



Whole School Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

Formulation of Policy

This Child-on-Child Abuse policy has been developed using the existing school safeguarding guidelines. It has also been drawn up according to guidance provided including:

- 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' ('KCSIE' Current Version 2024)
- Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI): 'Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements' (September 2021)
- 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' (July 2017) (DfE)
- 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people' (UKCIS Education Group guidance - December 2020)
- Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, June 2021 and April 2022, 'A Year on from the launch of the Ofsted review into sexual abuse in schools and colleges'

The policy is reviewed annually. The most recent update (September 2024) has taken into account new legislation and has been reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the governors.

Policy Statement:

Cranford is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils, so they can learn and thrive in a relaxed and secure environment. As such, the governors, senior leadership team, and all staff (including all volunteer staff members) at Cranford School are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse both within and beyond the school.

The school recognises that child on child abuse can happen in any setting and so we have put in place preventative measures to educate our school community about child-on-child abuse and ensure our staff have the knowledge and skills to respond to allegations of child-on-child abuse. The school also recognises that even if there are no reported cases of child on child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported; this is why the measures outlined in this policy are key to ensuring pupils feels safe to come forward and report abuse, but also ensures pupils can recognise abusive behaviour in their own peer groups.

This is the school's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute child on child abuse. It strongly relates to, and should be read alongside, '**Whole School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**', '**Whole School Policy for Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education**', '**Whole School Behaviour Policy**', '**Whole School SMSC Policy**', and '**Whole School Anti-bullying Policy**.'

Aims:

Our Aims as a school are to:

- Create an environment in the School which is safe and secure for all pupils;
- Encourage our pupils to establish satisfying relationships within their families, with peers and with other adults;
- Be aware of the nature and level of risk to which our pupils are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context; and (b) take a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse;
- Regard the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure. We do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to child on child abuse in response to alleged incidents of it; and believe that in order to tackle peer on-peer abuse proactively, it is necessary to focus on all four of the following areas: (i) systems and structures; (ii) prevention; (iii) identification; and (iv) response/intervention;
- Implement this policy in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and child on child abuse in our school setting, and encourage parents to hold us to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers, they should inform the School so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response;
- Recognise that abuse is abuse, and should never be passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', or 'part of growing up', as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children;
- **Recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers (including online)**
- Take a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in concerns or allegations about child-on-child abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused, and those who are alleged to have abused their peers, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter.
- Ensure that all staff are clear about the school's policy and procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse.
- Ensure that all pupils understand the systems in place for pupils to report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously.

What is Child-on-child abuse?

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children at any age (often referred to as child-on-child abuse) and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online. It is

important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports. Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as ‘teenage relationship abuse’)
- 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)
- sexual violence,⁹ such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- Consensual image sharing, especially between older children of the same age, may require a different response. It might not be abusive – but children still need to know it is illegal- whilst non-consensual is illegal and abusive. UKCIS provides detailed advice about sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and videos.

For further information about sexual violence see Part 5 and Annex B

All staff should be aware that technology is a significant component in many child-on-child safeguarding issues and children can abuse other children online. Children are at risk of abuse and other risks online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse and other risks will take place concurrently both online and offline. This can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who do not want to receive such content.

All child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously, we have a zero-tolerance approach and recognise child on child abuse as abuse. It should never be tolerated or passed off as ‘banter’, ‘just having a laugh’ or ‘part of growing up’, as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

What is Contextual Safeguarding?

This policy: (a) encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which is about changing the way that professionals approach child protection when risks occur outside of the family, thereby requiring all those within a Local Safeguarding Partnership to consider how they work alongside, rather than just refer into, children’s social care, to create safe spaces in which children may have encountered child on child abuse. (b) adopts a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach, which means:

- being aware of and seeking to understand the impact that these wider social contexts may be having on our school’s pupils,
- creating a safe culture in our school by, for example, implementing policies and procedures that address child on child abuse and harmful attitudes; promoting healthy

relationships and attitudes to gender/ sexuality; training on potential bias and stereotyped assumptions,

- being alert to and monitoring changes in pupils' behaviour and/or attendance, and contributing to local child protection agendas by, for example, challenging poor threshold decisions and referring concerns about contexts to relevant local agencies (see section entitled 'multi-agency working').

