Child on Child Abuse Policy

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Child on Child Abuse Policy

1. Context and Definition

The School's duty is to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activity and functions. This policy therefore complements and supports many other policies (including our Safeguarding Children Policy (including Child Protection Policy), Staff Code of Conduct, Anti-Bullying Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy, Electronic Devices in the Early Years Policy (RGS Springfield, RGS The Grange and RGS Dodderhill only), Rewards Behaviour and Sanctions Policy, Online Safety & Acceptable Use of Smart Devices Policy (including online safety)) and adheres to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education issued by the Department of Education and updated September 2026. This list of relevant policies is not exhaustive, but it is accepted that, when undertaking development or planning of any kind, the School will consider safeguarding matters as part of this process.

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 or college and online. All staff should be clear as to the school or college'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 (KCSIE September 2026*)*

RGS Worcester expects all staff and volunteers to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff should always act in the best interests of the child.

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 their peers and that it can happen inside or outside of school or online.

All staff should be clear as to the school or college's policy and procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse. 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 which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and/or videos
- upskirting
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

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, for example:

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 bullying. School staff, alongside their Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and/or Deputy DSLs, 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) 2026, states that:
"Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that their child protection policy includes:

- procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse
- the systems in place (and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously
- how allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with
- clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported
- a recognition 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
- a statement which makes clear there should be a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, and it should never be passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children
- recognition that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators, but that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously, and
- the different forms child-on-child abuse can take."

It also emphasises that the voice of child must be heard:
"Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure they facilitate a whole school or college approach to safeguarding. This means involving everyone in the school or college, and ensuring that safeguarding, and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development. Ultimately, all systems, processes and policies should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart. Where there is a safeguarding concern, governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide."

Our policy applies to all staff, part-time and full-time, permanent or temporary, Governors and volunteers working in the four RGS schools, hereafter referred to as 'the School' or 'RGSW' or 'We'. The School believes that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone that comes into contact with children has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively,

everyone should make sure that their approach is child centred and that they consider at all times what is in the best interests of the child.

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

At RGS Worcester 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 of 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 the many forms of child-on-child abuse. The policy also includes a planned and supportive response to the issues.
At RGS Worcester we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Safeguarding Children Policy (including Child Protection Policy)
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Anti-Bullying Policy (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy
- Electronic Devices in the Early Years Policy (RGS Springfield, RGS The Grange and RGS Dodderhill only)
- Rewards Behaviour and Sanctions Policy
- Online Safety & Acceptable Use of Smart Devices Policy (including online safety)

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 to Safeguard Children 2026, highlighting that "Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child, listen to what they say, observe their behaviour, take their views seriously, and work with them and their families and the people who know them well when deciding how to support their needs. Practitioners should also be aware that children may find it difficult to always speak about what they need, what is happening to them or what has happened to them. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026) This is echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools 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.

Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

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 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 along with some advice and support on specific actions to be taken for some categories. In addition, there is general advice for staff responding to such incidents in Section 7. Expected Staff Action, below.

6.1 Physical Abuse

This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or 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. Any such action or punishment will be in accordance with that detailed in the School's Rewards, Behaviour and Sanctions policy but where there are any concerns about a child's welfare, the DSL will always be informed in the first instance.

6.2 Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

This must always be referred immediately to the DSL.
The DSL will follow the guidance in Part Five, KCSIE 2026: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two or more children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into college. It can occur also through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face-to-face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.
(KCSIE Sept 2026*)*

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
- Inappropriate role play
- Sexual touching
- Sexual assault/abuse.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- Making clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment; it is never acceptable and it will not be tolerated;
- Not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as 'banter', 'part of growing up', 'just having a laugh' or 'boys being boys';
- Challenging physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them
- Not recognising, acknowledging or understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and/or downplaying some behaviours related to abuse as it can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it;
- Understanding that all of the above can be driven by wider societal factors beyond the school and college, such as everyday sexist stereotypes and everyday sexist language.

