Hassocks Infant School

Peer-On-Peer Abuse Policy

☆ Explore   ☆ Respect   ☆ Flourish

Date policy agreed:	October 2021
Date policy to be reviewed:	October 2025, or when there are changes to guidance
Responsibility:	Designated Safeguarding Lead

Introduction

The governors, senior leadership team, and all staff (which term shall apply to all volunteer staff members) at Hassocks Infant School are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of peer-on-peer abuse both within and beyond the school.

In particular, we:

- believe that in order to protect children, all schools should (a) be aware of the nature and level of risk to which their students are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context; and (b) take a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to peer-on-peer abuse.
- regard the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure. We (a) do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to peer-on-peer abuse in response to alleged incidents of it; and (b) believe that in order to tackle peer on-peer abuse proactively, it is necessary to focus on all four of the following areas:
    - *(i)   systems and structures*
    - *(ii)   prevention*
    - *(iii)   identification*
    - *(iv)   response/intervention*
- recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and peer-on-peer abuse in the school setting.
- encourage parents to hold us to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers, they should inform the school so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

Policy Aims

This policy:

- is the School's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute peer-on-peer abuse. It relates to, and should be read alongside, Hassocks Infant School's safeguarding and child protection policy and any other relevant policies.
- sets out our strategy for improving prevention, and identifying and appropriately managing peer-on-peer abuse.
- applies to all and is reviewed regularly, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which students are or may be exposed.
- recognises that abuse is abuse, and should never be passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', or 'part of growing up'.
- is compliant with the statutory guidance on peer on-peer abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2018).
- uses the terms 'child' and 'children', which is defined for the purposes of this policy as a person aged under. We have nonetheless chosen not to restrict our approach to peer-on-peer abuse under this policy to children but instead to adopt a wider interpretation of our safeguarding responsibilities so that they apply to all students, regardless of age.
- should, if relevant, according to the concern(s) or allegation(s) raised, be read in conjunction with the DfE's advice on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges (DfE's Advice) (May 2018), and any other advice and guidance referred to within it, as appropriate.

- should be read in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

Understanding Peer on Peer Abuse

Peer-on-peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children, and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships and wider peer associations. Peer-on-peer abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to): serious bullying (including cyberbullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence and abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or prejudice-based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence.

Examples of online peer-on-peer abuse would include sexting, online abuse, peer-on-peer grooming, the distribution of youth involved sexualised content, and harassment.

Hassocks Infant School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in concerns or allegations about peer-on-peer abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused, and those who are alleged to have abused their peers, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter. Research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of peer-on-peer abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers.

Contextual Safeguarding

A Contextual Safeguarding approach is about changing the way that professionals approach child protection when risks occur outside of the family, thereby requiring all those within a Local Safeguarding Partnership to consider how they work alongside, rather than just refer into, children's social care, to create safe spaces in which children may have encountered peer-on-peer abuse.

Our School Approach to preventing Peer-On-Peer Abuse

School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of peer-on-peer abuse in a range of ways such as:

Our school environment, by:

- educating all governors, senior leaders, staff, students, and parents about this issue.
- educating children about positive relationships, responsible and safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts about consent, via PSHE and Relationship Education and the wider curriculum.
- engaging parents on these issues.
- supporting the on-going welfare of the student body by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise student mental health.
- working with governors, senior leadership team, and all staff, students and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the School community,
- creating conditions in which our students can aspire to, and realise, safe and healthy relationships fostering a whole-school culture.
- responding to cases of peer-on-peer abuse promptly and appropriately.

- ensuring that all peer-on-peer abuse issues are fed back to the Designated Safeguarding Lead so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who may be in need of additional support.

Multi-Agency Working:

- The School actively engages with its Local Safeguarding Partnership in relation to peer-on-peer abuse, and works closely with, for example, children's social care, the police, Integrated Front Door and/or other relevant agencies.
- The relationships we have built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the school is able to prevent, identify early, and appropriately handle cases of peer-on-peer abuse.

Contextual Safeguarding approach, by:

- being aware of and seeking to understand the impact that these wider social contexts may be having out children.
- creating a safe culture in the school by, for example, implementing policies and procedures that address peer-on-peer abuse and harmful attitudes; promoting healthy relationships and attitudes to gender/ sexuality; being aware of risky areas in the school; training on potential bias and stereotyped assumptions.
- being alert to and monitoring changes in students' behaviour and/or attendance.
- contributing to local child protection agendas by, for example, challenging poor threshold decisions and referring concerns about contexts to relevant local agencies.

