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Child on Child Abuse Policy – Secondary Age

Category of Policy: Central Education Policy Adapted by School

Willow Tree Park

Contents Page

Feeling safe at school....2
Section 1 – What is child-on-child abuse?....2
Section 2 - Bullying....2
Section 3 – Sexting....4
Section 4 - Sexual violence and sexual harassment....5
Section 5 – Relationships....6
Section 6 – How do I know if someone is being abused?....6
Section 7 – What do I do if someone else is being abused?....7
Section 8 – What do I do if I am being abused?....8
Section 9 – Who can I talk to?....8
Section 10 – How can I help stop abuse from happening?....8

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Feeling safe at school

At Willow Tree Park, we want to make sure that you feel looked after and safe when you are in and out of school.

Sometimes we do not know if something bad is happening, so you need to tell us.

This policy looks at child-on-child abuse, and what you can do when you feel you are being abused, or when you notice someone else being abused.

We can help you by:

- Teaching you what child-on-child abuse is.
- Teaching you what to do if you feel like you are being abused, or if someone else is being abused.
- Making sure you know who you can speak to if you are worried.

Section 1 – What is child-on-child abuse?

A **peer** is someone who might be your friend, a pupil at school with you, or another young person you may know. You may often hear child-on-child abuse referred to as **'peer-on-peer' abuse**.

Abuse is something which usually physically or emotionally **hurts** another person by using behaviour that is meant to **scare**, **hurt** or **upset** the victim, or decrease their self-worth.

Child-on-child abuse can happen inside and outside of school – It can happen online, or in-person and it is important to let someone know if you think that you or someone else is being affected by child-on-child abuse.

It is not always easy to identify abuse when it is coming from someone you know such as a friend, or a classmate; but it is **important** to look out for the signs of child-on-child abuse and **report it** so that we can make sure it stops.

Section 2 - Bullying

Bullying is a type of abuse that takes place when someone tries to hurt another person on purpose. People can be bullied in many different ways:

Emotional bullying is a form of bullying which attempts to make the victim feel bad about themselves, such as how they look, what they wear and what they do. This type of bullying is often manipulative; people sometimes use emotional bullying to take advantage of you to get their own way by making threats or making you feel like you have to do something for them.

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Physical bullying can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or purposely hurting someone. Physical bullying is easier to spot than other forms of bullying and is often a result of not dealing with non-violent bullying in the first instance.

Verbal bullying can include insulting someone because of how they look or because of their personality and can often go beyond that. People can also use verbal bullying to be **racist, sexist, ableist** or **homophobic**. Verbal bullying usually exercises some form of prejudice which attacks the victim based on their personal attributes, such as their appearance, voice, clothes, disability and so on.

Racist bullying means bullying someone because of their race, skin colour, the country they are from or their religion. **Racist bullying is a hate crime in the UK**, along with threatening behaviour, online abuse, damaging property and abusing someone physically or verbally because of their race or ethnicity.

Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying involves bullying someone because of their gender or sexuality; calling someone gay or lesbian as an insult or using these words in a derogatory manner would be classed as homophobic bullying. As with racist bullying, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are illegal hate crimes in the UK. This type of bullying takes place when someone is targeted and abused by another because the victim identifies themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or another protected identity (gay, lesbian or bisexual). People who do not identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, but are perceived to be gay, lesbian or bisexual, can also be subjected to this kind of bullying.

Sexist bullying and sexism primarily impacts women and girls – abusing someone because they are female is associated with **misogyny** (hatred of women). Sexist behaviour can include **gender stereotyping**, believing one sex is superior to or **more valuable** than another, and **sexually objectifying** an individual's body.

Cyberbullying includes any kind of bullying which takes place online; cyberbullies send insulting messages over the internet and sometimes share sensitive or explicit information and images online. Cyberbullies often hide their identity and remain anonymous so that they can continue to abuse the victim without any consequences, meaning it could be someone you consider to be a friend. Cyberbullies may also use AI to make fake images or text about someone. If you are being cyberbullied, the best option is to **block the person and report the bullying**.

Ableist bullying includes bullying people for any disabilities they have, such as laughing or joking about a person in a wheelchair or a person who is autistic or using offensive and unacceptable terms for disabled people with others. Not all disabilities can be seen, so this type of bullying may be difficult to spot. Bullying or discriminating against someone on the grounds of their disability is illegal and should be reported to a teacher.