6.3 Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and those who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and 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.

6.4 Online Bullying

Online Bullying 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 safeguarding harms can include but are not limited to: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories.

Children can be harmed by being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.

Online bullying can take many forms, including:

- 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
- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Encouraging a young person to self-harm
- Pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations
- Misinformation
- disinformation (including fake news)
- conspiracy theories

6.5 Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes (including AI-generated images)
Sharing nudes and semi-nudes means 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 DSL who will follow the Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: how to respond to an incident (overview) (updated March 2024) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-how-to-respond-to-an-incident-overview

Taking and sharing of nude photos of under 18s is a criminal offence.

6.6 Upskirting
The Voyeurism Offences Act (2019), which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019. Upskirting 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 cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone, of any gender, can be a victim. This must always be referred to the DSL, who will treat it as a sexual offence, follow Part Five of KCSIE 2026 and contact the police where appropriate.

6.7 Initiation or 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 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.

6.8 Prejudiced Behaviour

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

6.9 Teenage Relationship Abuse

Young people can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child-on-child abuse is sometimes referred to as 'teenage relationship abuse'. Depending on the age of the young people, this may not be recognised in law under the statutory definition of 'domestic abuse' (if one or both parties are under 16). However, as with any child under 18, where there are concerns about safety or welfare, child safeguarding procedures should be followed and both young victims and young perpetrators should be offered support. Teenage relationship abuse is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner. This abuse may be child sexual exploitation.

7. Expected Staff Action

Staff must tell the DSL (or a Deputy DSL) immediately about any concern of child-on-child abuse, before taking any further action. The DSL decides what happens next. Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters. Staff will always take action that is in the best interests of the child and in accordance with the School's policies, and in particular the advice and guidance given in the Safeguarding Children Policy (including Child Protection Policy) and the Staff Code of Conduct.

8. Recognising Child-on-Child Abuse

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:

- Chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved;
- Difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability;
- All alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident;
- Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation;
- What was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery;
- The effect on the victim;
- Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret;

- The child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred;
- Whether this was a one-off incident or longer in duration.

It is important to deal with a situation of child-on-child abuse immediately and sensitively. The DSL will make sure information is gathered as soon as possible. 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.

8.1 Taking Action

- Always take complaints seriously
- Listen, record the pupil's own words and pass the record to the DSL immediately
- Assess needs of victim and alleged perpetrator
- Consider referral to Police or Social Care
- Contribute to multi-agency assessments
- Convene a risk management meeting
- Record all incidents and all action taken

8.2 Recording Sexualised Behaviour

- Be clear, explicit and non-avoidant, and avoid vague statements or euphemisms
- Record as soon as possible, as you can quickly forget or confuse detail
- Follow the prompts on your safeguarding and child protection recording form
- Use proper names for body parts but record exactly any language or vocabulary used by the child.
- Use the child's exact words in quotation marks.
- Note where and when the incident happened and whether anyone else was around.

8.3 Gather the Facts

Staff must not investigate or take statements. If a pupil tells you about an incident, listen, use open questions only (for example, 'Tell me what happened'), record the pupil's exact words and pass the record to the DSL at once. The DSL decides who speaks to the other pupils involved, and when, taking advice from the police or children's social care where a crime may have been committed.

8.4 Consider the Intent

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?

8.5 Decide on your Next Course of Action

If you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm, you must report to the DSL immediately; they will follow the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

If Worcestershire Children's Social Care Services (or the Local Authority area which is managing the case - some RGSW pupils live in other Local Authority areas), and/or the police intend to pursue this further, they may ask to interview the young

people in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

8.6 Informing Parents or Carers

The best way to inform parents or carers is in person. The nature of the incident and the type of harm or abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents or carers, whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

If a pupil does not want their parents told, the DSL will weigh the pupil's age, understanding and wishes (Gillick competence) against the risk of harm. There is no fixed age. The DSL will inform parents unless doing so would put the pupil at greater risk, and will record the reasons. NSPCC Link to Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines.

