



**THE FEDERATION OF  
MELLERS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND  
NOTTINGHAM NURSERY SCHOOL  
CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY**

**November 2024**

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**The Federation of Mellers Primary School and Nottingham Nursery**  
**Child-on-Child Abuse Policy**

This policy remains current and in line with the statutory guidance contained within Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership.

**What is Child-on-Child Abuse?**

All children can abuse their peers. This can manifest itself in a whole spectrum of behaviours including:

- Bullying including cyberbullying
- Sexual violence and harassment
- Physical abuse
- Sexting
- Upskirting (now a criminal offence and has reporting requirements)
- Initiation /hazing type violence and rituals

All schools need to include child-on-child abuse in their schools' policies and procedures and all staff need to be aware of these and ensure they are part of their everyday practice. Children also need to know how to report concerns and know that they will be listened to and supported.

These should include:

- Procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse
- How allegations are recorded, investigated and dealt with
- Clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected will be supported
- Recognition of the gendered nature of child-on-child abuse but recognising, that all forms of this behaviour are unacceptable and will be taken seriously

It is important that schools see this guidance as a framework that will need to be adapted to fit the age and developmental stage and understanding of their pupil group.

**Some useful definitions:**

**Sexual Harassment**

This can be defined as 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. In the context of this guidance, this means in the context of child on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

It can include:

- Sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names
- Sexual "jokes" or taunting

**Sexting**

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others or sends sexually explicit messages. They can be sent using mobiles, tablets, smartphones, laptops - any device that allows you to share media and messages. This is also known as youth produced sexual imagery.

## **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. It is now a criminal offence and may constitute sexual harassment. Cases of 'up skirting' have a mandatory requirement for being reported.

## **Sexual Violence**

In this guidance, this refers to sexual violence in the context of child-on-child sexual violence. Children can and do abuse other children. Sexual violence covers a spectrum of behaviour. It can refer to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2013. This includes:

**Rape:** A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

**Assault by Penetration:** A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

**Sexual Assault:** A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

## **Consent**

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose.

- A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- The age of consent is 16
- Sexual intercourse without consent is rape

It is also important to differentiate between consensual sexual activity between children of a similar age and that which involves any power imbalance, coercion or exploitation. Due to their additional training, the designated safeguarding lead should be involved and leading the school response. If in any doubt, they should seek expert advice. It is important that schools and colleges consider sexual harassment in broad terms. Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates an atmosphere that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

## **Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)**

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is "harmful sexual behaviour". The term has been widely adopted in child protection and is used in this advice. Harmful sexual behaviour can occur online and/or offline and can also occur simultaneously between the two. Harmful sexual behaviour should be considered in a child protection context.

## **Contextual Safeguarding**

All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead, should be considering the context within which incidents and/or behaviours occur. This is known as contextual safeguarding, which simply means assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare.

Additional considerations for schools when considering harmful sexual behaviour, ages and the stages of development of the children are critical factors to consider. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can

abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or smaller in stature.

Schools should ensure that their response to sexual violence and sexual harassment between children of the same sex is equally robust as it is for sexual violence and sexual harassment between children of the opposite sex.

### **Prevention**

As well as having strategies for dealing with incidents, schools should consider what they can do to foster healthy and respectful relationships between boys and girls including through Relationship and Sex Education and Personal Social Health and Economic education.

The most effective preventative education programme will be through a whole school approach that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. The Federation has a clear set of values and standards, and these will be upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life. This will be underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, and by a planned programme of evidence-based content delivered through the whole curriculum.

Such a programme should be developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering SEND children and their cognitive understanding), and may tackle such issues as:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- What respectful behaviour looks like
- Consent
- Gender roles, stereotyping, and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong
- Addressing cultures of sexual harassment

The Federation delivers this currently through planned, high-quality, Sex and Relationship Education (RSHE)

## **Child-on-Child abuse/sexual harassment and violence**

### **Introduction**

The Federation of Mellors Primary School and Nottingham Nursery recognises that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. This includes verbal as well as physical abuse.

Child-on-child abuse will not be tolerated. We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse within our school and beyond. In cases where child-on-child abuse is identified, we will follow our child protection procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation.

We recognise that child-on-child abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Sexting or youth produced digital imagery
- Upskirting
- Bullying
- Radicalisation
- Abuse in intimate relationships
- Children who display sexually harmful behaviour
- Gang association and serious violence (County Lines)

- Technology can be used for bullying and other abusive behaviour

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school such as the behaviour and relationships policy, anti-bullying policy, child protection policy and online safety policy.

This policy concentrates on child-on-child abuse in the context of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education and should be read in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LSCB) Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

The policy will:

- Set out our strategies for preventing, identifying and managing child on child abuse
- Take a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved

Acknowledging that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable and may have been abused by peer, parents or adults in the community.

It is critical to understand that child-on-child abuse, Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex or a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. The impact of this behaviour on children can be very distressing and have an impact on academic achievement and emotional health and wellbeing.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence may also occur online and offline.

## **The Context**

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

In this policy we recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour (Harmful Sexual Behaviour HSB). We are adopting the NSPCC definition of HSB as: - "*Sexual behaviours expressed by children...that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child...or adult.*"

## **Vulnerable groups**

We recognise that all children can be at risk, however we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable. This can include experience of abuse within their family; living with domestic violence; young people in care; children who go missing; children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities); children who identify or are perceived as LGBT and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

Whilst research tells us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers and girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools, this is not confined to girls. Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviour such as antisocial behaviour. Boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs. We recognise that both boys and girls experience child on child abuse, but they do so in gendered ways.