When does behaviour become problematic or abusive?

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it

Sexual behaviours

Cranford use the Sexual Behaviours Continuum Model, proposed by Simon Hackett, to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children, which is helpful when seeking to understand a student's sexual behaviour and deciding how to respond to it. This continuum relates exclusively to sexual behaviours and is not exhaustive.

Cranford also use The Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool to help distinguish between three levels of sexual behaviour – green, amber and red, and to respond according to the level of concern.

This tool uses a traffic light system to categorise the sexual behaviours of children and is designed to help professionals:

- Make decisions about safeguarding children
- Assess and respond appropriately to sexual behaviour in children
- Understand healthy sexual development and distinguish it from harmful behaviour by categorising sexual behaviours as green, amber or red, professionals across different agencies can work to the same standardised criteria when making decisions and can protect children with a unified approach.

How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?

All staff should be alert to the well-being of students and to signs of abuse (as outline in the '**Whole School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**'), and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) because of their experiences will differ.

As a guide, these are possible signs and symptoms; a pupil who is being abused by their peer(s), may exhibit behaviours which are unusual. This could be seen in terms of their motivation to come to school; they may want to be escorted to or from school or could

begin evading school. It may become apparent through their property being damaged, an unwillingness to eat at school or they may want to bring extra money to school to pay the alleged abuser. A pupil who is being abused by their peer(s) could become solitary or show traits of anxiety, have difficulty in getting to sleep, be frightened to talk or start stammering. The pupil may exhibit a decline in their academic performance and may withdraw from extra-curricular activities.

Are some children particularly vulnerable to abusing or being abused by their peers?

Any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to the strength of peer influence during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers. For example:

- Child-on-child abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure will also be different. In addition, we recognise that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys' perpetrators, but peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously and investigated fully.
- Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) can be more likely to be abused than their peers without SEND, and additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in children with SEND. These can include:
 - assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to a child's disability without further exploration,
 - the potential for children with SEND to be disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying and harassment, without outwardly showing any signs,
 - communication barriers and difficulties, and – overcoming these barriers.
- some children may be more likely to experience child on child abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics, particularly the protected characteristics, as outlined in the Equality Act (2010)

A whole school preventative approach

Our school actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

- educating all governors, the senior leadership team, staff, pupils, and parents about this issue. This includes training all governors, the senior leadership team, and staff on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify, and respond to it.
- educating pupils about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse, positive, responsible and safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts about consent, via PSHCEE and the wider curriculum. Students are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse. They are regularly informed about the school's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse.
- educating students about consent in PSCHCEE and RSE lessons includes teaching them basic facts such as (i) a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity; (ii) the age of consent is 16; and (iii) sexual intercourse without consent is rape, and
- engaging parents on the issue of child-on-child abuse by sharing key information, including this policy, with them at Parent Welcome and Information Evenings
- supporting the on-going welfare of the pupil body by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise student mental health, and by providing in-school support to address underlying mental health needs. We have a strong pastoral system, and all staff are trained to meet low-level mental health difficulties within the pupils.
- challenging behaviour which is not in keeping with the pupil behaviour code of conduct, or which does not reflect the schools value 'generosity of spirit'.
- providing excellent pastoral care, which focuses on the individual pupil, for example through structured form time activities, mentoring and peer mentoring.
- working with governors, senior leadership team, and all staff, pupils and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the school community.
- creating conditions in which our pupils can aspire to, and realise, safe and healthy relationships through form times, assemblies, the PSHCEE and SRE curriculum and through peer mentoring and support.
- ensuring pupils can develop trusting relationships with staff, and in which staff understand, through regular discussion and training, the importance of these relationships in providing students with a sense of belonging so that pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and feel listened to.

