

SAFEGUARDING

Balcarras School is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all young people and this includes:

- Protecting children from all forms of maltreatment
- Preventing the impairment of a young person's health and development
- Ensuring young people grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

Keeping young people safe is everyone's responsibility. All those working within our school community, whatever their role, has a responsibility to ensure the safeguarding of pupils at Balcarras.

DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead)	Miss L McCarthy
DDSL (Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads)	Mrs A Niblett Mrs E Derrick
Safeguarding Leads	Mr P Amor, Mrs S Winterbottom, Miss A Niblett Mr D Leatherbarrow
Safeguarding Governor	Laura Williams

OVERVIEW

Balcarras School is committed to the safeguarding of all pupils at Balcarras School. Our aim is to ensure that all pupils are safe in our school and that measures are in place to support any child who is at risk of harm. This policy should be read alongside the School's

- Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding & Safer Working Practice Protocol
- Bullying Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Whistle Blowing Procedure
- Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety (and Fire) Policy
- SEND and Inclusion Policy

and other relevant documentation.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; the Education Act 2002, and in line with government publications: 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', Revised Safeguarding Statutory Guidance 2 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' 2000, 'What to do if You are Worried a Child is Being Abused' 2003. The

guidance reflects guidance in the most recent version of the document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

The Governing body takes seriously its responsibility under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and to work together with other agencies to ensure adequate arrangements within our school to identify, assess, and support those children who are suffering harm.

We recognise that all adults, including temporary staff, volunteers and governors, have a full and active part to play in protecting our pupils from harm, and that the child's protection and welfare are our paramount concerns.

All staff believe that our school should provide a caring, positive safe and stimulating environment that promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child.

LINKS

This policy is linked to South West Child Protection Procedures:
www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/

THE AIMS OF THIS POLICY ARE:

1. To support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence.
2. To provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and feel confident, and know how to approach adults if they are in difficulties, believing they will be effectively listened to.
3. To raise the awareness of all teaching and non-teaching staff of the need to safeguard children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse
4. To provide a systematic means of monitoring children known or thought to be at risk of harm, and ensure we, the school, contribute to assessments of need and support packages for those children.
5. To emphasise the need for good levels of communication between all members of staff.
6. To develop a structured procedure within the school which will be followed by all members of the school community in cases of suspected abuse.
7. To develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies, especially the Police and Social Care.

8. To ensure that all staff working within our school who have substantial access to children have been checked as to their suitability, including verification of their identity, qualifications, and a satisfactory DBS check, and a central record is kept for audit.
9. To follow good, safe practice when recruiting new staff. This includes following safe practice when getting references, when interviewing candidates, when checking candidate's backgrounds and qualifications and ensuring that we do everything reasonable to ensure new staff are recruited safely to minimise the risk of harm to the pupils of the school.

SAFE SCHOOL, SAFE STAFF

We will ensure that:

All members of the governing body understand and fulfil their responsibilities, namely to ensure that:

1. there is a Child Protection policy together with a code of conduct for employees
2. the school operates safer recruitment procedures by ensuring that there is at least one person on every recruitment panel that has completed Safer Recruitment training
3. the school has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers and to make a referral to the DBS if a person in regulated activity has been dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns, or would have had they not resigned.
4. a senior leader has Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) responsibility
5. on appointment, the DSLs undertake all of the necessary training to fulfill the role
6. all other staff have Safeguarding training updated as appropriate
7. all staff are provided with part 1 and Annex B of KCSIE
8. any weaknesses in Child Protection are remedied immediately
9. a member of the Governing Body has overall responsibility for safeguarding
10. Child Protection policies and procedures are reviewed annually and that the Child Protection policy is available on the school website
11. that enhanced DBS checks are in place for the Chair of Governors

EARLY HELP

Staff understand the importance of Early Help in assisting any pupil. Staff will always inform the DSL or a Head of House immediately whenever they have concerns about a child.

The pastoral team is committed to helping all pupils, including those that are most vulnerable, to achieve their potential. When a member of staff passes on a concern, the pastoral team will ensure that every issue is considered carefully and appropriate help and advice is provided.

If additional support is required, or external agencies need to be involved in the case, then the support will be escalated and the appropriate agencies will be informed.