In all circumstances, where the risk of harm to the child is evident then the School should encourage the young person to share the information with their parent or carer and the School will support the young person with this, considerate of the fact that they may be frightened to share the information that they are being harmed in any way.

9. Points to Consider

9.1 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? In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular children aged between 1 and 4 years old who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however, should not be overlooked.

9.2 Vulnerability of the Children Involved

Some young people may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation.

9.3 Where did the Incident or Incidents take Place?

Did the incident take place inside or outside of school or online? 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?

9.4 What was the Explanation by all Children Involved of what Occurred?

Can each of the young people give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one young person different from another and why?

9.5 What is each of the Children's own Understanding of what Occurred?

Do the young people 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 young person'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 young person have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

9.6 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 Young Person who has been Harmed

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one-to-one support with a member of the Pastoral Team who can act as a Mentor. 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 young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person 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 may be considered, including for example a visiting speaker addressing a whole class or Year Group on bullying, relationship abuse etc, but it should be noted that this would be in addition to such topics being addressed as part of the School's PSHCE programme and that are regularly re-visited through our various Assemblies and Tutorial Programme.

10.2 For the Young Person who has Displayed Harmful Behaviour

It is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person 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 young person may require additional support from family members. Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that the young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g., making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour, it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one-to-one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). Where there is a criminal investigation, the DSL will carry out a risk assessment, with advice from the police and children's social care, to decide whether the young person can stay in school and what safeguards are needed. Each case is decided on its facts; removal is not automatic. The decision is recorded and reviewed as the investigation progresses.

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 young person and the

risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved, including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour. The School may also choose to issue a sanction as a consequence, such as an Internal or External Suspension for a period of time, to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour and the young person may be guided and supported with, for example, some sessions with a specific member of the Pastoral Team.

10.3 After Care

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue 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 young people do 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 young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

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. We recognise and acknowledge 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. We therefore understand how important it is to foster a culture in which staff are fully informed of the School's and wider societal expectations. We also acknowledge the School's responsibility to educate pupils so that they can recognise abuse. We also work to give pupils the self-confidence to feel able to speak to a trusted adult in School if they have any concerns for themselves or another young person. The School is committed to engaging with pupils about healthy relationships and giving them the opportunity to voice any concerns that they may have about the culture in the School, as well as being confident that we will act to address these as appropriate.

This School has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. There is a strong and positive PSHCE curriculum that tackles such issues as 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. The School makes sure that 'support and report' signposting is available to young people.

Staff will not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. Staff will consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action.

Young people are part of changing their circumstances and, through school council and pupil voice for example, we encourage young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour'. We involve pupils in the positive ethos in school; one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