Deciding if the behaviour is Peer-On-Peer abuse

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on aspects of Hackett's continuum to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, whether it:

- *is socially acceptable*
- *involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time*
- *is socially acceptable within the peer group*
- *is problematic and concerning*
- *involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability*
- *involves an element of coercion or pre-planning*
- *involves a power imbalance between the child/ children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power*
- *involves a misuse of power*

Identifying a child who is being abused but their peers

All staff should be alert to the well-being of students and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by peer-on-peer abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ.

Research suggests:

- peer-on-peer abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure will also be different. As a result, schools need to explore the gender dynamics of peer-on-peer abuse within their settings, and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender- imbalanced environments.
- children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers without SEND, and additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in children with SEND. These can include:
  - o *assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to a child's disability without further exploration,*
  - o *the potential for children with SEND to be disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying and harassment, without outwardly showing any signs,*
  - o *communication barriers and difficulties, and*
  - o *overcoming these barriers.*
- some children may be more likely to experience peer-on-peer abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs.

Handling concerns and allegations of Peer-On-Peer abuse

It is essential that all concerns and allegations of peer-on-peer abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our School environment.

When responding to a concern or allegation of peer-on-peer abuse professionals will followed guidance set out in:

- Ferrer & Co Peer on Peer Toolkit
- Our school's safeguarding and child protection policy
- West Sussex Briefing
- Our schools "What If" procedures to Peer-On-Peer Abuse and HSB (appendix 1).

Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to children's social care (and, if appropriate, the police) is made immediately.

How will the School respond to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse?

The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the member of staff who has reported it/them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected. Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL should consider what urgent action can be taken in addition to the actions and referral duties set out in this policy and further guidance, to seek specialist help in preventing the images spreading further and removing the images from the internet.

In borderline cases the DSL may wish to consult with the Inegrated Front Door on a no-names basis (where possible) to determine the most appropriate response. Where the DSL considers or suspects that the alleged behaviour in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum or where the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question might otherwise require it, the DSL should contact children's social care and/or the police

immediately. The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the agency and agree on a course of action, which may include:

- Manage internally with help from external specialists where appropriate and possible.
- Undertake/contribute to an inter-agency early help assessment, with targeted early help services provided to address the assessed needs of the child/children and their family.
- Refer the child/children to children's social care for a section 17/47 statutory assessment
- Report alleged criminal behaviour to the police

Safety plans

The School will always carry out a safety plan in respect of:

- any child who is alleged to have behaved in a way that is considered to be abusive or violent.
- any child who has reportedly been abused or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child,
- any child who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child as deemed appropriate by the DSL.

Information sharing, data protection and record keeping

When responding to concern(s) or allegation(s) of peer-on-peer abuse, the School will:

- always consider carefully, in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies (where they are involved), how to share information about the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the student(s) affected, their parents, staff, and other students and individuals.
- record the information that is necessary for the School and other relevant agencies (where they are involved) to respond to the concern(s) or allegation(s) and safeguard everyone involved,
- keep a record of the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including relevant authorities, and ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and to only use it for the agreed legal purpose.
- be mindful of and act in accordance with its safeguarding and data protection duties, including those set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018) and the HM Government advice on Information Sharing (updated in July 2018).

Disciplinary action

The School may wish to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved. However, if there are police proceedings underway, or there could be, it is critical that the School works in partnership with the police and/or children's social care. Where a matter is not of interest to the police and/ or children's social care, the School may still need to consider what is the most appropriate action to take to ensure positive behaviour management. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate

On-going proactive work for a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach

The School's response to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse should be part of on-going proactive work by the School to embed best practice and in taking a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to such abuse. As such the School's response

can become part of its wider prevention work. This response may involve the School working with the local authority to undertake, for example, a Contextual Safeguarding school assessment which would fit into a systems approach to Contextual Safeguarding.

The response could also include the School asking itself a series of questions about the context in which an incident of peer-on-peer abuse occurred in the School, the local community in which the School is based, and the wider physical and online environment. The Ferrer&Co Peer-On-Peer Toolkit will be used to support the school in its response.