Where necessary a discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) about appropriate action/support will take place. Often, many pupils' problems can be quickly and easily resolved, by a discussion with the relevant Head of House and appropriate action put into place by the school.

LOW LEVEL CONCERNS

Balcarras ensures that it has an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the school are dealt with promptly and appropriately. Balcarras works hard to promote a culture in which all concerns about adults are shared responsibly and with the right person. Balcarras ensures that all concerns are recorded and dealt with appropriately.

To ensure this happens, Balcarras will:

- aim to identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour early
- ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the school are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of Balcarras.

Definition:

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work
- does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children
- having favourites
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to school policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- acting in a way that humiliates a child.

CHILD PROTECTION

The procedures and policies of the school with regard to Child Protection are clearly set out in the school's Child Protection Policy

DSL RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the DSL are clearly set out in the school's Child Protection Policy

SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Procedures and policies for supporting children, to minimize risk of harm, are clearly set out in the school's Child Protection Policy

CONFIDENTIALITY

1. We recognise that all matters relating to child protection are confidential.
2. The Headteacher or DSLs will disclose any information about a child to other members of staff on a need to know basis only.
3. All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.
4. All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or wellbeing.
5. We will always undertake to share our intention to refer a child to Social Care with their parents /carers unless to do so could put the child at greater risk of harm, or impede a criminal investigation. If in doubt, we will consult with an Assistant Team Manager at the Children's Services Area Team on this point.

SUPPORTING STAFF

1. We recognise that staff working in the school who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm may find the situation stressful and upsetting.
2. We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the DSL and to seek further support as appropriate.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF

1. All school staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults.
2. All staff should be aware of guidance on Behaviour Issues, and the school's own Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding Protocol.
3. We understand that a pupil may make an allegation against a member of staff.
4. If such an allegation is made, or information is received which suggests that a person may be unsuitable to work with children, the member of staff receiving the allegation or aware of the information, will immediately inform the Headteacher
5. The Headteacher on all such occasions will discuss the content of the allegation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
6. If the allegation made to a member of staff concerns the Headteacher, the person receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Chair of Governors.
7. Suspension of the member of staff, excluding the Headteacher, against whom an allegation has been made, needs careful consideration, and the Headteacher will seek the advice of the LADO and Personnel Consultant in making this decision.
8. In the event of an allegation against the Headteacher, the decision to suspend will be made by the Chair of Governors.

WHISTLE-BLOWING

Procedures and policies for whistle blowing are clearly set out in the school's Whistle Blowing Policy.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

The school's approach to dealing with Domestic Abuse is detailed in the Child Protection Policy.

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

1. We acknowledge that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, when a child is endangering him/herself or others, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury to another person.
2. Such events should be recorded and signed by a witness.

3. Staff who are likely to need to use physical intervention will be appropriately trained.
4. We understand that physical intervention of a nature which causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under child protection or disciplinary procedures.
5. We recognise that touch is appropriate in the context of working with children, and all staff have been given guidance to ensure they are clear about their professional boundary.

BULLYING

Procedures and policies for dealing with bullying are clearly set out in the school's Bullying Policy. The school has a no-tolerance approach to bullying of any kind.

CHILD ON CHILD ABUSE

Abuse can take many forms and Balcarras recognises that child on child abuse can take many forms. The school is firm in its belief that abuse of any form is not acceptable and all abuse will be followed up by staff and sanctioned appropriately.

Child on child abuse could be of the form:

- **Physical** - biting, hitting kicking, hair pulling etc.
- **Sexual** – inappropriate language, touching, assault etc.
- **Bullying** – name calling, physical, isolating etc.
- **Cyber Bullying**
- **Sexting**
- **Hazing** – initiating
- **Prejudiced behaviour** – due to background, faith culture etc.
- **Gender Based Violence**

All abuse will be treated seriously. Pupils will be listened to whenever they report abuse and staff will ensure all matters are thoroughly investigated. Where appropriate other pupils will be asked about the incident to ensure that the facts are accurate. Where necessary sanctions will be applied and parents will be kept informed of the progress of all incidents.

Repeated abuse or more extreme abuse will lead to increasingly firmer sanctions being applied in line with the school's sanctions guidance.