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

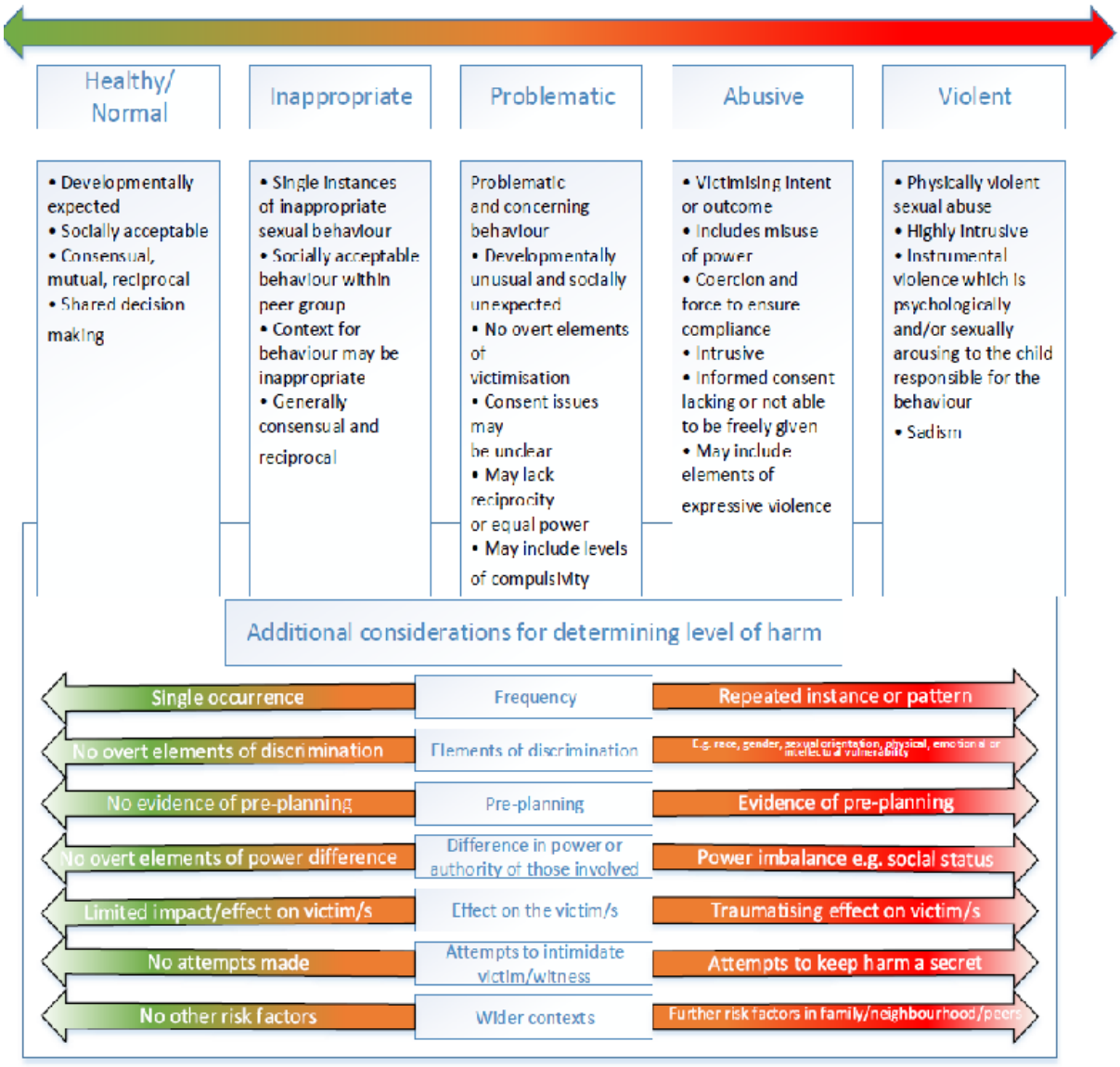
- Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, pupils and parents about this issue. This includes:

