2024-2025

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy and Procedures

Role	Staff Member
Designated Safeguarding Lead for Child Protection	*Mrs L Casey (Co-Head Teacher)* *Mrs A Allen (Co-Head Teacher)* *Miss E Bell (Family Liaison Officer)*
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (with DSL training) and members of the Safeguarding Team	**Mr C Tupper (Deputy Head Teacher)** **Miss E Herdecka (Assistant Head Teacher)** **Mrs L Stephens (Assistant Head Teacher)** **Mrs Pettifor (SENCO/Inclusion)** **Mrs V Beazley (UKS2 Learning and Behaviour Lead)** **Miss C Sims (UKS2 Learning and Behaviour Lead)** **Mr R Welsh (LKS2 Learning and Behaviour Lead)** **Mrs V McLaren (KS1 Learning and Behaviour Lead)** **Mrs M Stevens (School Business Manager)** **Mrs J O'Hara (EYFS Lead)** **Mrs E Kazim (Key Stage 1)** **Mr W Ewen (Key Stage 1)** **Miss S Tuffley (Key Stage 1)** **Miss S Jones (Key Stage 2)** **Mr D Corley (Sports Coach)** **Miss K Jesney (HLTA/Lead MDM Supervisor)** **Mrs L Meredith (Wrap Around Leader)** **Mrs B Foskett (HLTA)** **Mrs Miller (HLTA)** **Mrs P Newman (Wrap Around Deputy)** **Mrs E O'Boyle (School Office)**
Designated Teacher for 'Looked After Children' and 'Previously Looked After Children'. Also, DDSL (with DSL training) and member of the Safeguarding Team	**Mrs Pettifor (SENCO/Inclusion/PLAC)**
Nominated staff managing 'Low level concerns'. Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (with DSL training) and members of the Safeguarding Team	**Mr C Tupper (Deputy Head Teacher)** **Mrs Pettifor (SLT)**
Link Safeguarding Governor	**Mrs H Mash**
Link Online Safety Governor	**Miss C Sims**

This policy is provided to all staff and should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Equality Policy
- Online Safety and AUP Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Staff Induction Policy

Introduction

'Keeping Children Safe in Education (2 September 2024; paragraph 159) states that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse, with systems in place (*and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible*) for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously and how allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with. Furthermore, the school is required to state the clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported.

While it is recommended that child-on-child abuse is part of the Child Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with child-on-child abuse we have decided to separate it from the main Child Protection Policy.

At Danson Primary School, we take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. All child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

We recognise that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported with girls more likely to be victims and boys perpetrators. 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 child, with full consideration to impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

Child-on-child abuse should never be passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

Purpose and Aim

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 Danson Primary School, we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Cyber Bullying Policy

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 to Safeguard Children (December 2023)', 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. This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

Introduction to abuse and harmful behaviour

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'. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence. 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 children 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.

There are different forms of child-on-child abuse such as:

1. **Bullying** (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying). **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 children 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:

   a. An Imbalance of Power: Children 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.

   b. 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.

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 cyberbullying 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.

2. **Upskirting**: This is a criminal offence, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm.

3. **Physical abuse** which can include hitting, kicking, 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 child has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally, before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

4. **Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment**. This may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse. It also includes causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.

Harmful sexual behaviour from children is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a child engages in harmful sexual behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the child who instigates it as well as the child it is intended towards.

At Danson Primary School, we follow the Part five of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024' guidance which sets out how schools and colleges should respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

5. **Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)**:

The use of taking or distributing indecent images of children under the age of 18 is a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support children may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Sharing of nude and semi-nude images is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude

pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference.

However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, children are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

At Danson Primary School, we follow the 'Searching Screening and Confiscation Advice for schools' guidance and the UKCIS 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people' guidance which outlines how to respond to an incident of nude and/or semi-nude images and/or videos being shared.

6. **Abuse in intimate personal relationships** between children (also known as teenage relationship abuse).

7. **Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals**. Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation 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 idea behind this practice is that it 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.

8. **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 by 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 child-on-child 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 as possible and not 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 child-on-child abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to children 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 children 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 children to tell us what happened. Only interrupt the child 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 child to be able to harm another?