- responding to accusation and cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately and ensuring that all staff refer any allegations or disclosures to the school's DSL without delay.
- ensuring that all staff refer any concerns regarding a change in a pupils' behaviour/attitude/demeanour that could constitute a potential child on child abuse issue are referred to the DSL, as per our safeguarding policy.
- The SLT and safeguarding/ pastoral team regularly review behaviour incident logs and the school bullying log which can help to identify any changes in behaviour and/or concerning patterns or trends at an early stage.

Responding to concerns or allegations of Child-on-child abuse

It is essential that all concerns and allegations of child-on-child abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our school environment. Any response should:

- include a thorough investigation of the concern(s) or allegation(s), and the wider context in which it/they may have occurred (as appropriate) – depending on the nature and seriousness of the alleged incident(s), it may be appropriate for the police and/or children's social care to carry out this investigation.
- treat all children involved as being at potential risk – while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. We will ensure that a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter.
- take into account:
 - that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved and consider and address the effect of wider sociocultural contexts – such as the child's/ children's peer group (both within and outside school); family; the school environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence. We will consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child/ children's needs and to mitigate risk, and
 - the potential complexity of child-on-child abuse and of children's experiences, and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent. While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited, they are not consenting

- the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL will discuss the proposed action with the child/ children and their parents and obtain consent to any referral before it is made. The school will manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so. We consider the wishes of any child who has allegedly been abused and give the child as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and how they will be supported.

In cases where nudes or semi-nudes have been shared, we follow guidance given to schools and colleges by the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS): Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (December 2020) and Dfe's Searching Screening and Confiscation Advice.

The school recognises:

- the importance of explaining to children that the law is in place to protect rather than criminalise them
- the importance of understanding intra-familial harms, and any necessary support for siblings following incidents
- the need for schools and colleges to be part of discussions with statutory safeguarding partners.

What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s)?

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay (in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy) so that a course of action can be agreed.

Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to children's social care (and, if appropriate, the police) is made immediately. Anyone can make a referral. In exceptional circumstances, where referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made (as per the Whole School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy procedures in section 3.5).

If a child speaks to a member of staff about child-on-child abuse that they have witnessed or are a part of, the member of staff should listen to the child and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement. For further details please see the procedures set out in **(As outlined in the 'Whole School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy')**.

How we will respond to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse:

The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the member of staff who has reported it/them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety

of the child/all children affected. Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL should consider what urgent action can be taken in addition to the actions and referral duties set out in this policy, to seek specialist help in preventing the images spreading further and removing the images from the internet. Staff must ensure that they do not view, copy, print, share, store or save any illegal images of a child under any circumstances, even if they are attempting to provide help for the child. If a member of staff unintentionally views any images of this nature, they must inform the DSL immediately.

Safety plans

We will always carry out a safety plan in respect of:

- any child who is alleged to have behaved in a way that is considered to be abusive or violent,
- any child who has reportedly been abused or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child, or
- any child who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child as deemed appropriate by the DSL. Where it is alleged that a child has behaved in a way that is considered to be inappropriate or problematic (as opposed to abusive or violent), the DSL will use their professional judgment – based on the particular concern(s) and/or allegation(s) raised, and the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question – to determine whether (as explained above) it would be appropriate to contact children’s social care, and to carry out a safety plan.

Careful judgment and consideration are required as to whether alleged behaviour which might be judged to be inappropriate by an adult might actually be harmful to another child. Consultation is recommended with children’s social care if there is any doubt about this. Where other children have been identified as witnesses to alleged abuse or violence, consideration should also be given by the DSL to whether there might be any risks to those children, and whether a safety plan would be appropriate in relation to any risks presenting to them.