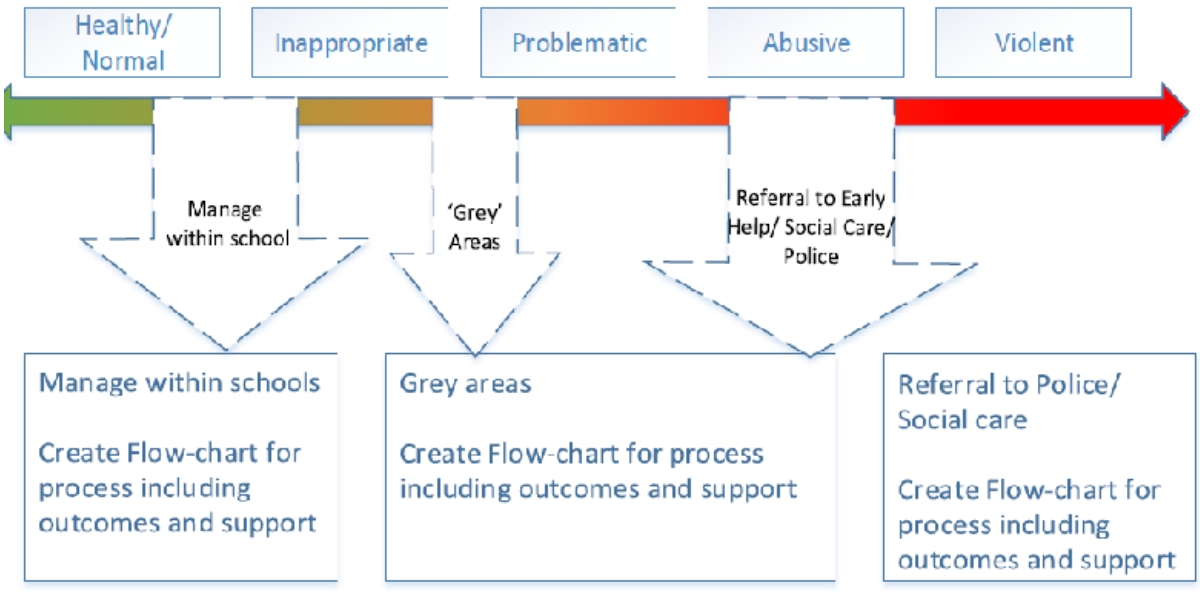
- training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of ~~peer-on-peer~~ child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes (a) Contextual Safeguarding; (b) the identification and classification of specific behaviours; and (c) the importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing. Training includes case studies which the staff design themselves;
- educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via PSHCE and the wider curriculum. For example, by addressing gender inequality in a statistics class, or by reviewing literature in an English class which addresses bullying and its effect on mental health. Pupils 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.
- engaging parents on this issue by:
  (a) talking about it with parents, both in groups and one to one;
  (b) asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the School address those risks;
  (c) involving parents in the review of School policies and lesson plans; and
  (d) encouraging parents to hold the School to account on this issue.

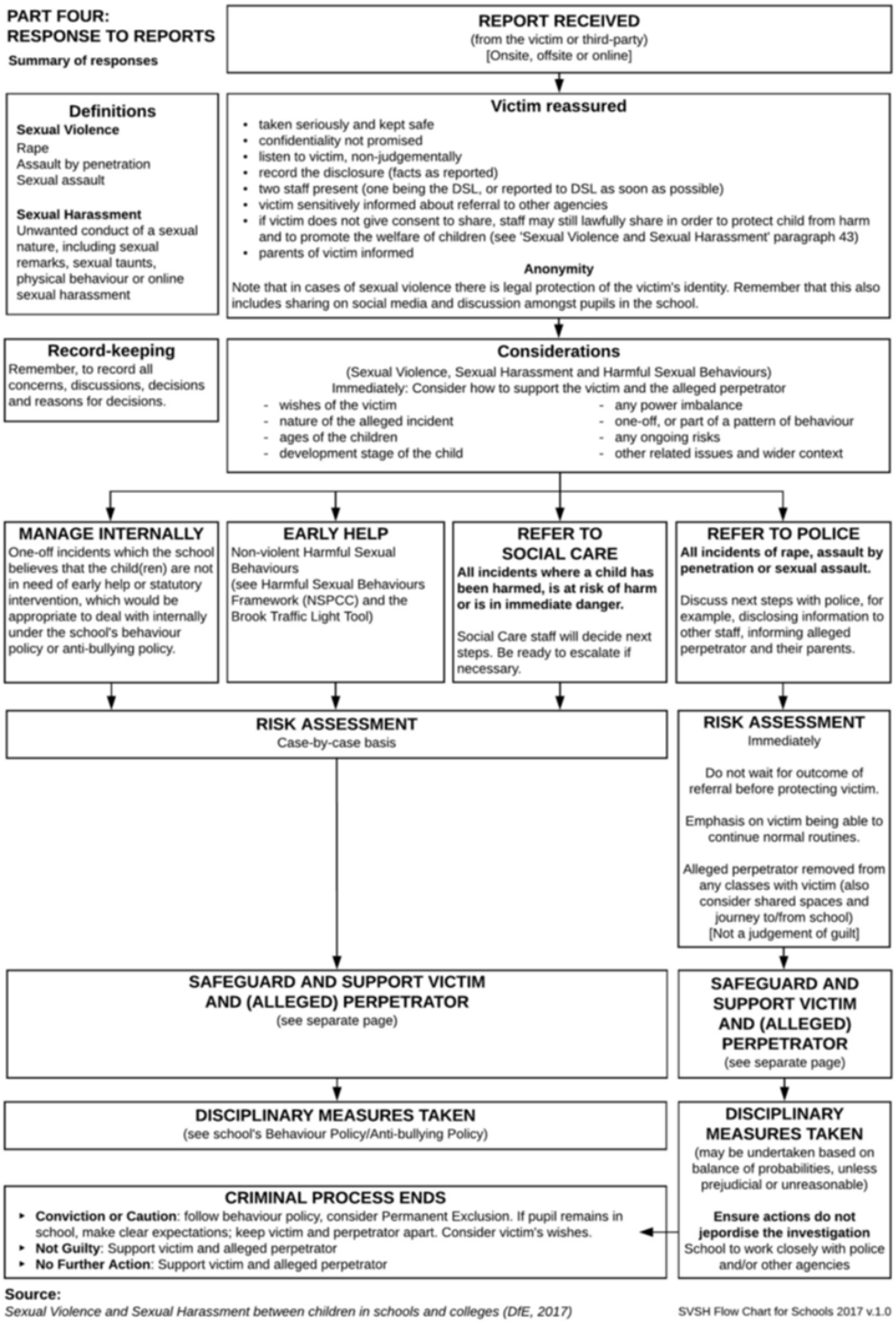
- ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the School's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who may need additional support. This is done by way of engendering a culture in which staff feel able to raise concerns about pupils with the safeguarding team at any appropriate time in the week, confident that they will be listened to, advised and that concerns will be dealt with promptly and appropriately.
- challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom);
- working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, 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;
- inviting appropriate external speakers to further educate and inspire pupils;
- creating conditions in which our pupils can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships;
- creating a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to; and
- responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately.