To minimise **Child on Child Abuse**, the school will ensure that every incident is taken seriously and will apply appropriate and measured sanctions to minimise the risk of further abuse taking place.

All **Child on Child Abuse** will be recorded on the school's CPOMS system and a considered list of staff will be made aware of the incident via the CPOMS system.

The school understands that, following an incident of **Child on Child Abuse**, it may be necessary to support pupils with their emotions. These pupils might be the victims, but might also be witnesses to the event or even the perpetrators. The school has an excellent support network of staff, including the tutors, Deputy Heads of House and Heads of House. Where necessary support procedures will be put in place, based on discussion with the pupil.

Balcarras strongly believes that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up”. Balcarras recognises that girls might be more likely to be victims than boys, but that all child on child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Mental Health

Balcarras School understands that we have a central role to play in enabling pupils to be resilient and to support good mental health and wellbeing. Balcarras School promotes good mental wellbeing for all pupils.

Balcarras School’s approach to mental health and behaviour is part of a consistent whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. This involves providing a structured school environment with clear expectations of behaviour, well communicated social norms and routines, which are reinforced with highly consistent consequence systems. This is paired with an individualised graduated response when the behavioural issues might be a result of educational, mental health, other needs or vulnerabilities.

Balcarras School understand that staff cannot act as mental health experts and should not try to diagnose conditions. However, there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems.

Balcarras School has a good understanding of the local services available, including school nurses, and how and when to draw on or commission them. Where required, Balcarras School will make clear the expectation that parents and pupils need to seek and receive support elsewhere, including from their GP, NHS services, trained professionals working in specialist mental health support organisations and other sources.

What helps good mental health?

Balcarras understands that for children to remain mentally well they need:

- good physical health (including good diet and regular exercise).
- to be able to explore and develop interests (through their environment, play and interaction with others).
- to feel part of a family (feeling as though they belong, get along with others, are loved, valued and safe).
- to be supported to learn, be optimistic and feel that they have a say.
- to feel part of the Balcarras School Community.
- to be supported to cope when things do not go well.

- to be supported to learn how to problem solve.

Upskirting

" '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 now a criminal offence and may constitute sexual harassment."

Any reports of "upskirting" will be taken very seriously. Balcarras staff are aware how distressing this can be for the victim and a thorough investigation will follow on from any report of upskirting. Where upskirting has taken place, appropriate sanctions will be put into place and parents informed. The DSL will be involved in all decisions about appropriate sanctions.

CHILD ON CHILD SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are likely to be complex and require difficult professional decisions to be made, often quickly and under pressure. Balcarras will ensure that strategies are in place and lines of communication are strong, so that the best decisions can be made whenever an incident is disclosed. The initial response from the school is important and victims will always be reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. The school will ensure that the DSL and all relevant members of the pastoral support team are involved and discussion will always take place as regards to the best course of action, to both support the victim but also ensure that correct procedures are followed.

Wherever necessary Balcarras will inform outside agencies fully and promptly of the incident and continue to communicate with any agencies as the incidents are investigated.

Consideration will be given to

- The ages of the children involved
- The nature of the allegation
- The wishes of the victim
- The developmental stages of the children involved
- Any power imbalance between the children
- Any patterns of abuse that might exist
- Ongoing risks
- Other related issues

At all stages the support and safeguarding of the children will be a prime focus. This includes the safeguarding of the victim, but also the safeguarding of the perpetrator, to ensure any further harm is minimised.

PREVENTION

The procedures and policies of the school with regard to prevention of harm and support for pupils are clearly set out in the school's Child Protection Policy

HEALTH & SAFETY

The procedures and policies of the school with regard to health and safety are clearly set out in the school's Health and Safety (and Fire) Policy

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Balcarras will use alternative provision to provide education where the school judges it to be in the interest of the pupil or in the interest of the other pupils at the school. Balcarras primarily uses Abbey View School as the main alternative provision provider. Balcarras will always ensure that the safeguarding policies of any alternative provider are thorough and in line with expectations Balcarras has for the safeguarding of pupils. Balcarras will request verification that any alternative provision provider carries out the necessary DBS checks and other checks required for working with pupils.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

A senior teacher will be assigned to the role of designated teacher in charge of looked after children (and previously looked after children). The designated lead will ensure that all looked after children are identified and all guidance followed in the care and monitoring of all the looked after children at Balcarras School.

