

Child-on-Child Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy

Date approved	2 October 2025
Review cycle	Annually in September in line with KCSIE: September 2026 or following significant changes in legislation.
Party responsible	Full Governing Body
Linked policies	Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy, E-safety Policy, Policy for Preventing & Tackling Bullying, Positive Mental Health Policy

This policy outlines our school's commitment to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence and harassment, in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025)*, *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*, and other relevant statutory guidance.

Definition

"Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) includes a range of inappropriate or abusive sexual acts which can have serious long-term impacts. It can manifest as physical or verbal abuse, sexual assault, inappropriate touching, or coercive sexual acts. Notably, harmful sexual behaviour includes grooming, manipulation, or exploitation for sexual purposes and can also take place online. It is essential to recognise that this behaviour is not acceptable, and all incidents should be addressed swiftly, using appropriate safeguarding measures."

This includes:

- Child-on-child abuse: Includes physical abuse, sexual violence and harassment, emotional abuse, coercive control, and online abuse.
- Sexual violence, as defined in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- Sexual harassment, Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, including online behaviour (e.g., image-based abuse, sexualized bullying).
- Upskirting, which 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 to cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- Sexting (also known as 'youth-produced sexual imagery' or sharing 'nudes' and 'semi-nudes')

Legal References:

Children Act 1989 & 2004

Education Act 2002

Sexual Offences Act 2003

UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

At the Swanage School, all staff need to maintain an attitude of **'it could happen here'** when considering the possibility of child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence and harassment. This mindset is essential to safeguarding practices and is reinforced in **Part 5 of [KCSIE 2025](#)**.

Staff should be clear on:

- Our school's safeguarding policy and procedures
- Their role in preventing child-on-child abuse and responding to it if they believe a child may be at risk
- The indicators of child-on-child abuse, how to identify it and respond to reports
- The importance of challenging inappropriate behaviour between peers - if they do not, it can create an unsafe environment and lead to a culture that normalises abuse
- Staff must report concerns immediately and follow school procedures

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must ensure all staff receive annual safeguarding training, including on child-on-child abuse.

Training for all staff on child-on-child abuse:

All staff will receive regular training on identifying, preventing, and responding to child-on-child abuse, including harmful sexual behaviour. Training will focus on:

- recognising the early signs of abuse,
- how to respond appropriately,
- how to support children involved.

Specific emphasis will be placed on online abuse and how technology plays a significant role in child-on-child abuse.

The Swanage School recognises that a child or young person may disclose incidents of child-on-child abuse to any member of staff. To ensure appropriate responses and support, all staff will receive training on the importance of maintaining clear, accurate, and timely records of any such incidents. This training will also include guidance on how to handle disclosures sensitively and in line with safeguarding procedures.

Staff should be aware that:

- Safeguarding issues can manifest in child-on-child abuse
- Technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues
- Children are at risk of both online abuse and face to face abuse, both of which can take place inside and outside of school
- Children can abuse their peers online through:
 1. Abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages
 2. Non-consensual sharing of indecent nude and semi-nude images and/or videos, especially around chat groups

3. Sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who do not want to receive such content
4. Child-on-child abuse may be taking place, even if not reported

This is explained in paragraphs 24, 29 and 46 of KCSIE linked above.

Prevention Strategies

The Swanage School embeds safeguarding into PSHE curriculum where respectful relationships are promoted and includes consent education. The school has a “whole school” approach to challenge harmful sexual behaviour and provide a safe space for disclosure.

Pupils should feel confident reporting abuse

The Swanage School have systems in place for pupils to confidently report abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment. They should know that we will treat their concerns seriously and that they can safely express their views and give feedback.

These systems should be:

- Well promoted
- Easily understood
- Easily accessible

We will give pupils an open forum to talk things through, as such discussions can lead to increased safeguarding reports. We will make them aware of the process and how any report will be handled, including when they have a concern about a friend or peer.

