



**Child on Child Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance**  
**Including sexual violence and sexual harassment between children**

|                            |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Ratifying Committee</b> | Health, Safety & Safeguarding |
| <b>Date</b>                | <b>July 2025</b>              |
| <b>Review</b>              | <b>Annually</b>               |

1. Context and definition
2. Responsibility
3. Framework and legislation
4. Abuse and harmful behaviour
5. Types of abuse
6. The response to child-on-child abuse

## 1. Context and Definition.

The purpose of the Child-on-Child Abuse Policy is to ensure that all forms of child-on-child abuse, across a spectrum of behaviours, including concerns/allegations of inappropriate behaviour through to sexual assault are fully understood by staff working with children. Action the appropriate approach and response and adopt a zero tolerance to all forms of child-on-child abuse. This policy sits alongside The Bridge Child Protection and Safeguarding policy, please also see the school behaviour policy. The Child-on-Child Abuse toolkit and Child on Child abuse internal risk assessment also provides further supporting information.

Child on Child abuse is defined as being for those under the age of 18. The Bridge adopts a wider interpretation of its safeguarding responsibilities to that they apply to all students, regardless of their age.

Child-on-child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control exercised between children, and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships, and wider child associations intended to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others.

The Bridge School will ensure that staff are aware that children are capable of abusing other children. All staff will receive regular training in how to recognise and be aware of safeguarding issues including from child on child abuse and procedures that must be followed to report and deal with any incidents.

The Bridge School pupils have severe and profound learning difficulties and pupils may not understand their actions. Pupils have high staff ratio and if a pupils does not understand personal space or actions then plans will be put in place to support understanding and safe supervision to protect themselves and others.

The Bridge staff receive training:

- that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up;
- in not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys",
- that challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts are not acceptable. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.
- on how to recognise age appropriate sexualised behaviour through the Brook Traffic Light Tool

Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to):

- bullying (including cyberbullying);
- physical abuse such as 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, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent e.g. forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude/semi-nude images or videos (known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- upskirting, which 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;
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Online child-on-child abuse is any form of child-on-child abuse with a digital element, for example:

- sexting
- online abuse
- coercion and exploitation
- child-on-child grooming
- threatening language delivered via online means
- the distribution of sexualised content
- harassment.

## **2. Responsibility**

The governors, senior leadership team, and all staff at The Bridge School are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse both within and beyond the school

We believe that in order to protect children school should be aware of the nature and level of risk to which students may be exposed and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy to support the needs of the students as well as taking a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse.

Contextual Safeguarding supports creating a safe culture in school, promoting healthy relationships and attitudes to gender, sexuality, training on bias and stereotyped assumptions, being alert to and monitoring changes in behaviour and reporting concerns to relevant local agencies/multi agency working. It is about being aware of and seeking to understand the impact that wider social contexts may be having on the children/students in school.

We recognise the national increasing concern about this issue and have policies in place to mitigate harmful attitudes and child on child abuse in the school setting. If a child is not feeling safe in school as a result of their child's the child, parents/carers should inform the school so that appropriate and prompt action is taken.

At The Bridge school we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently so as to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, taking into consideration the impact on emotional and mental health and well-being. The Bridge School is aware that for some pupils, due to their developmental stage not age, an action may not have intent but plans will be put in place to support understanding and safe supervision to protect themselves and minimise the impact on others.

All staff receive regular and robust training on child protection and safety including training in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and have read and accessed all safeguarding policies. Child on child abuse is also referenced in The Bridge School Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The Bridge School is committed to identifying children who may benefit from early help. Early Help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life.

Bridge School staff will identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent concerns from escalating. They will provide a safe environment in which children can learn.

At The Bridge School staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.

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

- educating all governors, its senior leadership team, staff, students, and parents about this issue;
- educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse, positive, responsible and safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts about consent, via the curriculum. Education will be appropriate and personalised to individual learning needs of each pupil.
- engaging parents on these issues;
- supporting the on-going welfare of the student body by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise student mental health, and by providing in-school counselling and therapy when relevant to address underlying mental health needs. School will use strategies personalised to a pupil's needs that are carried out by class staff. This will be linked to what is appropriate and personalised to individual learning needs of each pupil;
- working with governors, senior leadership team, and all staff, students and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the school community;
- creating conditions in which our students can aspire to, and realise, safe and healthy relationships fostering a whole-school culture;
- responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately, and
- ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the DSL and deputies so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who may be in need of additional support.

The Bridge School actively engages with Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership (TWSP) in relation to child on child abuse, and works closely with, for example, children's social care, the police and other schools. The relationships the school has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the school is able to prevent, identify early, and appropriately handle cases of child-on-child abuse. The DSL (or deputy) will regularly review behaviour incident logs which can help to identify any changes in behaviour and/or concerning patterns or trends at an early stage. We recognise that all behaviour is communication. However, our safeguarding duty is to keep all children safe, regardless of whether they fully understand their actions and the impact these may have on others.

The Bridge School recognises that any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to the strength of child influence, especially during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their child. We know that research suggests:

- child on child abuse may affect boys differently from girls (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators). However, all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously;
- children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their children without SEND, and
- some children may be more likely to experience child on child abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs.