The School will always consult with up-to-date advice from recognised and respected organisations like the NSPCC. In particular the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework (NSPCC Website) is relevant and useful and the continuum of behaviours illustrated below (proposed by Hackett in 2010) is taken from this framework:

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
Developmentally expected Socially acceptable Consensual, mutual, reciprocal Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Problematic and concerning behaviours • 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	• Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim • May include elements of expressive violence	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator • Sadism


Healthy/ Normal
Inappropriate
Problematic
Abusive
Violent
• Developmentally expected
• Socially acceptable
• Consensual, mutual, reciprocal
• Shared decision making
• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour
• Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group
• Context for behaviour may be inappropriate
• Generally consensual and reciprocal
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
• 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
• Physically violent sexual abuse
• Highly intrusive
• Instrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour
• Sadism
Additional considerations for determining level of harm
Single occurrence
Frequency
Repeated instance or pattern
No overt elements of discrimination
Elements of discrimination
E.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability
No evidence of pre-planning
Pre-planning
Evidence of pre-planning
No overt elements of power difference
Difference in power or authority of those involved
Power imbalance e.g. social status
Limited impact/effect on victim/s
Effect on the victim/s
Traumatising effect on victim/s
No attempts made
Attempts to intimidate victim/witness
Attempts to keep harm a secret
No other risk factors
Wider contexts
Further risk factors in family/neighbourhood/peers


Healthy/ Normal
Inappropriate
Problematic
Abusive
Violent
Manage within school
'Grey' Areas
Referral to Early Help/ Social Care/ Police
Manage within schools
Create Flow-chart for process including outcomes and support
Grey areas
Create Flow-chart for process including outcomes and support
Referral to Police/ Social care
Create Flow-chart for process including outcomes and support