SEXTING

Balcarras School takes the issue of "Sexting" very seriously. We have consulted with the police on best practice. In the event that the school becomes aware that a pupil may have images on his/her phone (or other electronic device) of an inappropriate nature the school will:

- Take the phone from the pupil.
- Contact the parents and ask them to collect the phone from school at a time convenient to them
- Ask the parents to not return the phone to the pupil until the parents are confident all images have been wiped and if necessary the phone returned to factory settings.

We will always liaise closely with the police over issues of sexting.

Staff should also reference to the "**Safeguarding & Safer Working Practice Protocol**".

SPECIAL NEEDS (SEND)

The procedures and policies of the school with regard to SEND are set out clearly in the SEND Policy. As with all pupils, early indicators of possible abuse will always be reported immediately and not assumed to be related to the Child's SEND.

ONLINE SAFETY

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation and extremism.
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: child on child 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’.
- **conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying; and
- **commerce** - risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams.

The school uses the South West Grid for learning to filter all information available via the school’s internet. The ICT Team monitor closely computer usage and attempted breaches of the school filter. Wherever the team encounter a concern (such as an inappropriate search, trying to download non permitted files, attempts to damage the school system, attempting to view sites with possible links to radicalisation etc.) these concerns will always be reported to the relevant Head of House and the matter is always fully investigated and appropriate action taken.

RADICALISATION

There is no place for extremist views of any kind at Balcarras School. This includes pupils, parents, staff, governors and outside agencies working in the school. Pupils at Balcarras see the school as a safe place where they can explore controversial issues safely and where teachers ensure this is facilitated professionally. All staff have a duty to manage this safely.

Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation is seen as part of Balcarras Schools’ wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other forms of harm and abuse. During the process of radicalisation it is sometimes possible to intervene to prevent vulnerable people being radicalised.

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism. There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. It can happen in many different ways.

Balcarras will help prevent radicalisation of pupils by:

- Monitoring behaviour of pupils and passing on any concerns promptly.
- Build pupils' resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views.
- Monitoring ICT access and ensuring that the school internet filter does not allow extremist websites to be viewed by pupils at the school.

Balcarras will keep under constant review the potential radicalisation of pupils and ensure that it is regularly discussed at pastoral meetings. Any concerns about the radicalisation of pupils at the school will be immediately passed on to the correct authority.

DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

Before any drama production goes ahead, a careful check will be made to ensure that the content of the production is suitable for the age of the pupils involved (both performing and watching the performance). The Head of Drama will complete a declaration for all performances, making clear that the work has been carefully considered and judged by the Head of Drama to be age appropriate.

APPENDIX 1

Further advice on child protection is available from:

- NSPCC: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/>
- Childline: <http://www.childline.org.uk/pages/home.aspx>
- CEOPSThinkuknow: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>
- Anti-Bullying Alliance: <http://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/>
- Beat Bullying: <http://www.beatbullying.org/>
- Leaflet on Child on Child Abuse – Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership - 01452 583 629 gscp@gloucestershire.gov.uk
- The Multi Agency safeguarding hub - 01452 42 6565 childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk
- Operation Encompass – LSP – multi agency approach.
- Gloucestershire rape and sexual abuse centre - 01452 526770 - info@glosrasac.org.uk
- Gloucestershire victim support 0808 281 0112 - victimsupport.org.uk
- NSPCC helpline Report Abuse in Education on 0800 136 663 - help@nspcc.org.uk

APPENDIX 2

Missing Pupil Protocol

This protocol covers pupils who go missing during the school day.

OVERVIEW

Pupils are not permitted to leave the premises during the school day except if agreed and by prior arrangement with the school. It is possible that on some occasions a pupil may leave the premises without the knowledge or permission of the school. This protocol is in place to ensure that every action possible is taken to ensure the quick and safe return of that pupil to the school.

