



See also :

- Safeguarding Policy*
- Staff Code of Conduct*
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2021)*
- Sexual Violence and Sexual Harrassment between Children (DfE 2021)*
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (DfE 2015)*
- When to call the police (NPCC)*

This policy can be found on page 19-21 of the College's Safeguarding policy (7a).

Procedures for dealing with peer on peer abuse

The College seeks to promote an environment where students feel able to discuss their concerns with a member of staff. Situations involving student to student abuse will be taken very seriously, taking into account the needs of those involved under the guidance of the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Where a student is suspected of causing harm to another student the usual Designated Safeguarding procedures will be followed. Staff should be mindful that no reports of peer on peer abuse does not mean that it does not happen in the college and they should pass on any concerns directly to the DSLs. Additionally, staff should feel able to challenge inappropriate language and action between peers rather than dismiss it as banter or part of growing up, adopting a zero tolerance approach. Terms such as 'victim' and 'perpetrator' should be avoided when communicating with students and parents or carers as individuals may not associate with these terms and the college recognises that alleged perpetrators may also themselves have been the victims of abuse.

Peer on peer abuse can occur between any number of children, of any age, gender or culture. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and staff must remain alert to the reality that it could happen here and to report all concerns. The College's unique mix of students has areas that should be considered as higher risk to being subjected to peer on peer abuse. Staff should be aware of the potential risk of the following: an initially higher ratio of males to females in the lower years followed by increased numbers of females joining post or during puberty; mixed aged students within year groups, peer groups and classes; boarding facilities; a high proportion of students with SEND; a variety of cultural backgrounds; and a high proportion of students identifying amongst the LGBTQI+ community.

Peer on peer abuse can take many forms including of a physical nature or sexual nature. Bullying and cyberbullying should be considered as peer on peer abuse. A bullying incident should be treated as a safeguarding concern where there is 'reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm', for example through violent or sexually abusive behaviour. Additionally, abuse can occur between individuals in a relationship or perceived friendship as well as between strangers.

Instances of peer on peer abuse may include one, or several, of the following online activity and sharing nudes and semi-nudes (previously referred to as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery), as well as sexual violence, sexual harassment (which can include sexual comments, remarks or jokes occurring in person or online and may be standalone or part of wider abuse), upskirting (which is now a criminal offence, the victim can be of any gender and typically involves taking a picture under someone's clothing, without them knowing, to view their genitals or buttocks for sexual gratification or to cause the victim harm or distress) and physical abuse. It can also include specific gender issues, such as girls being sexually touched or assaulted by boys or initiation-type violence and humiliation (known as hazing). It can also occur in intimate partner relationships between peers. DSLs should consider each concern individually and take prompt and appropriate action. Concerns that reach the local authority thresholds should be reported to the local authority social care department and, in the case of a serious or criminal allegation, such as rape or assault by penetration, the police. All children involved would be offered support through tutors, the College nurse and the DSLs, outside agencies and via independent counsellors where necessary. The College recognises that peer on peer abuse may involve individuals from other settings and will take appropriate action to ensure necessary parties are informed in these instances. Peer on peer abuse can be complex and vary significantly between cases.

With particular reference to sharing nudes or semi-nudes, whilst sharing photos and online content is part of daily life for young people, there are risks associated with the production and distribution of sexual images, not only relating to the law but also a young person's wellbeing, especially if the material is shared beyond their control. Staff should refer to the DSL any instances or suspicion of sharing nudes or semi-nudes. The student concerned is likely to be very embarrassed and anxious about the consequences and the situation must be dealt with sensitively.

Staff must not ask to view the image but confiscate the device on which the image is held and pass it on to the DSL who, in conjunction with the principal, will follow the guidance in 'Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding young people'. Some but not all instances, according to this guidance, will need to be reported to the police and in cases where referral to outside agencies is not necessary designated staff will work with the student to support and re-educate them. In any event the sharing of sexual imagery of those under 18 by adults constitutes child sexual abuse and will therefore be referred to the police.

The initial response to a report of sexual harassment or sexual violence from a child is important. It is essential that all students are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A student should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a student ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. If staff have a concern about a child or a child makes a report to them, they should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy). All students involved should be offered full support and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) will assess the matter on a case by case basis. This may include contacting social services, the police and managing the situation within

the College setting. DSLs should produce risk assessments for students involved with sexual violence and sexual harassment concerns and review as necessary as the investigations continue. Staff must be vigilant in their approach to incidents of this nature, recognising that students may not be willing to make a disclosure. Information may initially come from recognising indicators in students' conversations and behaviours. How settings respond is seen to influence confidence for others to disclose. More guidance on these procedures can be found in Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe In Education 2021, When to call the police NPCC, what to do if you are worried a child is being abused 2105 and in Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children 2021 (SVSH 21). Senior leadership and pastoral staff are expected to read Part 3 of SVSH 21.

The College ethos of mutual respect and tolerance and our expectations of behaviour are clearly outlined in our good behaviour and sanctions policy, as well as in PHSE lessons and also from the support given to students by form and personal tutors. Serious matters concerning peer on peer abuse would be considered a breach of our good behaviour policy and result in disciplinary action being taken. Staff training to deal with peer on peer abuse is ongoing and all staff will be trained to manage a report of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

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