The DFE advice requires schools to conduct a risk and needs assessment following any report of sexual violence and to consider on a case-by-case basis whether such an assessment is required following a report of sexual harassment. The assessment will consider the 'victim' the 'perpetrator' and any other children, adult students and staff as appropriate.

### **3. Framework and Legislation**

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 where the child's welfare is paramount. Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2020 ensures that procedures are in place in school to hear the voice of the child. The Child-on-Child Abuse toolkit which provides case studies and further information and advice. The Bridge Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

### **4. Abuse and harmful behaviour.**

Staff at The Bridge receive training in:

1. What abuse is, what it looks like and the reporting procedure in place.
2. The appropriate support and interventions that can be put in place to support and meet the needs of the individual.
3. The preventative strategies that can be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

4. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how to recognise the impact that this may have on children.

## 5. Types of Abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between children and this list is not exhaustive.

- Abuse
- Physical Abuse, bullying including cyber bullying
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, jokes, remarks, online sexual harassment

Up skirting, typically involving taking a picture under a person's clothing with them knowing with the intention of viewing genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.

Down blousing, typically involving an individual searches for a good view down a woman's blouse or shirt and snaps a digital picture to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.

Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery

Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

County Lines

Radicalisation and extremism

Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail within The Bridge School Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The policy also lists possible indicators of CSE and CCE and support pathways. All staff, especially the DSL (or deputy) will give immediate consideration as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator (and any other children involved/impacted). The DSL will liaise with the relevant bodies and agencies to assist in the management of the report. School will also follow the guidance in the Child-on-Child Abuse toolkit.

At The Bridge School all staff are trained on the indicators of abuse to help them to identify children who may be in need of help or protection. We believe that abuse and safeguarding issues are rarely stand-alone events. All staff are aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the Bridge School and/or can occur between children outside of these environments. All staff, but especially the DSL and

deputies will consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families.

Through robust training staff are alert to the well-being of students and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ.

Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL will consider what urgent action can be taken, this may include seeking specialist help as outlined in The Bridge School Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and Child on Child Abuse toolkit. It may be appropriate to contact children's social care and/or police to assist in carrying out a safety plan.

## **6. The response to child-on-child abuse**

There is a whole school risk assessment in place in relation to child-on-child abuse that is updated annually or as necessary.

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

- always consider carefully, in consultation with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies (where they are involved), how to share information about the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the student(s) affected, their parents, staff, and other students and individuals;
- record the information that is necessary for the school and other relevant agencies (where they are involved) to respond to the concern(s) or allegation(s) and safeguard everyone involved;
- keep a record of the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including relevant authorities, and ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and to only use it for the agreed legal purpose, and
- be mindful of and act in accordance with its safeguarding and data protection duties.

A written safety plan/risk assessment will be carried out in respect of:

- any child who is alleged to have behaved in a way that is considered to be abusive or violent;
- any child who has reportedly been abused or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child, or
- any child who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child as deemed appropriate by the DSL.

Within the Bridge School our approach is covered within the Behaviour Policy and this Policy. It is supported by the Child-on-Child Abuse Toolkit and our PSHE policy. We will ensure a calm considered and appropriate response to any reports. All reports are taken seriously with all facts recorded. The Designated Safeguard lead DSL (or deputy) will use their professional judgement to: (a) assess the nature and seriousness of the alleged

behaviour, and (b) determine whether it is appropriate for the alleged behaviour to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required e.g. social care/police. Will assess the needs of the victim and alleged perpetrator and keep a record of all action taken.

The Bridge School will always reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. We will never give a victim the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting child on child abuse, including sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor will we make a victim feel ashamed for making a report.

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their child(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their child(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL (or deputy) without delay.

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

All staff, especially the DSL (or deputy) will give immediate consideration as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator (and any other children involved/impacted). If any of the children involved has SEND the DSL will liaise with the SENCO to assist in the management of the report.

Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL will consider what urgent action can be taken, this may include seeking specialist help, such as advice from The Internet Watch Foundation and the police in preventing the images spreading further and removing the images from the internet.

The Bridge School will follow the guidance and procedures outlined in the schools Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. It may be appropriate to contact children's social care and/or police to assist in carrying out a safety plan. The DSL may also use and consider the TWSP Sexually harmful behaviour - risk assessment tool.

Where other children have been identified as witnesses to alleged abuse or violence, consideration will also be given by the DSL (or deputy) to whether there might be any risks to those children, and whether a safety plan would be appropriate in relation to any risks presenting to them.

The Bridge school has in place a range of strategies to ensure the safety of children within the school grounds. This includes:

- staff being aware that pupils may have interactions without understanding the implications of their actions. Environmental context and pupil independence is taken into consideration and may result in reduced supervision.
- supervised transitions around school unless an independent transition has been risk assessed and agreed.

- individual pupil risk assessments in place for those pupils who are able to transition independently a short way to the toilet. Agreed strategies in place around length of time a pupil is out of class if independently going to the toilet.
- high levels of staff support so pupils are always supervised on the playgrounds.
- cross curricular teaching that emphasises dignity and respect for all.
- high expectations for appropriate behaviour for all.