All staff should be aware of indicators, which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new

possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

## **Responding to Alleged Incidents**

### **Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment**

All reports of child-on-child abuse will be made on a case-by-case basis with the designated safeguarding lead taking a leading role using their professional judgement and supported by other agencies such as social care or the police as required.

#### **The immediate response to a report**

- We will take all reports seriously and will reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe
- All staff will be trained to manage a report
- Staff will not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead or social care) staff will however only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it
- A written report will be made as soon after the disclosure as possible recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later. These reports will be recorded on My Concern.
- The DSL will be informed as soon as possible

DSLs are: Lorna Dermody, Joy Buttress, Michelle Bramley, Senga Cannop, Laura Patel, Fay Lee, Billie Wilson, Rebecca Bryan and Wendy Towle.

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead will make an immediate risk and needs' assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Risk assessments will be recorded and uploaded to My Concern and kept under review. The designated safeguarding team will ensure they are engaging with Nottingham City Social Care.

#### **Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment**

Following an incident, we will consider:

- The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment
- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour
- The ages of the children involved
- The developmental stages of the children involved
- Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children or staff, and other related issues and wider context?

## **Follow up Actions:**

Whilst the school or college establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police:

- We will consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises
- These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator.

## **Options to manage the report:**

1. In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, we may decide that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising the behaviour and bullying policies and by providing pastoral support such as our school counselling service.

This decision will be made based on the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All decisions, and discussions around making these decisions will be recorded and stored by Lorna Dermody or Joy Buttress (Headteachers) and Laura Patel (Deputy headteacher).

2. In line with the above, we may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.
3. Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to the MASH following locally agreed protocols. Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy will be working alongside, and cooperating with, the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.

## **Support for children affected by sexual-assault**

Support for victims of sexual assault is available from a variety of agencies. We will support the victim of sexual assault to remain in school but if they are unable to do so we will enable them to continue their education elsewhere. This decision will be made only at the request of the child and their family. If they are moved, we will ensure the new school is aware of the ongoing support they may need. The DSL team will support this move.

## **Physical Abuse**

While a clear focus of child-on-child abuse is around sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be abusive. The principles from the anti-bullying policy will be applied in these cases.

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
- involves a misuse of power

## **Online Behaviour**

Many forms of child-on-child abuse have an element of online behaviour including behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting. Policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour can be found in the behaviour and relationships policy, online safety policy, and child protection policy.

## **Prevention**

The Federation between Mellers Primary School and Nottingham Nursery actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

- Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers about this issue. This will include training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it.

This includes:

- (a) Contextual Safeguarding
- (b) The identification and classification of specific behaviours
- (c) The importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing

- Educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum. At Mellers Primary School, we teach Relationships Education throughout our PSHE sessions across all year groups. It focuses on appropriate relationships, consent of touch, hygiene, health, friendships and families. In Year Six, children are taught about the physical act of sex, and these are the only sessions which parents can opt out of, all other sessions are compulsory. We will actively speak to parents who choose to opt out to encourage them to participate and alleviate any concerns they may have around the content of the sessions. We also invite parents to attend annual meetings that inform them about the content of the sessions, allow them to ask questions and look at resources, then consult them on the policy

- Pupils/Students are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse

- They are regularly informed about the school's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse

- Engaging parents on this issue by:

- (a) Talking about it with parents, both in groups and one-to-one
- (b) Asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the school address those risks
- (c) Involving parents in the review of school policies and lesson plans
- (d) Encouraging parents to hold the school to account on this issue

- Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the school's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who maybe in need of additional support

- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom)
- Working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, pupils 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
- Teaching pupils Fundamental British Values through our learning values, PSHE and wider curriculum. This includes teaching children about Diversity, Children’s Mental Health, Inequality, the Environment, Leadership in a range of different ways including assemblies, developing community links and establishing a range of Ambassador roles
- Creating conditions in which our pupils can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships
- Creating a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to
- Responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately

### **Multi-agency working**

The school actively engages with its local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse, and works closely with, Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership (NCSCP), Nottinghamshire Multi- 14 Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies, and other schools.

The relationships the school has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the school is able to prevent, identify early and appropriately handle cases of Child-on-Child abuse.

### **Support for Young People: Local and National**

Nottinghamshire Children and Young People’s Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChiIVAs) provided by IMARA provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence. They are based within the specialist sexual violence sector and will help the victim understand what their options are and how the criminal justice process works if they have reported or are considering reporting to the police. ChiSVAs will work in partnership with schools and colleges to ensure the best possible outcomes for the victim.

<https://www.imara.org.uk/>

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)

<https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/information-for-residents/children-and-families/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services-camhs/get-help-from-camhs/>

### **Useful Publications and Websites and Government Publications:**

Christopher Winter Project SRE

<https://cwpresources.co.uk/home/>

Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges>

Keeping Children safe in Education

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education)

Preventing youth violence and gang involvement

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-schools-and-colleges-on-gangs-and youth-violence](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-schools-and-colleges-on-gangs-and-youth-violence)

Preventing and tackling bullying in schools

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying)

### **Other useful documents**

Sexting

Sexting in schools and colleges-Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people

[Overview of Sexting Guidance.pdf](#)

Preventing abuse among children and young people-guidance from Stop it Now

<http://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/what-is-age-appropriate>

NSPCC-Harmful sexual behaviour

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour/>