Policy updated: October 2021

Appendix 1

	Hassocks Infant School
	Hassocks Infant School "What If" Procedures - Peer on Peer Abuse and Harmful Sexualised Behaviour (HSB)

Name of DSL and DDSLs	Lauraine Smith (DSL) Adiran Bates-Holland (DDSL) Jo Heath (DDSL)
Document created	May 2021

	Steps	Supporting Document	Role of staff member	Role of SLT
		Prevention		
1.	All staff should be clear on policy and procedures regarding peer on peer abuse.	Safeguarding training provided by DSL. Relevant documents shared at training and throughout the year. Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Page 55 -60.	All staff to sign to say they have attended and understood the training, policy and KCSiE.	DSL to provide relevant training and updates throughout the year.
2.	A DSL/DDSL to undertake further training in this area.	DSL/DDSL to regularly attend DSL network meeting. The Brooks Traffic Light Tool Training. NSPCC training.		DSL/DSSL to book onto training.
3.	A broad and balanced curriculum is taught, developing children's understanding of consent, acceptable behaviour, keeping	Parents Booklet - Jigsaw Time PSHE and Relationships Education Policy E4S Cornerstone Hub: EHWB resources	All staff will support to teach the values of our broad and balance curriculum.	Further support curriculum design and stay up-to-date with relevant initiatives and

	themselves safe and healthy relationships.	E4S Cornerstone Hub: RSE resources Jigsaw curriculum overview		curriculum expectations.
4.	Targeted work for individual and groups of children.	Support from specialist colleagues e.g., DSL, SENCo, learning mentor, Family support workers, wellbeing lead, PSHE and Relationship lead, Safeguarding in Education team, Forest School Lead.	Identified staff member to support with targeted work.	If deemed necessary, member of SLT may also support with targeted support.
5.	Systems in place for all children to raise concerns with staff, knowing they will be listened to and valued.	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy	Listen to concerns raised by children.	Listen to concerns raised by children.
6.	Robust risk assessments created for pupils identified as a potential risk to other pupils.	Example risk assessment template (Saved: Safeguarding drive → DSL folder → peer on peer abuse and HSB safety plans)	Relevant staff will be aware of risk assessment.	Relevant member of SLT will create the risk assessment, drawing on advice from specialist colleagues.
Incident and associated actions				
7.	Factual record of the concerning behaviour recorded.	Safeguarding induction and training. CPOMs training.	Logs of incident recorded on CPOMs and/or cause form concern/behaviour log form.	Review incident logs.
8.	Further discussions with the alleged victim/perpetrator may be required to assess safeguarding decision.	See additional information section below.		
9.	If necessary, further guidance will be sought via professionals within IFD.	IFD contact details	All staff can call IFD.	DSL/DDSL will seek professional advice, as necessary.
10.	Identify if incident falls within peer on peer abuse remit. *If not identified as peer on peer abuse or a safeguarding concern, the incident will be dealt with under our school's behaviour policy or anti-bullying policy in the first instance.*	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Page 55 -60 West Sussex Children Protection and Safeguarding Procedures: Children who Harm Other Children Behaviour Policy Anti-Bullying Policy	Relevant staff member to support SLT with review.	Review incident log and evaluate if the concern falls within peer on peer abuse remit. Rationale for decision should, wherever possible, be recorded.

	If the incident is identified as peer on peer abuse or other safeguarding concern, continue to step 11.	PSHE and Relationships Education Policy		
11.	If deemed a safeguarding concern, a referral will be made to IFD. If it is deemed an emergency, the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) should be called.	IFD contact details IFD referral site and EDT contact details	All staff can make a referral.	DSL/DDSL will lead on the referral.
12.	Parents of both the perpetrator and the alleged victim will be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral, unless to do so would place the alleged victim at risk, and/or jeopardise a police investigation. If unsure, advice should be sought from the IFD.	IFD contact details See additional information section below.	Logs of parent communication logged on CPOMs.	Logs of parent communication logged on CPOMs.
13.	If peer on peer abuse is suspected, staff should follow the West Sussex Children Protection and Safeguarding Procedures: Children who Harm Other Children.	West Sussex Children Protection and Safeguarding Procedures: Children who Harm Other Children		DSL/DDSL will support as appropriate and create follow up action in school, in line with risk assessment and safety plan.
14.	If there is also an allegation of crime, this will be reported to the police.	West Sussex Children Protection and Safeguarding Procedures: Children who Harm Other Children	All staff can report a crime to the police.	DSL/DDSL will report to the police.
15.	The DSL/DDSL will support Children's Social Servies with their assessments, following the referral.	West Sussex Children Protection and Safeguarding Procedures: Children who Harm Other Children		DSL/DDSL will support as appropriate and create follow up action in school, in line with