Decide on the next course of action

If from the information that we gather **we believe any child to be at risk of significant harm** we must make a safeguarding referral to Children's Social Care immediately (where a crime has been committed the Police should be involved also). If this is the case, once Children's Social Care has been contacted and made a decision on what will happen next then we will be informed on the next steps.

If Children's Social Care and the Police intend to pursue this further they may ask to interview the children 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 Children's Social Care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case we may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, we agree with the decision, we may then be left to inform parents.

Informing parents

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from Police/ Children's Social Care we have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then we 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. If a child is deemed to be 'Gillick Competent' following the 'Fraser' guidelines and does not wish for us to share the information with parents, then we will consider

this. An example is if a child is being bullied because they are pregnant (unless this has occurred through significant harm in which case a criminal/Children's Social Care case is likely or the child is under the age of 13).

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then we would encourage the child to share the information with their parent (the child may be scared to tell parents that they are being harmed in any way).

Danson Primary School will always act in the best interests of the child.

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 child may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

Points to consider:

What is the age of the children involved?

How old are the children involved in the incident and is there any 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 around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following)

- 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?
- What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?
- Can each of the children give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the children involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one child different from another and why?
- What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?
- Do the children 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 child'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 child have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If we are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, we will seek advice from Children's Social Care.

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?

Next Steps

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.

For the child who has been harmed

What support they require depends on the individual child. 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 child continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the child may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other children 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 cyberbullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PHSE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

If the child 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 child who has displayed harmful behaviour

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the child has behaved in such a way. It may be that the child 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 a Team around a child/strengthening families/early help referral and the child may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the child has been met, it is important that child receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the child they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of harmful sexual behaviour it may be a requirement for the child 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 child cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the children will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation the behaviour that the child has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This would be completed via a multiagency response to ensure that the needs of the child and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the child and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the child or protective strategies if the child feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

At Danson Primary School, we may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion/seclusion for a period of time to allow the child to reflect on their behaviour.

After care

It is important that following the incident the children involved continue to feel supported and receive help. 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 children 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 children following the incident(s) are imperative.

Preventative Strategies

At Danson Primary School, we prioritise proactive measures to prevent child-on-child abuse rather than simply responding to incidents after they occur.

The first and most crucial step is recognizing that child-on-child abuse can happen in any setting, regardless of the strength of policies and support systems in place. Acknowledging this reality allows us to continuously assess and manage risks while refining our strategies to better support children in discussing concerns. By encouraging open communication and ensuring all staff are well informed, we create an environment where issues can be addressed effectively.

To foster this open environment, we ensure that children feel safe to express concerns about anything that may be upsetting or worrying them. This is reinforced through a strong and positive PSHE/SMSC curriculum, which directly addresses topics such as prejudiced behaviour. Providing an open forum for discussions helps children process their experiences in a supportive setting, reducing the likelihood of harmful interactions occurring in private or unmonitored situations.

Creating such an open and honest environment also requires that all staff feel confident in addressing these issues and challenging inappropriate language and behaviour among children. To achieve this, we provide comprehensive staff training and continuous professional development (CPD) on recognizing abusive behaviours

and engaging in meaningful conversations with children. Staff must avoid dismissing concerns as mere 'banter' or a normal part of growing up, as minimizing such issues may discourage children from seeking further help or support. Every case should be considered on an individual basis, ensuring that concerns are taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

Additionally, it is essential to provide accessible signposting for children who may not feel comfortable raising concerns directly with staff or peers. A resource board with information on various support services allows children to seek guidance independently if needed. Furthermore, external organisations and support programs can be brought in to educate children on specific issues, reinforcing the importance of prevention and early intervention.

Finally, empowering children to take an active role in shaping their school environment is key to fostering a culture of respect and accountability. At Danson Primary School, we encourage student participation through the school council and pupil voice initiatives. Students are also involved in establishing "rules of acceptable behaviour," helping to create a positive school ethos where all children understand appropriate boundaries before behaviours escalate into abuse.

By implementing these strategies, we strive to create a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where every child feels valued and protected.

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