Disciplinary action

Cranford will consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved. However, if there are police proceedings underway, or there could be, we work in partnership with the police and/or children’s social care. We will always report an incident/concern to the police if appropriate. Where a matter is not of interest to the police and/or children’s social care, we consider what is the most appropriate action to take to ensure positive behaviour management. Disciplinary action, where appropriate may include:

- ensuring that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;
- demonstrating to the child/children and others that child on child abuse can never be tolerated; and
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

Any disciplinary action will be in line with our sanctions as outlined in the Whole School Behaviour Policy.

However, we will balance this against any police investigations, the child's/children's own potential unmet needs, and any action or intervention planned regarding safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action, the School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children in its care from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the child on child abuse and the causes of it.

We recognise that disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of child-on-child abuse, so we will always consider the wider actions that may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards.

Information sharing, data protection and record keeping

When responding to concern(s) or allegation(s) of child-on-child abuse, the school will:

- always consider carefully, in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies (where they are involved), how to share information about the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the student(s) affected, their parents, staff, and other pupils and individuals,
- record the information on MyConcern that is necessary for us and other relevant agencies (where they are involved) to respond to the concern(s) or allegation(s) and safeguard everyone involved, including keeping a log of child-on-child Abuse allegations and the ensuing investigation, with outcomes and actions outline.
- keep a record of the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including relevant authorities, and ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and to only use it for the agreed legal purpose, and
- be mindful of and act in accordance with its safeguarding and data protection duties, including those set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (December 2023) 74 and the HM Government advice on Information Sharing (updated in July 2023).

Multi-agency working

Cranford actively engages with its Local Safeguarding Partnership in relation to child-on-child abuse, and works closely with, for example, children's social care, the police, Oxfordshire Safeguarding Childcare Partnership (OSCP), Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS) and/or other relevant agencies in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's procedures, and other schools.

Reviewed: June 2021: Headmaster, Deputy Head DSL
Update: October 2021: Headmaster, Deputy Head DSL
Reviewed: April 2022 by Headmaster, Deputy Head DSL
Reviewed: September 2022 by Headmaster, Deputy Head DSL
Reviewed: September 2023 by Headmaster, Senior Deputy Head (Whole School)

Reviewed: September 2024 by Headmaster, DSL

Review Due: September 2025 by Headmaster, DSL

Appendix 1

References and useful links:

- Whatis.com <http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/cyberbullying>
- This is abuse campaign
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/410010/2015-03-08_This_is_Abuse_campaign_summary_report__2_.pdf
- Department for Education: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexualharassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges>
- Keeping Children Safe In Education 2023: [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

Appendix 2

Contact details relevant to report and referring child-on-child abuse:

MASH	0345 050 7666	http://www.oscb.org.uk/concerned-about-a-child/
Out Of Hours Emergency Duty Team	0800 833 408	
LCSS North	0345 2412703	LCSS.North@oxfordshire.gov.uk
LCSS Central	0345 2412705	LCSS.Central@oxfordshire.gov.uk
LCSS South	0345 2412608	LCSS.South@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Designated Officer (LADO)	01865 810603	Lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Kingfisher Team (CSE)	01865 309196	
Police: Emergency Non-emergency	999 101	
OSCB		oscb.oxfordshire.gov.uk
CAHMS	0800 1111	
Forensic CAHMS	01865 902613	https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/refer/
CAHBS	01865 902613	https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/refer/

Appendix 3

Sexual behaviours continuum model

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developmentally expected• Socially acceptable• Consensual, mutual, reciprocal• Shared decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour• Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group• Context for behaviour may be inappropriate• Generally consensual and reciprocal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problematic and concerning behaviour• Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected• No overt elements of victimisation• Consent issues may be unclear• May lack reciprocity or equal power• May include levels of compulsivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victimising intent or outcome• Includes misuse of power• Coercion and force to ensure compliance• Intrusive• Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given• May include elements of expressive violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physically violent sexual abuse• Highly intrusive• Instrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour• Sadism

Appendix 4

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