This is set out on pages 17 and 20 of the DfE's guidance on sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Managing reports of Sexual Violence or Harassment

Core principles:

- All staff act in the best interests of the child
- Zero tolerance for sexual harassment and sexual violence – never dismissed as ‘just banter’, ‘part of growing up’ or ‘just having a laugh’
- Follow general safeguarding procedures
- Prioritise immediate protection and support for both victim and alleged perpetrator(s)

Responding to a report: Process and Risk Assessment

- Immediate risk assessment by DSL.
- Ensure immediate safeguarding of the victim and alleged perpetrator(s), including separation if necessary
- Decided on a case-by-case basis with support both victim and alleged perpetrator through tailored plans.
- Underpinned by the principle of a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, meaning it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated
- The DSL or a deputy will take the lead, supported by other agencies as required and consider referral to children's Social Care or Police.
- Inform parents/carers unless unsafe to do so.

When responding to reports of child-on-child abuse, the DSL will undertake a thorough **risk assessment** of the situation, considering:

- The age, developmental stage, and needs of both the victim and the perpetrator(s)
- The severity and frequency of the alleged abuse
- Any ongoing risks to the victim, other children, or the community
- The impact of technology and online platforms This assessment will guide the appropriate response and the involvement of other agencies, where necessary.

Record-keeping

The Swanage School will follow pre-existing record-keeping protocols to ensure that all incidents are documented thoroughly, including the case details, the actions taken, referrals to external agencies and outcomes. All incidents must be recorded securely and confidentially. These records are vital for safeguarding and for any future referrals to Children's Social Care or other agencies.

All reports and incidents will be logged on the school's safeguarding system (**My Concern**), with full details recorded about the nature of the abuse, actions taken, and any ongoing monitoring or interventions. Detailed records will be kept confidentially and reviewed regularly to identify patterns of concern that may require further safeguarding interventions. Records should include actions taken, outcomes, and follow-up and comply with UK GDPR and safeguarding record retention policies. If requested by Police, school records can be shared.

How to support the pupils involved

The victim

Victims of this abuse may experience significant emotional distress which can impact their learning, relationships and overall wellbeing. This distress may be heightened if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school.

Students must reassure victims that they will be taken seriously, supported and kept safe. Immediate safeguarding measures should be implemented, including maintaining a reasonable distance between the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) across all school settings, including before- and after-school activities.

Support for the victim must be tailored to their individual needs, considering

- Age and, developmental stage
- Nature and impact of the abuse
- Cultural, SEND and neurodiverse factors
- The wishes and feelings of the victim

Support may include:

- Access to counselling or therapeutic services
- Wellbeing check-ins
- A designated safe space
- Multi agency referrals (e.g. CAMHS, Social Care, STARS)
- Pupils should be regularly reassured that their safety and wellbeing are our priority.

Staff should be aware that:

- Victims may not disclose the whole picture immediately, so dialogue should be kept open and encouraged
- Girls are more likely to be victims and boys are more likely to be perpetrators

- There may be more than one perpetrator, which is why KCSIE refers to 'perpetrator(s)' rather than 'perpetrator'

See more in paragraphs 456 to 463 of KCSIE.

The Alleged Perpetrator(s)

Balancing the safeguarding needs of the victim with the rights and wellbeing of the alleged perpetrator(s) requires careful, case-by-case consideration.

Alleged perpetrators are also children and must be safeguarded. Support should include:

- Early intervention, and wellbeing, or therapeutic support
- Behavioural mentoring and education around consent and respectful relationships
- Restorative approaches, where appropriate and safe, with consent from all parties
- Referrals to external agencies (e.g. Social Care, CAMHS, Counselling Services) with consent being sought from parents prior to referrals being made.

The Swanage School will consider support (and sanctions) on a case-by-case basis. Considerations should include:

- Age and developmental stage
- Nature, frequency and severity of the allegation and assessed risk of harm
- Any unmet needs or additional vulnerabilities

Sanctions must be proportionate, educational, and supportive of long-term behavioural change. The school must ensure that disciplinary measures do not compromise safeguarding.

Find further guidance in paragraph 464 of KCSIE 2025.

Unsubstantiated, Unfounded, False or Malicious Reports

The DSL must assess whether the pupil who made the allegation requires support or may have been abused by someone else. If so, a referral to Children's Social Care must be considered.

If a report is found to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school will respond in line with its behaviour policy, ensuring that the response is proportionate and does not discourage future disclosures. Regardless of the outcome, all pupils involved should be monitored for emotional wellbeing and offered support.

