



CHRIST CHURCH C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

PEER TO PEER ABUSE POLICY

Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2016 states that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with' (page 19).

The document also states it is most important to ensure opportunities of seeking the voice of the child are 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, any system and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.'

At Christ Church C.E. Primary School we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

Aims and objectives

At Christ Church C.E. Primary School we aim to ensure everyone feels valued and respected and each person is treated fairly and well. The distinctive and inclusive ethos of our Anglican Voluntary Controlled school places great emphasis on caring for others with friendship, courtesy and consideration. We are a community where we value each member and this policy is designed to support the way we

can live and work together. We aim to promote a happy, secure and safe environment.

The school expects every member of the school community to behave in a considerate way towards each other and to work together to create an environment of good positive and responsible behaviour.

Framework and Legislation

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, 2015*, highlighting that every assessment of a child, 'must be informed by the views of the child' and within that 'It is important to understand the resilience of the individual child when planning appropriate services. (*Working Together, 2015:23*) This is clearly echoed by *Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2016* through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

Statement of Intent

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils and staff so they can learn and work in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Abuse of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If abuse does occur, all pupils and adults should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Objectives of this Policy

- All governors, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents should have an understanding of what peer to peer abuse is.
- All governors and teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the school policy is on peer to peer abuse, and follow it when peer to peer abuse is reported.
- All pupils and parents should know what the school policy is on peer to peer abuse, and what they should do if bullying arises.

- As a school we take peer to peer abuse seriously. Pupils and their parents and also any member of staff should be assured that they will be supported when peer to peer abuse is reported.
- peer to peer abuse will not be tolerated.

Introduction to abuse and harmful behavior

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. Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'.

(Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2016).

It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

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.

Bullying (physical, name calling, homophobic etc.)

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children 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 excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Physical abuse e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling etc.)

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, 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.

Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault etc.)

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 behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

Cyber bullying

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the *Malicious Communications Act 1988* under section 1 which states, that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the *Communications Act 2003*, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose

of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour. If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the *Sexual Offences Act 2003*. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Prejudiced 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 - in particular, prejudices to do with 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 (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

Expected action taken from all staff

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and initiator 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 the true facts around what has occurred as soon after the child(ren) may have 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 and leave a child labelled. In all cases of peer on peer 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 and consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

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. 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?)

Consider the Intent (begin to Risk Assess)

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

Decide on your next course of action

After the facts have been gathered staff are expected to log the incident with a member of SLT. This will be logged on O track as required for tracking purposes. SLT will then liaise with the staff members involved to discuss an appropriate course of action, in accordance with relevant school policy.

If from the information that is gathered, you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must make a safeguarding referral (face to face) to the Designated Safeguarding Leads (Mr Sean Davies, Mrs Natasha Molineux, Mrs Elizabeth Mill, Mrs Diana Bolton or Mrs Shelley Till) they will then make a judgement as to whether or not to inform Social Services

If social care and (in some cases) 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.

Informing 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. 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 or even with them (they may be scared to tell parents that they are being harmed in any way). Where school can evidence they are acting in the best interests of the young person they would not be criticised, however this would be the case if they actively breached the rights and choices of the young person.

The best way to inform parents 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 whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

Outcomes

- The perpetrator (s) may be asked to genuinely apologise. Other consequences may take place.
- In serious cases, suspension or even exclusion will be considered
- If possible, the pupils will be reconciled
- After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

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.

Prevention

For all schools and settings, it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of peer on peer abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way.

- We will raise awareness of bullying with the children and parents by taking part in the Annual "Anti Bullying Week" in November.
- A strong and positive PHSE/SMSC curriculum 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
- Phone numbers of Child line and other appropriate help organisations will be displayed prominently in school.
- The school is aware of its responsibilities to prevent all forms of prejudice based bullying, including homophobia and transphobia.
- It is useful to ensure young people are part of changing their circumstances and that of the procedures within schools. Having a school council and 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.

We will use a variety of methods for helping children to prevent bullying. As and when appropriate, these may include:

- writing a set of school rules
- signing a behaviour contract
- writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying
- reading stories about bullying or having them read to a class or assembly

- making up role-plays
- having discussions about bullying and why it matters

Written by - Sean Davies (Head Teacher)

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