	In all cases where the suspected abuser is a young person, the Police and Children's Social Care must convene a Strategy Discussion within the Section 47 Enquiry time-scales. The Police will also decide whether a criminal offence is alleged.			risk assessment and safety plan.
16.	If the strategy discussion agrees the concern does fall within category of abuse, social services will follow procedures outlined in 8.7 of the West Sussex Children Protection and Safeguarding Procedures: Children who Harm Other Children. The DSL will support as appropriate and relevant safety plans, risk assessment and targeted interventions arranged in school.	Early Help support CATS – The Consultation Assessment and Treatment service details are: 01403 223268 Information on risk assessment for children who pose a risk. PSHE and Relationships Education Policy. E4S Cornerstone Hub: EHWB resources. E4S Cornerstone Hub: RSE resources. Government guidance: Mental health and behaviour in schools Government guidance: promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing. West Sussex Community mental health liaison service (CMHL). West Sussex School Nursing Service. Anna Freud: Mentally Healthy Schools.	Relevant staff will support with implementation of risk assessment and relevant interventions to support.	DSL/DDSL will support as appropriate and create follow up action in school, in line with risk assessment and safety plan.

17.	Where neither Children's Social Care nor the police progress an investigation, a thorough investigation should take place using the school's normal disciplinary procedures.	See disciplinary policy.	Staff will engage with disciplinary procedures as appropriate.	HT and DSL will follow disciplinary procedures.
18.	In situations where the school considers a safeguarding concern remains present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative plan. The plan will be monitored, and a date set for a follow up review with everyone concerned. The plan should reflect both the physical and emotional safety of all pupils concerned.	Example risk assessment template (Saved: Safeguarding drive → DSL folder → peer on peer abuse and HSB safety plans)	Regularly update records and records on CPOMs/paper logs.	DSL/DDSL regularly review and monitor risk assessment.
19.	All information regarding the victim and any child who poses a risk will be shared with the next setting, in line with safeguarding transition arrangements.	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Page 64. Information Management Toolkit for Schools.		DSL/DDSL will organise for a secure transfer of records and safeguarding handover meeting.
**The Designated Safeguarding Lead will make a record of the concern and a copy will be kept on both pupils' files. The records will be reviewed regularly, and further actions added to the record.**			
	Additional information if deemed Harmful Sexualised Behaviour (HSB)			
	Harmful Sexualised Behaviour (HSB)	If the allegation is deemed to fall within the remits of Harmful Sexualised Behaviour (HSB) then DfE guidance: Sexual violence and harassment between children in schools and colleges will be used alongside our safeguarding policy. DfE guidance: Sexual violence and harassment between children in schools and colleges Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Page 58-60		
	Determining the extent and nature of concern	Where further assessment is required prior to deciding the extent and nature of the concerns, the school should: • Ensure the parents / guardian of both the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) are advised and invited to be present when the children are interviewed formally. • Provide pupils with the opportunity to record or dictate in their own words their version of events.		

	- Consider any need to separate the alleged victim and perpetrator in the classroom, in the school and the possible need to send one or both homes. - Not interview either child on their own after the preliminary interview following disclosure - they should be accompanied by a parent or guardian. - Keep a written record of pertinent information including date, time, those present and signature - a diagram / photo of the room / playground may be useful, as well as a description of who was present etc. - Provide the child with the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of the record and record any disagreement.
Safeguarding and supporting alleged perpetrator	An alleged perpetrator may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviours in young children may be (and often are) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and/or materials. Advice should be taken, as appropriate, from children's social care, NHS Sussex Partnership Assessment & Treatment Service, and the police. It is also very important to monitor the emotional health and well-being of all involved, including the alleged perpetrator and school/college must consider accessing Youth Emotional Support (YES) or more specialist services. Where there are concerns, the school/college should discuss them with MASH/Early Help worker.
Example risk assessment template	Saved: Safeguarding drive → DSL folder → peer on peer abuse and HSB safety plans