



Child on Child Abuse Policy

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Child on Child Abuse policy

Introduction:

The Rowans 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 or passed off as part of “banter” or “growing up”. 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.

Child on Child abuse:

For these purposes, Child on Child abuse is any form of inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature including physical, sexual or emotional abuse, exploitation, sexual harassment, all forms of bullying, coercive control, hazing / initiation rituals between children and young people, both on and off line, including that which is within intimate personal relationships. We should remember child on child abuse is harmful to both perpetrator and the victim. Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs. (e.g. significant disruption in their lives, exposure to domestic abuse, witnessing or suffering abuse, educational under achievement or being involved in crime.) Examples of online Child on Child abuse would include sexting, online abuse, Child on Child grooming, the distribution of youth involved sexualised content, and harassment. It can include grooming children for sexual and criminal exploitation.

How prevalent is Child on Child abuse?

It is hard to say just how widespread a problem Child on Child abuse is. But there is extensive evidence of Child on Child abuse in the context of both sexual and criminal exploitation research suggests that Child on Child abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse affecting children in the UK. For example, more than four in ten teenage schoolgirls aged between 13 and 17 in England have experienced sexual coercion. Two thirds of contact sexual abuse experienced by children aged 17 or under was committed by someone who was also aged 17 or under. Most young people aged over 13 have been sent a sexually explicit image, whether they requested this or not. Police data between 2019 – 2022, shows a 40% increase in reports of sexual assaults and rapes where both the alleged victim and perpetrator were under 18. A 26% increase in reports where the allegation was against a child under 10. More than 2700 recorded incidents took place on school property in 2022. 1 in 5 have experienced at least one type of online bullying, this is equivalent to 764,000 children.

Additional guidance on Child on Child abuse:

Child on Child abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up”. The gendered nature of Child on Child abuse is recognised; however, all Child on Child abuse is unacceptable and will always be taken seriously.

Where appropriate, incidents of Child on Child abuse involving physical abuse or bullying will be managed through the school behaviour policy. The DSL / DDSL will always be made aware of all incidents of Child on Child abuse so that further safeguarding actions can be taken as necessary.

If a pupil makes an allegation of abuse against another pupil:

- Staff must record the allegation and inform the DSL / DDSL.

- The DSL / DDSL will assess the information and ensure that it is categorised and recorded by the nature of the incident i.e. bullying (including the type such as cyber, racial, biphobia etc), physical abuse (identifying the specifics: hitting, kicking etc) or a Harmful Sexual Behaviour (identifying the RAG on the NSPCC toolkit, or other specifics such as sexting or whether the incident was potentially criminal).
- The DSL / DDSL will identify appropriate outcomes to the incident, which may include school based support or interventions, as well as referrals to other agencies, as necessary, such as Front Door, CEOPS and the Police (if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence).
- The DSL / DDSL will complete a risk assessment and where necessary create a written support plan for all children involved, including the child/ren who has experienced the abusive behaviour and the child/ren who is alleged to have displayed the abusive behaviour as well as any others affected, with a named person they can all talk to if needed.

The school will minimise the risk of Child on Child abuse by:

- Challenging any form of derogatory or sexualised language or behaviour, including requesting or sending sexual images.
- Being vigilant to issues that particularly affect different genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing type violence with respect to boys, whilst at the same time recognising that any of these issues can affect any pupils regardless of their gender.
- Ensuring our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent.
- Ensuring pupils are aware of the different ways in which they can speak with a trusted adult in the school, either directly or through other means such as help email, which is monitored by key staff in the safeguarding team.
- Ensuring pupils are aware of the different ways in which they can speak with an adult outside of the school through agencies such as Child Line or the NSPCC.
- As a school we will gather pupil-voice to understand the experience of pupils at the school, so that this can inform the development of safeguarding practice.
- Ensuring that staff are aware of Child on Child abuse and maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here’, as they do with all areas of safeguarding.
- Ensuring that staff are trained to understand that a pupil harming a peer could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves.

Multi-agency working:

At the Rowans we will work closely with all other professionals to ensure the best possible outcome for young people. Child on Child abuse that involves sexual assault and violence must always result in a multi-agency response. As well as supporting and protecting the victim, professionals need to consider whether the perpetrator could be a victim of abuse too. We know that young people who develop harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced abuse and neglect themselves.

We make sure that the young people affected are getting the help they need. A typical response from The Rowans will involve contacting:

- social care
- the police

- any specialist services that support children who demonstrate harmful sexual behaviour
- the family
- any other professionals who know or have had contact with the child

Individual risk assessments will also be updated. Each case will be considered on an individual basis, ensuring the well-being of all children and young people involved and statutory guidance will be followed.

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children:

Sexual violence refers to crimes under the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#) and includes rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; whilst sexual harassment incorporates a wider range of 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature', such as: sexual comments or lewd "jokes", sexualised bullying, non-consensual taking or sharing of sexual images/videos (such as up skirting), or physical behaviour such as: deliberately brushing against someone or 'pinging' bra straps.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can/may:

- Occur between two children of any age and sex
- Be physical and/or verbal
- Occur online and/or offline
- Be perpetrated by individuals or groups, against individuals or groups
- Be a standalone incident, or part of a wider pattern of sexualised behaviour
- Be perpetrated against some children more than others, such as: girls, children with SEND or LGBT children.

At the Rowans we recognise that young people who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same setting. We are proactive in supporting all pupils to ensure their well-being at all times.

We also recognise that it is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

On-going proactive work to a contextual safeguarding whole-school approach:

The Rowans response to concerns/allegations of Child on Child abuse and sexual violence and sexual harassment are part of on-going proactive work to embed best practice and take a contextual whole-school approach to such abuse. All cases of Child on Child abuse and sexual violence or harassment are monitored closely and reviewed to ensure best practice.