



Iver Heath Junior School

Child-on-Child Abuse

Policy

Approved by:	Governors	Date: July 2026
Last reviewed on:	June 2026	
Next review due by:	October 2028	

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance

1. Context and Definition
2. Responsibility
3. Purpose of Policy
4. Framework and Legislation
5. Abuse and harmful behavior
6. Types of abuse
 - 6.1 Physical abuse
 - 6.2 Bullying
 - 6.3 Identity-Based / Prejudice-Related Bullying
 - 6.4 Online bullying / Cyber bullying
 - 6.5 Sexual bullying, sexual violence and sexual harassment
 - 6.6 Sexting
 - 6.7 Initiation / Hazing
7. Children reporting Child-on-Child Abuse
8. Expected Staff Action
 - 8.1 Staff taking Action
 - 8.2 The Designated Safeguarding Lead / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Behaviour Lead) / Member of SLT will:
9. Points to Consider
10. Next Steps
11. Preventative Strategies
12. Where to go for further information

1. Context and Definition

Child on child abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others.

All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing other children. This is most likely to include but not limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as teenage relationship abuse')
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online.

All staff should be clear as to the school's policy and procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse and the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

All staff should understand that even if there are no reports in their school it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important if staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or deputy).

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature:

Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance

All staff should be aware that

This abuse can:

- Be motivated by perceived differences e.g. on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other differences
- Result in significant, long lasting and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to the victim; vulnerable adults are at particular risk of harm

Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs e.g.:

- Significant disruption in their own lives
- Exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering abuse
- Educational under-achievement
- Involved in crime

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the first priority of any education setting, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical. School staff, alongside their Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy, have to make their own judgements about each specific case and should use this policy guidance to help.

2. Responsibility

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2023 states that

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. (page 6)

All staff should understand that even if there are no reports in their school, it does not mean that it (child-on-child abuse) is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important that if staff have any concerns regarding child on child abuse they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or deputy). (page 12)

Child-on-Child abuse is referenced in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The sensitive nature and specific issues involved with Child-on-child necessitate separate policy guidance.

At Iver Heath Junior School we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to the impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

3. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to explore some forms of Child-on-Child abuse. The policy also includes a planned and supportive response to the issues. It has been written using the government document keeping Children safe in Education 2023.

At Iver Heath Junior School we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

Anti-Bullying Policy

Online Bullying Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

4. Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document is Working Together, 2018, highlighting that every assessment of a child, 'must be informed by the views of the child'. (Working Together, 2018:21) This is echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

5. Abuse and harmful behaviour

It is necessary to consider

- what abuse is and what it looks like
- how it can be managed
- what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual
- what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

Abuse is abuse and will never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up' at Iver Heath Junior School.

It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

- Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.
- Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action.
- Staff should be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.
- Staff should be aware of the added vulnerability of children and young people who have been the victims of violent crime (for example mugging), including the risk that they may respond to this by abusing younger or weaker children.

The alleged perpetrator is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. Evidence suggests that such children may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, may have witnessed or been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, may have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and be in need of protection. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the alleged perpetrator must address their own needs.

6. Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

6.1. Physical abuse

This may include hitting, kicking, purposefully tripping up, nipping/pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally, before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

6.2. Bullying

At Iver Heath Junior School, we follow the guidance from the Anti-Bullying Alliance and have taken their definition of bullying.

**Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.
It can happen face to face or online.**

In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

6.3. Identity-Based/Prejudiced Related Bullying

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society.