OBJECTIVES

1. To locate any missing pupil quickly.
2. To ensure that all pupils are kept safely on the school premises during school hours.
3. To ensure that pupils who leave school during the school day only do so with the school's permission and that parents are fully aware of the circumstances.
4. To ensure that teachers and staff keep pupils under proper supervision at all times.
5. To ensure that if a pupil 'goes missing' during the school day, he/she is located quickly and returned safely to the school.

STRATEGIES

1. If a pupil cannot be found by their subject teacher, then in the first instance the Head of House, the Assistant Head of House, Head of Sixth Form or Head of Year, should be informed promptly.
2. If the HoH/ HoH/ Ho6th/ 6thHoY are not available, then the incident should be referred promptly to another HoH or the Assistant Head i/c pastoral.
3. It is important that the following information is given:
 - when was the pupil last seen,
 - from which lesson is the pupil missing (room and subject),
 - are there any particular circumstances surrounding the pupil that may lead to the pupil leaving the school site
4. The remaining pupils will be left safe in the care of the subject teacher.
5. The HoH / Ho6th will recruit available staff to conduct a thorough search for the pupil including:
 - Pupil toilets
 - The library
 - Play areas (playground, backfield)
 - The school buildings
 - The school grounds
6. The HOH / Ho6th will charge the ICT technicians to view CCTV footage for any images of the missing pupil.

7. The HoH / Ho6th will ensure that no students are asked to be involved in searching for the missing pupil, either on site or off site.
8. If the search is unsuccessful, the HoH / Ho6th will then phone parents and inform them of the situation. The parents will be asked to check at home and also with close relatives/family friends where the pupil might have gone.
9. If the child has a social worker, then the HoH / Ho6th will phone and inform the social worker.
10. If the pupil is not found within a reasonable (determined by the school) period of time, the police must be called by the HoH / Ho6th.
11. Available members of staff will be sent to search the area in the immediate vicinity of the school.

School Trips

1. If a pupil goes missing during an outing or school visit, the teacher in charge must ensure that the remaining pupils are safely cared for by the other staff and adults.
2. An urgent and thorough search should be made of the immediate vicinity and if the pupil is not found quickly the police must be called.
3. The trip leader will contact the school and appraise of the situation.
4. A pastoral leader will be assigned to the situation. The pastoral leader will phone the parents and inform them of the situation.
5. If the pupil is found the trip leader must call the school immediately to inform of the situation.
6. The pastoral leader will phone the parents to pass on the news.

Whenever a child returns from being missing, a discussion will take place with the child and a member of the pastoral team to discuss the incident and look at strategies to avoid the same event occurring again in the future. Parents will also be involved in this review and, where necessary, other agencies will be involved to help avoid the child going missing again.

Appendix 3
Child on Child Abuse Leaflet

Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership



Safeguarding in Education Team

Child on Child Abuse
Information leaflet for staff

August 2021



Child on Child ABUSE

Child on Child abuse can take various forms and include serious bullying, relationship abuse, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or gender based violence.

This form of abuse occurs when there is any kind of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse or coercive control exercised between young people. It includes bullying, cyberbullying, sexual violence, harassment and sexting.

It should be recognised that the behaviour in question is harmful to both the perpetrator (who is the young person) and the victim. Behaviour may be intimate or non-intimate.

DEFINITION:

Young people can abuse other young people. This is generally referred to as child on child abuse and can take many forms. This can include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers; causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent; consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi nudes images and or videos; upskirting and initiating/hazard type violence and rituals Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021

SPOTTING THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- absence from setting or disengagement from setting activities
- physical injuries
- mental or emotional health issues
- becoming withdrawn – lack of self esteem
- lack of sleep
- alcohol or substance misuse
- changes in behaviour
- inappropriate behaviour for age
- abusive towards others

VULNERABLE GROUPS:

- abuse can happen to anyone at any age. Both boys and girls can be victims;
- black and minority ethnic young people often under identified as victims and over-identified as perpetrators;
- young people with intra-familial abuse in their histories or those living with domestic abuse are more likely to be vulnerable;
- young people in care and those who have experienced loss of a parent, sibling or friend through bereavement;
- young people with SEND are three times more likely to be abused than their peers;
- young people who have been abused or have abused their peers.

Abusers can be younger than their victims.