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Bullying is not always done by one person and can often involve a group of people 'ganging up' on someone – if you ever see someone being bullied, **never** join in and **always report it.**

The school **does not tolerate** any form of bullying and **all** reports of this form of abuse will be taken **extremely seriously**.

Section 3 – Sexting

Sexting is sending **sexually explicit pictures, videos or messages of a sexual nature** via social media, text, gaming platforms and streaming sites – they can sometimes be called 'nudes' or 'nude pics' but can also be sexually explicit messages.

Using **AI** to generate sexual or explicit images or text of someone or looking like it is sent from someone, and sending these via text is **abuse**.

Pressuring someone into sending these pictures, videos and messages is **abuse**.

It is important to know that sharing nude images or videos of or with people under the age of 18 is **illegal** even if **consent** is given.

Consent means that someone has given another person permission to do something; if consent has not been given for someone to share nude images or videos to another person, it is both **abusive and illegal.**

Sharing sexually explicit images and videos to someone you have a close relationship with is never a good idea, not only because it is illegal, but because that person may use this against you in the future in the event of an argument or fall-out – this is known as 'revenge porn' and can have serious consequences.

Using **AI** image or text generators to make or edit explicit pictures or messages of someone to be sent online is also abuse, and you should tell a teacher or a parent if you think someone is doing this.

Incidents of sexting can be divided into two categories:

Aggravated incidents are taken extremely seriously by the school. They occur when there is an abusive element involved in sending and possessing sexually explicit images, for example where:

- **An adult is involved** – Anyone over the age of 18 sending and receiving sexually explicit images and videos or attempting to develop a relationship via online platforms with someone under the age of 18 will be committing a criminal sex offence.
- **There has been an intent to harm** – The sharing of sexually explicit images and videos becomes abusive if they are shared around due to conflict, such as a fall-out or breakup, or if an element of blackmailing and making threats has been involved.

- **Reckless misuse** – If there has been no intent to harm another, but the images have been taken, sent or shared without consent, this will be seen as abusive behaviour as the victim may have been harmed as a result of reckless or thoughtless behaviour.

Experimental incidents, while still illegal, are not seen as abusive as there is no intent to harm anyone and consent has been given by all parties. These incidents will still be taken seriously by the school. An example of experimental sexting is where it has taken place between two young people who are in a close relationship, and the images are not intended to be distributed beyond them.

Even if you are not the person who is sending them, it is **illegal** to have these kinds of pictures or videos of a person if they are under 18 years old.

Section 4 – Sexual violence and sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of abuse which involves **unwanted sexual behaviour** of one person to another which makes the victim feel uncomfortable, intimidated, degraded, objectified or violated.

This can happen **online** and **face-to-face** (both physically and verbally) and is never acceptable at any age.

It could be:

- Someone making **sexual comments**, like using inappropriate sexual language towards someone, saying sexual things about someone's appearance or clothes, or requesting sexual favours.
- Calling someone **sexual names.**
- **Sexual jokes** or teasing.
- Being physical, like **touching** which makes someone feel uncomfortable, messing with their clothes, or **showing pictures** or **drawings** which are of a sexual nature.
- Being sexual online, like **sharing sexual pictures** and **videos,** or posting sexual comments on social media.
- **Sexual threats** or pushing someone to do something sexually that they do not want to or are not ready for.
- Using **AI** chatbots or image generators to create sexual imagery or text about someone.

Bright Futures School has a **zero-tolerance** approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment – it will never be acceptable and will **never** be passed off as "banter" or "just having a laugh." Everyone at our school **must recognise** that sexual violence and harassment is not normal.

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If you ever feel like you have been or are the victim of sexual harassment, make sure that you tell a responsible adult, and they will listen to what happened and support you with any worries that you have.

Section 5 – Relationships

Any relationship you have should be **positive** and make you feel **safe, happy and comfortable**.

A negative relationship might make someone feel **scared**, **confused**, **worried** and even **unsafe**.

It is important that you know the **difference** between a positive relationship and a negative relationship.