This can include but is not limited to:

- disabilities and special educational needs
- ethnic
- cultural and religious backgrounds
- gender
- sexual identity
- home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class)

6.4. Online Bullying / Cyber bullying

Online Bullying / Cyberbullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, e-mail, chat rooms etc.) to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. Online bullying can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites
- Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- Stealing someone's online identity
- Spreading rumours online
- Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms or games
- Developing hate sites about another person

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance

- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Being abusive, either individually or as a group, during on-line gaming platforms
- Encouraging a young person to self-harm
- Pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversation

6.5. Sexual Bullying, sexual violence and sexual harassment

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL will follow the DfE Guidance: Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges 2021

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101422/4/Sexual_violence_and_sexual_harassment_between_children_in_schools_and_colleges.pdf

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may include

- inappropriate sexual language
- Upskirting
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

6.6. Sexting

The term ‘sexting’ relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content; these are created and sent electronically. They are often ‘shared’ via social networking sites and instant messaging services. This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

DSL will follow the UKCCIS: Sexting in schools and colleges 2016 guidance.

[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544441/sexual_violence_and_sexual_harassment_between_children_in_schools_and_colleges_2021.pdf)

6.7. Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies. The ceremony welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance

in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

7. Children reporting child-on-child abuse.

Teachers and staff members at Iver Heath Junior School build positive relationships with the children in the school. We are a small enough school for children to continue to build relationships with staff throughout their time at IHJS. Members of staff run after-school clubs, take regular assemblies, are visible on playground duties and around the school. Building relationships are encouraged and valued at our school. As such, we encourage the children to report to and involve an adult as soon as they find themselves in a situation that make them feel in any way uncomfortable.

However, we also recognise that some children may find themselves in situations where they do not, for whatever reason, feel comfortable to do that. In such cases children may:

- Add their concerns to our school's **Worry Monsters**, who help children share their concerns in a private way and help them feel their worry has been shared and ultimately 'eaten' by our Worry Monsters. These are closely monitored by the Deputy DSL/Behaviour Lead or, in their absence, a member of SLT to alert staff that a child would like to report a concern of any kind. The Deputy DSL will then decide with the class teacher who the best person to speak to the child would be.
- Seek comfort from **Heathcliff** our school's mascot. Heathcliff, lives primarily in the library for children across the school to have access to. However he also travels the classrooms for the children's benefit. During the day, children will have the opportunity to share their worries or just a warm cuddle from our school's mascot.
- Ask their parent to contact the class teacher (in the first instance) to give them the confidence to relay the necessary information. This can be done by the parent writing a note to the teacher in the Homework Diary or emailing the school office to ask the class teacher to contact them.

8. Expected staff action

Staff should consider the seriousness of the case and make a quick decision whether to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL/Behavioural Lead immediately before taking any further in-school actions.

All staff should follow the school's Behaviour Policy, which states that each incident should be dealt with by the member of staff who sees the incident or the incident is reported to.

It is important to deal with a situation of child on child abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information and timeline as soon as possible to get the true facts. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

8.1. Staff Taking Action

It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance

- Staff will record the incident using the identified paperwork as well as gather witness statements, which will also be recorded on the appropriate paperwork. As much as possible – taking children's age and academic ability into consideration – children should write their accounts in their own hand. The member of staff should then go through it with the child and annotate where needed to ensure that it is indeed a true account.
- Staff will speak to all the children involved, gain a statement from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account.
- Staff will use open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?). Do not interrogate or ask leading questions.
- If a member of staff feels they need support in dealing with a situation of this nature, they should ask SLT for support. The expectation is that SLT will be present and offer guidance but that the staff member should still lead the conversation.
- Staff will have a discussion with the child about their actions and use the following restorative questions to allow the child to critically reflect on their actions.
- Staff will record all incidents of child on child abuse on CPOMS to allow the DSL to see all records and gather a complete picture of any/all incidents and patterns.

8.2. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Behaviour Lead)/Member of SLT will:

- Consider the Intent: The DSL/Deputy DSL/Behaviour Lead will review the information gathered and decide if this has been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?
- Decide on the next course of action: if they believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm they will follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. If MASH and the police intend to pursue this further, they may ask to interview the children in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to.
- Make a decision on informing the parents. If the incident is clearly a one-off, then the class teacher may be asked to speak to the parents about the incident in term of what happened and the severity of the incident and any sanction given (in line with the school's behavior policy). If this is a repeated pattern of behavior, the DSL/Deputy DSL will inform the parents either by telephone call or face-to-face.
- The Deputy DSL/Behaviour Lead will keep a additional record of all identity-based incidents/bullying or sexually-based incidents/bullying.

