



Peer on Peer Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy

Approved:	9 April 2022
Review Cycle:	Annual
Responsible party:	Safeguarding & Welfare Officer, Student Committee
Linked policies:	Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy, Preventing & Tackling Bullying Policy, E-Safety & ICT Policy

Definition of Peer-on-peer sexual abuse

The term includes:

- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks or jokes, and online sexual harassment (which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse)
- 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')

Managing reports of sexual harassment / sexual violence

Overriding principles:

- Zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and sexual violence – it's never 'just banter', 'part of growing up' or 'just having a laugh'
- Follow general safeguarding procedures
- Immediate consideration should be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator
- All staff act in the best interests of the child

What staff need to know

At the Swanage School, staff need to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'. They should address inappropriate behaviour as soon as it happens, as this can help prevent abusive/violent behaviour further down the line.

This is explained in paragraphs 429 and 430 of Keeping Children Safe in Education [KCSIE 2021](#) which should be read alongside the Department for Education's advice on sexual violence and harassment. [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges](#).

Staff should be clear on:

- Our school's safeguarding policy and procedures
- Their role in preventing peer-on-peer abuse and responding to it if they believe a child may be at risk
- The indicators of peer-on-peer abuse, how to identify it and respond to reports
- The importance of challenging inappropriate behaviour between peers. If this is not challenged effectively and promptly it can create an environment in which pupils feel unsafe and lead to a culture that normalises abusive behaviour

Staff should also be aware that:

Safeguarding issues can manifest in peer-on-peer abuse and that 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:

- Abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages
- Non-consensual sharing of indecent nude and semi-nude images and/or videos, especially around chat groups
- Sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who don't want to receive such content
- Peer-on-peer abuse may be taking place, even if not reported

This is explained further in paragraphs 24, 29 and 46 of KCSIE

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 will be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible.

As set out on pages 17 and 20 of the DfEs guidance on sexual violence and sexual harassment, The Swanage School will give pupils a forum to report any concerns and ensure that they understand what action will be taken by the school, including when they have a concern about a friend or peer.

To embed and support this approach, The Swanage School has undertaken the following actions:

- Circulated a survey on Peer-on-Peer abuse to students and will repeat this periodically
- Dedicated Crew time resources created for implementation in year groups
- Launched a 'Not at The Swanage School' campaign in Spring 2022 term
- Created a Safeguarding 'interactive teaching display'
- To develop a "Report it" facility on TEAMS

Responding to a report: process and risk assessment

Our response should be:

- Decided on a case-by-case basis
- Underpinned by the principle of a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, meaning it's never acceptable and it won't be tolerated

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a deputy will take the lead, supported by other agencies as required.

How to support the pupils involved

The victim

Victims of this abuse will likely find the experience distressing, which can affect their progress in school. This can be made worse if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school.

Students should be reassured that we will take them seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. Staff will keep victims a reasonable distance apart from the alleged perpetrator(s) on school premises, including at before and after-school activities.

Support to the victim will be responsive to their individual needs and circumstances and will take account of:

- The age and developmental stage of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the potential risk of further abuse
- The needs and wishes of the victim

In supporting victims we will also remain 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')

Find further guidance in paragraphs 456 to 463 of KCSIE.

The alleged perpetrator(s)

Careful consideration needs to be taken when implementing safeguarding support and balancing the need to safeguard the victim (and other children) whilst continuing to provide the alleged perpetrator(s) with an education and implementing any required disciplinary sanctions.

In determining actions, The Swanage School will consider support (and sanctions) on a case-by-case basis. This will include consideration of:

- The age and developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator(s)
- The nature and frequency of the allegations and risk of harm to other children
- Any unmet needs that the alleged perpetrator(s) may have

Find further guidance in paragraph 464 of KCSIE.

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports

The DSL will consider whether the pupil and/or the person who made the allegation needs support or may have been abused by someone else resulting in a “cry for help”. If this is the case, it may be appropriate to consider a referral to Children's Social Care.

If it is found that the report is deliberately invented or malicious, any follow up action would be taken in line with the school's behaviour policy.