Positive relationships

- You are **comfortable** around that person.
- You can be **honest** with that person.
- You can say how you **feel**, what you are **thinking**, and you **listen** to each other.
- You **support** each other and treat each other **well**.
- You feel **safe**.
- You **trust** that person.
- You do **helpful things for each other**.
- You are **never pressured** to do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- You feel **looked after**.

Negative relationships

- The person might **push** you, **hit** you or **break** your things.
- The person might **tell you what to do**, what to wear or who you can see.
- You might feel **scared** – they might say they will hurt you if you do not do something.
- They might **make threats** or do harmful things if you do something they did not want you to do.
- The person **calls you names**, makes you feel bad in front of other people and makes you **feel bad about yourself**.
- The person gets **angry easily** and you do not know what will make them angry – it might make you feel **nervous**.
- The person might **pressure** you to do things **you do not want to do** or are not ready for, like having sex or using drugs and alcohol.
- The person **might not take no for answer** when you say you do not want to do something.

Section 6 – How do I know if someone is being abused?

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It might be hard for you to know if you are being abused and you **might not understand** it is happening. It is important you can **recognise** when behaviour is not appropriate.

It is also important that you can notice when **someone else** might be being abused.

Some signs might be:

- Not going to school.
- Having injuries, like bruises.
- Feeling sad and down.
- Feeling like they cannot cope.
- Feeling withdrawn or shy.
- Not talking as much, or at all.
- Getting headaches or stomach aches.
- Feeling nervous.
- Not being able to sleep, sleeping too much or getting nightmares.
- Feeling panicked.
- Changing their looks to look and act much older.
- Being abusive to someone else.

Remember: you can feel all of these things too. Listen to how you feel, pay attention to what you have read here, and know that these signs can mean you are being abused.

Section 7 – What do I do if someone else is being abused?

If you think that someone is being abused, it is important that you **help** that person.

You should **never walk away** and ignore the problem if you see someone else being abused, because the abuse may keep happening.

If you can, and it is **safe** to do so, tell the person who is being abusive to **stop**, but never get angry or hit them.

Tell a responsible adult, such as a teacher, as soon as you have seen someone being abused.

A responsible adult can **stop the abuse** and give their support to the person who is being abused.

You should **never feel scared** to tell someone about abuse.

Sometimes, you might not **see someone being abused**, but you might be **worried** about them. You might think they are being abused by **someone you do not know**, or someone they have told you about. It is important that you **tell someone** even if you are worried but have not **seen** any abuse.

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Section 8 – What do I do if I am being abused?

The first thing you should do is **tell someone you trust**. This could be a family member, a friend or a teacher.

You can ask the person abusing you to leave you alone; however, it is important to remain safe in such situations and assess whether it would be better to ignore the person and **report it** so that someone can help you.

You should **never**:

- Ignore the abuse without reporting it.
- Respond to abuse with violence.
- Continue to allow people to abuse you.
- Allow the abuse to change who you are.

Always remember that if you are being abused, it is **not your fault,** and you are **never alone**.

Section 9 – Who can I talk to?

It is important you **tell someone** as soon as you think that you are being abused, or you think that someone else is being abused.

Speaking to someone like your parent, carer or teacher will mean that we can make sure the **abuse stops** and does not happen again.

The list below shows the **people** at our **school** that you can speak to:

- Alicia Highton
- Jonny O'Connor
- Kerry Platt
- Any other Teacher or Learning Mentor

Section 10 – How can I help stop abuse from happening?

We can all help stop abuse at our school by:

- Making sure we **understand** how we should **treat** others.
- **Helping** others when they are in need.
- Being **kind**, **friendly** and **respectful** to others.
- Thinking about people's **feelings** before we say or do something.
- Looking back at this booklet and paying attention to school activities such as assemblies, which talk about child-on-child abuse.
- **Talking to someone** when we are worried.

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You should know that abuse is never OK, and it is serious. It is not funny, or part of growing up. The school will not tolerate abuse and if you abuse someone, you will be disciplined accordingly.

Appendix 1 – Revision Log

Date of first publication – September 2024

Revision number	Date of Revision	Nature of Revision
1.	30/10/25	Terminology changes in line with KCSIE 2025.
2.	09/10/2026	No changes.
3.		
4.		