's response, it should be underpinned by the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded. We record all concerns and any actions on CPOMS.

2. Early help

In line with 1 above, the school may decide that the students 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 student's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of students than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.

Full details of the early help process are in Chapter one of Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Multi-agency early help will work best when placed alongside strong school policies, preventative education and engagement with parents and carers.

Whatever the response, it should be under-pinned by the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded. We record all concerns and any actions on CPOMS.

3. Referrals to children's social care

Where a student has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, schools should make a referral to local children's social care.

At the referral to children's social care stage, schools will generally inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing a parent or carer is going to put the student at additional risk). Any such decision should be made with the support of children's social care.

If a referral is made, children's social care will then make enquiries to determine whether any of the students involved are in need of protection or other services. Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the school (especially the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy) should 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 students that require support.

Schools should not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a children's social care investigation before protecting the victim and other students in the school. It will be important for the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) to work closely with children's social care (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions the school or college takes do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. The risk assessment as per paragraph 275 will help inform any decision.

Consideration of safeguarding the victim, alleged perpetrator, any other children directly involved in the safeguarding report and all children at the school should be immediate.

In some cases, children's social care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. The school (generally led by the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy) should be prepared to refer again if they believe the student remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm. If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support and pastoral support.

Whatever the response, it should be under-pinned by the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded. We record all concerns and any actions on CPOMS.

4. Reporting to the Police

Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to children's social care (as above).

It is important that the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) are clear about the local process for referrals and follow that process.

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is this should be passed 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.

At this stage, schools will generally inform parents or carers unless there are compelling reasons not to, for example, if informing a parent or carer is likely to put a student at additional risk. In circumstances where parents or carers have not been informed, it will be especially important that the school is supporting the student in any decision they take. This should be with the support of children's social care and any appropriate specialist agencies.

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

All police forces in England have specialist units that investigate child abuse. The names and structures of these units are matters for local forces. It will be important

that the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) are aware of their local arrangements.

In some cases, it may become clear very quickly, that the police (for whatever reason) will not take further action. In such circumstances, it is important that the school continues to engage with specialist support for the victim as required. Whatever the response, it should be under-pinned by the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded. We record all concerns and any actions on CPOMS.

After recent government action to tackle the issues raised by testimonies given on the Everyone's Invited website, NSPCC has been commissioned to run the helpline which we will publicise in school and on our website – 0800 136 663. This number is for children and young people who are victims of sexual abuse, adult victims, parents and carers of victims and professionals working with children and young people. It is to report or share incidents which have happened both in and outside of educational settings.

Guidance documents/appendices for school policies:

[Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020, January 2021 Update \(post EU exit\)](#)

[Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges, May 2018](#)

[Governors Handbook October 2020](#)