



This policy is applicable to all CST Schools Trust (CST) schools and academies

Guidance – Peer to Peer Abuse

DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2016) says that “governing bodies should ensure that there are procedures in place to handle allegations against other children”. The guidance also states the importance of minimising the risks of peer-on- peer abuse.

In most instances, the conduct of students towards each other will be covered by the school’s behaviour policy. However, some allegations might be of such a serious nature that they become safeguarding concerns.

What is peer to peer abuse?

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as peer on peer abuse.

These allegations are most likely to include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation; however, the abuse may take many forms.

Physical abuse:

- Pre-planned violence
- Physical altercations (e.g. biting, hitting, kicking, punching, hair pulling etc.)
- Forcing other to carry out violence
- Forcing others to use drugs, alcohol or other substances

Emotional abuse:

- Bullying
- Cyber bullying
- Threats and Intimidation
- Initiation/Hazing
- Blackmail/extortion
- Prejudiced behaviour (e.g. homophobia, racism etc)

Sexual abuse:

- Sexual assault
- Indecent exposure
- Indecent touching
- Showing pornography to others
- Forcing others to create/share/download indecent images
- Sexting (youth produced sexual imagery and messaging)

Sexual exploitation

- Encouraging/enticing other pupils to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts
- Sharing images through social media



The safeguarding implications of sexual activity between young peopleⁱ

The intervention of child protection agencies in situations involving sexual activity between children can require professional judgments. Some situations are statutorily clear – for example, a child under the age of 13 cannot consent to sexual activity. It is important to distinguish between consensual sexual activity between children of a similar age (where at least one is below the age of consent), and sexual activity involving a power imbalance, or some form of coercion or exploitation. Guidance should be sought from Social Care, particularly where there is a lack of clarity around the age of consent of

ⁱ Taken from The safeguarding implications of events leading to the closure of Stanbridge Earls School – A Serious Case Review (2015)

Allegations against other pupils (safeguarding issues)

It may be considered a safeguarding issue if the allegation against the student includes the following:

- Is being made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger or more vulnerable pupil
- Is of a possible criminal nature
- Puts other pupils in the school at risk, or raises the risk factor for others
- Indicates that other pupils may have been harmed or be at risk or harm
- Includes bullying (under the definition of emotional abuse) or intimidation

Procedure

- When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, which is of a safeguarding nature it should be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) as soon as possible.
- A factual record must be kept (as normal safeguarding child protection procedures) and updated with all actions and outcomes
- The incident should not be investigated at this time
- The DSL will contact Social Care to discuss the case and next steps, and make a formal referral where appropriate
- If the allegation indicates that a potential crime has taken place the Social Care will refer the case to the police
- Parents of both the alleged victim and the student being complained about should be informed, this should be discussed during the consultation with the Social Care.
- A risk assessment will be considered at this time to protect all parties involved.
- It may be appropriate to exclude the alleged culprit against whom the report has been made for a fixed time in line with our school's behaviour policy and procedures.
- Police and Social Care will lead any investigation, however where neither police nor Social Care thresholds are met, our school will then undertake a thorough investigation following the school's policies and procedures.
- A risk assessment should be considered along with an appropriate supervision plan
- Support should be given to all student involved, and they should be involved in the relevant meetings and sign and agree to the plans that are set
- The plan should be monitored and review dates set



If allegations are made directly to other agencies

In some circumstances parent or the alleged victims will report directly to other agencies. In these cases these agencies should always make referrals to the Social Care or the police.

Social Care or police should liaise directly with the DSL for the school to inform them of the situation, or liaise with a member of the Designated Officer (LADO) and schools safeguarding team who will contact the DSL with the information.

All professional should be invited to support with the risk assessment of the students involved and the management of such allegations.

Prevention

The school will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:

- Providing PHSE as part of the curriculum, which will help students develop their understanding of acceptable behaviours, healthy relationships and keeping themselves safe.
- Having effective systems within our school for students to be able to raise concerns with staff, knowing they will be listened to, supported and valued, and that the issues they raise will be looked into and addressed
- Liaising and working with other professionals to develop robust risk assessments for pupils that are identified as posing a potential risk to other students
- Liaising with specialists to deliver appropriate targeted work to pupils identified as being at potential risk e.g. protective behaviours work.

Contact numbers

School DSL:

Local Authority Designated Officer:

LADO and Safeguarding Team;

SOCIAL CARE (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub):