Danbury Park Community Primary School

Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy

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Be wise, be happy, belong

Danbury Park Community Primary School
Peer-on Peer Abuse Policy

1. Statement of Intent

1.1. At Danbury Park Community Primary School we recognise that peer abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others.

1.2. We expect all staff to recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers.

1.3. We expect all staff to be aware of safeguarding issues from peer abuse including:
- bullying (including online bullying);
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery); and
- Initiation type violence and rituals.

1.3. 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 victim; vulnerable adults are at particular risk of harm.

1.4. 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.

1.5. We recognise that emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical. School staff, alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputies, have to make their own judgements about each specific case and should use this policy guidance to help.

2. Responsibility

2.1. At Danbury Park Community Primary School we follow all statutory regulation and guidance relating to the safeguarding and protection of children including the current version of *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and *Working Together* which defines the responsibilities of governing bodies and adults working in school.

2.2. This policy should be read alongside the following school's policies: Child Protection, Behaviour, Anti-bullying, Equality and Special Educational Needs. The school feels that a separate policy is needed to acknowledge the sensitive nature of peer-on-peer abuse and the specific issues involved.

2.3. At Danbury Park Community 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 the impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and wellbeing. At all times the voice of the child must be heard.

3. Abuse and harmful behaviour

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

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

3.3.   Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action.

3.4.   Staff should be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.

3.5.   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.

3.6.   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 alleged perpetrator must address their needs.

4.   Types of abuse

4.1.   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.

4.2.   **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 accidently before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

4.3.   **Sexual violence and sexual harassment**
This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will follow the current DfE Guidance: *Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges* with consideration of
* Managing internally,
* Early Help,

- Referral to the Children and Families Hub,
- Reporting to the police .

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 behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is intended towards.

Sexually harmful behaviour may include
- inappropriate sexual language,
- inappropriate role play,
- sexual touching,
- sexual assault/abuse.

Staff are made 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;

4.4. **Bullying (see the school's Anti-bullying Policy)**
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 are repeated.
- Targeted. Bullying behaviours are targeted at an individual or group of individuals with the specific intention of causing harm.
- 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.

4.5. **Online Bullying**
Online Bullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, email, 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.

4.6. Sexting
The term 'sexting' relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content; these are created and sent electronically. They are often 'shared' via social networking sites and instant messaging services.

4.7. Upskirting
This typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.
This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead DSL.

4.8. Initiation/Hazing
Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony, which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private club, 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.

4.9. 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 – 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.

4.10. 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. Younger siblings may disclose that they have witnessed this behaviour.

5. Expected staff action

5.1.   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 following the school's Child Protection Policy.

5.2.   At Danbury Park Community Primary School we recognise that 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. 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.

5.3.   For the young person who has been harmed the school extends support, which will depend on the individual young person. This may include one to one well-being support and counselling. It may be that the family prefer to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends, in which case it is necessary that the 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 online bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of Personal Social and Health Education including Relationship and Sex Education that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

5.4.   For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour it is important to find out why they have 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 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 exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion/seclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

5.5. **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.

6. Preventative Strategies

6.1. Peer on peer abuse can and will occur in any institution even with the most robust policies and support processes. Danbury Park Community Primary School recognises that it is important to develop appropriate strategies to proactively prevent peer on peer abuse.

6.2. This school has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. There is a strong and positive PSHE curriculum and ethos that tackle 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. Pupils are encouraged and supported to tell adults when they require help or are aware that a peer may need help.

6.3. Staff will not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. Staff will consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action.

6.4. Young people are part of changing their circumstances and, through school council and pupil voice for example, we encourage young people to support changes and develop school and class rules of acceptable behaviour. We involve pupils in the positive ethos in school, one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.