PART FOUR:
RESPONSE TO REPORTS
Summary of responses
REPORT RECEIVED
(from the victim or third-party)
[Onsite, offsite or online]
Definitions
Sexual Violence
Rape
Assault by penetration
Sexual assault
Sexual Harassment
Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, including sexual remarks, sexual taunts, physical behaviour or online sexual harassment
Victim reassured
taken seriously and kept safe
confidentiality not promised
listen to victim, non-judgementally
record the disclosure (facts as reported)
two staff present (one being the DSL, or reported to DSL as soon as possible)
victim sensitively informed about referral to other agencies
if victim does not give consent to share, staff may still lawfully share in order to protect child from harm and to promote the welfare of children (see 'Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment' paragraph 43)
parents of victim informed
Anonymity
Note that in cases of sexual violence there is legal protection of the victim's identity. Remember that this also includes sharing on social media and discussion amongst pupils in the school.
Record-keeping
Remember, to record all concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions.
Considerations
(Sexual Violence, Sexual Harassment and Harmful Sexual Behaviours)
Immediately: Consider how to support the victim and the alleged perpetrator
wishes of the victim
nature of the alleged incident
ages of the children
development stage of the child
any power imbalance
one-off, or part of a pattern of behaviour
any ongoing risks
other related issues and wider context
MANAGE INTERNALLY
One-off incidents which the school believes that the child(ren) are not in need of early help or statutory intervention, which would be appropriate to deal with internally under the school's behaviour policy or anti-bullying policy.
EARLY HELP
Non-violent Harmful Sexual Behaviours
(see Harmful Sexual Behaviours Framework (NSPCC) and the Brook Traffic Light Tool)
REFER TO SOCIAL CARE
All incidents where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm or is in immediate danger.
Social Care staff will decide next steps. Be ready to escalate if necessary.
REFER TO POLICE
All incidents of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault.
Discuss next steps with police, for example, disclosing information to other staff, informing alleged perpetrator and their parents.
RISK ASSESSMENT
Case-by-case basis
RISK ASSESSMENT
Immediately
Do not wait for outcome of referral before protecting victim.
Emphasis on victim being able to continue normal routines.
Alleged perpetrator removed from any classes with victim (also consider shared spaces and journey to/from school)
[Not a judgement of guilt]
SAFEGUARD AND SUPPORT VICTIM AND (ALLEGED) PERPETRATOR
(see separate page)
SAFEGUARD AND SUPPORT VICTIM AND (ALLEGED) PERPETRATOR
(see separate page)
DISCIPLINARY MEASURES TAKEN
(see school's Behaviour Policy/Anti-bullying Policy)
DISCIPLINARY MEASURES TAKEN
(may be undertaken based on balance of probabilities, unless prejudicial or unreasonable)
Ensure actions do not jepordise the investigation
School to work closely with police and/or other agencies
CRIMINAL PROCESS ENDS
Conviction or Caution: follow behaviour policy, consider Permanent Exclusion. If pupil remains in school, make clear expectations; keep victim and perpetrator apart. Consider victim's wishes.
Not Guilty: Support victim and alleged perpetrator
No Further Action: Support victim and alleged perpetrator
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Source:
Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children in schools and colleges (DfE, 2017)
SVSH Flow Chart for Schools 2017 v.1.0

12. Sources of Further Information

11.1. DfE: Statutory guidance: Working together to safeguard children, 2026 Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK

11.2. DfE: Statutory guidance: Keeping children safe in education, September 2026 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

11.3. DfE: Searching, screening and confiscation at school, updated Sept2023 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation

11.4. DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying, July 2017 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying

11.5. DfE: Statutory guidance School exclusion, updated 2026 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion

11.6. DfE: Teaching Online Safety in Schools, June 2019 updated January 2023 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools

11.7. DfE: Relationship Education and Relationship and Sex Education, July 2020 updated December 2025 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex- education-rse-and-health-education

11.8. DfE: Behaviour and discipline in schools, July 2020 updated 2024 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-and-discipline-in-schools

11.9. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2 DfE: Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/promoting-and-supporting-mental-health-and-wellbeing-in-schools-and-colleges

11.10. DfE: Children Missing Education, September 2016 updated Sept 2025 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education