It is important to remember that as with all safeguarding issues, child on child abuse can impact on young people without these characteristics. The issue facing professionals is that these characteristics will often make the young person more visible, whilst those without any of the characteristics above may be less likely to come into contact with professionals.

For example, when a young person goes missing from care (even for a small amount of time) the professional network will know about it, whilst if a young person regularly returns home later than their curfew their parents may not necessarily tell anyone. It is therefore important to look at interlinking factors and not isolated incidents.

CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING AND POWER DYNAMICS

It is important to recognise that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts as they form different relationships in their neighbourhoods, educational setting and online and these can feature violence and abuse which is often hidden to adults. Peer influence and pressure is a major factor in decisions made by young people to join groups. Keeping Children Safe in Education highlights the importance of awareness of factors across an educational setting's local community so they understand where young people are living, who they come into contact with and the dynamics at play.

Understanding the power dynamic that can exist between young people is very important in helping to identify and respond to child on child abuse – there will be a power imbalance and this may be due to age or status – social or economic – and the perpetrator in one situation may be the powerless victim in another so it is essential to try to understand the perpetrator and what is driving the behaviour before taking sanctions.

A thorough investigation of the concerns should take place to include any wider contexts which may be known. However, the victim should always be made to feel safe and actions will need to be taken to separate victim and perpetrator and ensure that the abuse is not allowed to continue. The issues of the interplay between power, choice and consent should be explored with young people.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Create an environment based on equality and informed choice** allowing young people to know their rights, what to do if they are unhappy with something and what it means to give true consent.
- **It could happen here** – staff having the attitude to believe that is happening in your setting even without disclosures.
- **Understand your local community** and the context in which young people at your setting are growing up.
- **Ensure young people know the risks** – talk about child on child abuse in an age appropriate way. Create opportunities for young people to weigh up risks and recognise that sometimes this means they will take risks we as adults and professionals disagree with. Our role is to be influencing young people to be making the healthiest long-term choices and keeping them safe from harm in the short-term.
- **Check young people have safe relationships** – in their family, with their peers and with your staff. Create the environment where it is OK to talk, even about the most difficult things.
- **Spot the signs and know what to do** – use the checklists above along with your safeguarding procedures and be confident to raise child on child as a possibility.

Child on Child Sexual Abuse
What to do if a young person makes a disclosure:

Make sure you understand your child protection/safeguarding policy and procedures for dealing with **child on child** abuse, and follow these.

Do

Listen and reassure the young person that they will be supported and kept safe

Make a written record as soon as possible, stating only the facts

Tell your Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately

Where appropriate, take action yourself:

- If the young person is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, make a referral to children’s social care
- If an offence has been committed, report it to the police (even if the alleged perpetrator is under 10 – the age of criminal responsibility)

Find out whether the victim and alleged perpetrator share classes, premises or transport, and consider how best to deal with this

Don't

Dismiss the incident as ‘banter’, ‘part of growing up’ or ‘having a laugh’

Ask any leading questions

Promise total confidentiality – explain who you will need to tell and why

View photos or videos of a sexual nature. If you do so by accident or think you might need to in order to deal with the issue effectively, talk to our DSL

Take notes while the young person is talking, if at all possible

Tell anyone about the disclosure unless they need to know in order to progress it

DEFINITIONS:

Child-on-child sexual abuse: when a young person (anyone under the age of 18) commits an act of sexual violence or harassment against another young person

Sexual violence: rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault (intentional sexual touching)

Sexual harassment: unwanted conduct of a sexual nature – such as sexual comments, sexual jokes or taunting, physical behaviour like interfering with clothes, or online harassment such as sexting

Sexual activity is an offence if:

- Person B (the victim) does not consent
- Person A (the perpetrator) does not reasonably believe that Person B consents

Someone consents if they:

- Agree by choice
- Have the freedom and capacity to choose

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub – MASH tel: 01452 426565 Option 1

Gloucestershire Safeguarding Education Partnership
gsep@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Local Authority Designated Officers for Allegations

LADO – Nigel Hatten and Rosalind Waters tel: 01452 426994
amadmin@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Legal Services tel: 01452 328746

Police

Gloucestershire Police tel: 101

References:

Safeguarding Network (2021) - <https://safeguarding.network/safeguarding-resources/peer-peer-abuse/>

The Key