8.3. Cyber-Bullying

Should school staff be made aware that a child is being bullied online they will follow the usual procedures and complete the relevant processes. The class teacher should have a conversation with the DSL/Deputy DSL/Behaviour Lead about the next steps. Each situation will be dealt with on an individual basis and judgements will be taken as such. It is very likely that parents will be informed and asked to work together to ensure that the situation is dealt with effectively and efficiently. The child/children involved will be spoken about the effects of their behavior, our E-Safety learning and the possible dangers they could be placing themselves in.

9. Points to consider

- What is the age of the children involved? How old are the young people involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved?
- Where did the incident or incidents take place? Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?
- What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred? Can each of the children give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the child involved? Is the

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance

incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one child's different from another and why?

- What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?
 - Does the child know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch?
 - Is the child's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour?
 - Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived?
 - Does the child have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?
- Repetition:
 - Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

10. Next Steps

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

10.1. For the child who has been harmed

What support they require depends on the individual child and the situation. It may be that they wish to seek support to deal with the situation from an identified member of staff or an external agency may be sought if this is more appropriate. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends; in which case it is necessary that this child continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the child may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people, or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required. Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PHSE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently. If the child feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

10.2. For the child who has displayed harmful behaviour

It is important to find out why the child has behaved in such a way. It may be that the child is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an early help referral and the child may require additional support from family members. Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the child has been met, it is important that the child receives a consequence for their behaviour. This will be addressed using the school's Behaviour Policy but may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the child they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. The school may also choose a sanction as a consequence such as an external or internal exclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour. In the cases of sexually harmful behavior it may be a requirement for the child to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency. It may be that the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others, in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the child and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the child and their parents/carers. This may mean additional supervision of the child or protective strategies if the child feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance

10.3. After care

It is important that following the incident the child involved continues to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the child does not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). For this reason, regular reviews with the child following the incident(s) are imperative. How these will be carried out, will be decided on an individual basis. It may be appropriate for the Deputy DSL (Behaviour Lead) to be the most appropriate. However, it may be that the relationship between the child and the class teacher is the most appropriate.

11. Preventative Strategies

Child on Child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most robust policies and support processes. It is important to develop appropriate strategies to proactively prevent child on child abuse.

- This school has an open environment where children feel safe to use the range of methods available share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them.
- There is a strong and positive PSHE (Personal, Social & Health Education) & SMSC (Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural) curriculum that tackles such issues as identity-based prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another.
- We teach children the five British Values (Democracy, Rule of Law, Mutual Respect, Tolerance and Individual Liberty) explain the importance in this country of respecting one another including celebrating differences.
- The school makes sure that children know how to report incidents.
- The children receive regular assemblies on their safeguarding, behavior and conduct, as well as taking part in Anti-Bullying and E-Safety weeks.
- Staff will consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action.
- Staff will not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood.
- Our children are part of changing their circumstances and, through Agents for Change, school council and pupil voice for example, we encourage children to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour'.
- We involve pupils in the positive ethos in school; one where all children understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

12. Where to go for further information

12.1. DfE: Statutory guidance: Working together to safeguard children 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

12.2. DfE: Statutory guidance: Keeping children safe in education 202

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118195/5/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2023.pdf

12.3. DfE Guidance: Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges 2018

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

12.4. UKCCIS: Sexting

[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people)

12.5. DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

12.6. DfE Advice for parents regarding cyberbullying

[Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61551/advice-for-parents-and-carers-on-cyberbullying)

12.7. Brook Traffic Light Tool

<https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/category/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool>

12.8. NSPCC: Harmful sexual behaviour framework

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2016/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework/?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_content=NSPCC%3A%20Harmful%20sexual%20behaviour%20framework&utm_campaign=caspar-newsletter