11.11. DfE: Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff, November 2014 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/374850/Cyberbullying_Advice_for_Headteachers_and_School_Staff_121114.pdf

11.12. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-how-to-respond-to-an-incident-overview March 2024

11.13. UKCIS: Tackling race and faith targeted bullying face to face and online. May 2017 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-race-and-faith-targeted-bullying-face-to-face-and-online-a-guide-for-schools

11.14. UKCIS: Education for a connected world, June 2020 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-a-connected-world

11.15. West Midlands Safeguarding Children Procedures (adopted by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership) https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/

11.16. Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/

11.17. Brook Traffic Light Tool https://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light- tool/

11.18. Gov.uk: Equality Act 2010: advice for schools https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools

11.19. Equality and Human Rights Commission: Public Sector Equality Duty Guidance for Schools in England https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/public-sector-equality-duty- guidance-schools-england

11.20. Key messages from research on children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour https://www.csacentre.org.uk/find-a-support-service/

11.21. NPCC- When to call the police https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/publications/publications-log/2020/when-to-call-the-police--guidance-for-schools-and-colleges.pdf

11.22. Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges: Ofsted June 2021

11.23. The Lucy Faithfull Foundation has developed a HSB toolkit, which amongst other things, provides support, advice and information on how to prevent it, links to organisations and helplines, resources about HSB by children, internet safety, sexual development and preventing child sexual abuse. https://ecsa.lucyfaithfull.org/toolkit

11.24. The Lucy Faithfull Foundation in collaboration with the Home Office, has developed 'Shore Space', an online resource which works to prevent harmful sexual behaviour. Shore Space offers a confidential chat service supporting young people who are concerned about their own or someone else's sexual thoughts and behaviour. https://shorespace.org.uk/

11.25. StopItNow – Preventing harmful sexual behaviour in children - Stop It Now provides a guide for parents, carers and professionals to help everyone do their part in keeping children safe, they also run a free confidential helpline. https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/resources/

ANNEX A
Risk Assessment

Basic Information	
Referrer Name and Role	
Referrer Contact Details (email address and phone number)	
Name of School(s) for Victim(s)	
Name of School(s) for Child/ren Alleged to have Caused Harm	
Did Incident Occur on School Premises? If not, where did the Incident Occur?	

CONSIDERATIONS	RISK (CONSIDER VICTIM, CHILD ALLEGED TO HAVE CAUSED HARM, OTHER PUPILS AND STAFF)	RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)	ACTIONS TO REDUCE RISK	REVISED RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)
● What is the incident? ● Who was involved? ● Where did it happen				
● Does this incident constitute a crime? Assault, sexual assault, rape, sharing of indecent images of children, etc. As such has this been referred to the police?				
● Is it necessary to limit contact between the children involved? Refer to KCSiE and DFE guidance on sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools and colleges.				
● Is there an actual or perceived threat from the child alleged to have caused harm to the victim and/or others?				

CONSIDERATIONS	RISK (CONSIDER VICTIM, CHILD ALLEGED TO HAVE CAUSED HARM, OTHER PUPILS AND STAFF)	RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)	ACTIONS TO REDUCE RISK	REVISED RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)
● Is either the victim or the child alleged to have caused harm at risk of physical harm as a result of this incident (for example, bullying or 'retribution' by peers)?				
● Do they share classes?				
● Do they share break times? ● Do they share peer/friendship groups?				
● Do they share transport to/from school?				
● Are they likely to come into contact with each other (or anyone else involved in/with knowledge of the incident) outside of school?				
● How can such contact be limited?				
● Is there a risk of harm from social media and gossip?				

Further action taken by the School (please complete for Pupil involved)

Name of Pupil			
Action	Yes/No	Date	Name of Member of Staff Responsible for Action
Police informed			
Referral to Family Front Door			
Referral to External Support Services (give name)			
Referral to Internal Support Services (give name)			
Referral to CAMHS			
Referral to Early Help			
Other			