



# Child on Child Abuse Policy 2024

## Including Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children

### Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy

This policy is available on our Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy website and is available on request from the Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy office. We also inform parents and carers about this policy when their children join our Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy and through our Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy newsletter.

The policy is provided to all staff (including temporary staff and volunteers) at induction alongside our Staff Code of Conduct. This policy is read alongside the guidance included in:-

- Keeping children safe in education 2023

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Directors and Governing Body on an annual basis. This policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body on 16.9.2024 and is due for review on 16.9.2025

Signature  Principal Mrs S Clowes Date: 16.9.2024

Signature *D Jones* Chair of Governors Mrs D Jones Date: 16.9.2024

The policy was last reviewed by Directors on 5<sup>th</sup> September and the Governing Body on 16.9.2024 . It is due for review in September 2025.

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## **1. Purpose of the Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide clarity on what is meant by child-on-child abuse in all its forms
- Understand the culture within our setting
- Evidence how ALL staff support the children in our setting
- Give children confidence that they will be supported and informed
- Give parents/carers the assurance that staff know how to deal with this abuse
- Evidence how our safeguarding staff handle reports/concerns/disclosures
- Inform of the post incident management process/ongoing support/safety planning

In addition to this policy, we have other policies that support this and that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

Anti-Bullying including Online Bullying Policy

Safeguarding

Whistleblowing Policy

Behaviour Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Online Safety Policy

(Add any others)

## **2. Our staff**

**ALL** staff at OUR LADY AND SAINT BENEDICT CATHOLIC ACADEMY:

- recognise the increasing national concern regarding this issue as highlighted in the Keeping children safe in education 2024
- are aware of the level and nature of risk that our pupils are or may be exposed to
- understand the important role that they play in the culture of vigilance
- recognise child-on-child abuse of all types
- are confident and competent in responding promptly and appropriately with timely challenge of the attitudes and behaviours of child-on-child abuse (both inside and outside the classroom)
- listen to children, capture their voice, and help to create a culture in which our children feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgemental environment

- will not downplay behaviours and dismiss them as 'just banter', 'having a laugh' or 'part of growing up'
- understand that by dismissing unacceptable behaviours it can lead to an unsafe environment for children and, in worst case scenarios, a **culture** that **normalises** abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not having the confidence to come forward, speak out and report what has happened to them.
- report and record their concerns following our safeguarding referral processes
- understand that even if there are no reports of this type of abuse that it 'does happen here'
- are committed to a whole setting, whole staff approach, to ensure the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse within our setting and beyond
- recognise and understand that children who harm others, may have additional or complex needs of their own, e.g., significant disruption in their own lives, exposure to domestic abuse, witnessing/suffering abuse as well as educational under-achievement and possibly an involvement in criminal activity and therefore they too, will need support.
- encourage parents to communicate with us so that we can work together to ensure and enable a prompt and appropriate response to any type of child-on-child abuse.
- know that putting a stop to child-on-child abuse of any type and ensuring the safety of our children is a priority in our education setting.
- regard the introduction of this policy as a positive, proactive, and preventative measure

At **OUR LADY AND SAINT BENEDICT CATHOLIC ACADEMY** we work hard to create a culture where child-on-child abuse does not happen. We strive to create an ethos of mutually respectful behaviour. However, if this type of abuse is seen, heard or reported **ALL** staff are confident in their actions and subsequent support.

Staff are aware of the importance of: -

- Making clear that child-on-child abuse including sexual violence and sexual harassment, is never acceptable and that we have a zero-tolerance approach.
- Not dismissing this abuse as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys"; and
- Challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as physical and sexual assaults e.g. grabbing bottoms, breasts, and genitalia, flicking bras and the lifting up of skirts.

We have well promoted and easily understood systems in place so that our children feel confident to knowing their concerns will be treated seriously. All incidents reported go through the process and Directors and Governors read the reports to ensure a robust response has been given consistent with collegiate policy. All children have a session on how we expect them to behave and what to do if they feel themselves or others are receiving abuse. We highlight the fact that they will be taken seriously, any incident reported will be fully investigated, sanctions will be put into place and follow up support will be provided for the victim and perpetrator. Trends will be highlighted through the reports and any concerns within the whole Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy, particular year group, class or peer group will be addressed.

### **3. Our children**

**ALL** children are at risk of child-on-child abuse, but some groups are more vulnerable than others to abuse and include the following:

- A child with additional needs and disabilities
- A child living with domestic abuse
- A child who is at risk of/suffering significant harm
- A child who is at risk of/or has been exploited or at risk of being exploited, criminally/sexually
- A looked after child
- A child who goes missing from Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy/home or is missing education
- Children who identify as or are perceived as LGBTQI+

The fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are LGBT can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT. These risks can be compounded where children who are LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced and provide a safe space for these children to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

Research tells us that girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers and more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching, sexual violence and/or sexual harassment. They often are exploited into gangs and are victims of sexual violence when in those gangs. However, we are aware that these are behaviours not just confined to girls.

Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may

display other behaviour such as anti-social/criminal behaviours. Boys are more likely to be exploited /entrapped into gangs and subject to violence because of gang culture.

At **OUR LADY AND SAINT BENEDICT CATHOLIC ACADEMY** we encourage our children to talk to us and tell us when they are worried and what they are worried about, be it about themselves or another child. We are confident that our children know:

- who to speak to and/or where to go for support
- that they will be listened to, taken seriously and not dismissed
- that they will receive the right help at the right time
- that they will receive ongoing support
- that they will be supported to feel safe in Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy
- that they will be supported to continue to access their education

We reassure all victims that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward, and that they will be supported and kept safe. Abuse that occurs online or outside of the Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy or college will not be downplayed and will be treated equally seriously. Victims will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. We will ensure that we explain that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them, and this will be explained in such a way that avoids causing alarm or distress. All incidents of child on child abuse are reported to Directors and Governors. Both consider that appropriate action was taken to support all involved. (see appendix 1)

We also inform our children that there are other ways to report abuse if they are worried about themselves or other children and for whatever reason don't feel that they can speak to staff in Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy. For example:

[NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000](https://www.nspcc.org.uk) or by emailing [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).  
[Get Support | Childline](#)

At Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy all children receive a weekly RHE lesson. We use 'Ten Ten' a fully-resourced curriculum scheme of work in Relationships and Health Education (RHE) for Catholic primary schools. This is approved by the Catholic dioceses throughout England and Wales and meets the statutory guidance for RHE. The entire teaching is underpinned with a Christian faith understanding that our deepest identity is as a child of God – created, chosen and loved by God. The programme is fully inclusive of all pupils and their families. The programme has the following modules:

Module One: Created and Loved by God: Created and Loved by God explores the individual. Rooted in the teaching that we are made in the image and likeness of God, it helps children to develop an understanding of the importance of valuing themselves as the basis for personal relationships. At the start of each learning stage in Module One, are a series of Story Sessions. All of these Sessions communicate and help children know more deeply the key idea that we were created by God out of love and for love. Building on this religious understanding of the meaning and purpose of our bodies, children are then taken through a variety of age-appropriate sessions which explore body and health issues.

Early Years Foundation Stage – our uniqueness in real terms, including celebrating difference and individual gifts, talents and abilities, looking after and using our bodies (including vocabulary around this topic), the necessity of when and how to say sorry in relationships, a basic exploration of Jesus's forgiveness and growing up as God's plan for us.

Key Stage One – that we are uniquely made by a loving God, that we have differences and similarities (including physical differences between boys and girls), key information about staying physically healthy, understanding feelings and emotions, including strong feelings such as anger, and the cycle of life from birth to old age.

Lower Key Stage Two – understanding differences, respecting our bodies, puberty and changing bodies (recommended for Year 4+), strategies to support emotional wellbeing including practicing thankfulness, and the development of pupils understanding of life before birth.

Upper Key Stage Two – appreciation of physical and emotional differences, a more complex understanding of physical changes in girl and boys bodies, body image, strong emotional feelings, the impact of the internet and social media on emotional wellbeing (including teaching on seeing images online i.e pornography), a more nuanced and scientific understanding of life in the womb and how babies are made, and menstruation. The Paradise Street materials are used to assist this teaching.

Module Two: Created to Love Others Created to Love Others explores the individual's relationship with others. Building on the understanding that we have been created out of love and for love, this Module explores how we take this calling into our family, friendships and relationships, and teaches strategies for developing healthy relationships and keeping safe. Gospel Stories At the start of each learning stage, we begin with a session based on a key Gospel story which provides the religious foundation for the teaching that will follow. This religious understanding is then applied to real-world situations relevant to the age and stage of the children:

Early Years Foundation Stage – In the Unit 'Personal Relationships', children will expand their vocabulary by applying names to different family/friend relationships, consider positive/negative behaviour in relationships and learn to look to Jesus as their role model for a good friend. They will learn to resolve conflict and the importance of asking for forgiveness when necessary. In the Unit 'Keeping Safe', children learn about practical ways to stay safe inside and out, including medicine safety and people who help us in emergencies.

Key Stage One – In the Unit 'Personal Relationships', children are taught to identify the Special People in their lives who they love and can trust, how to cope with various social situations and the importance of saying sorry and forgiveness within relationships. In the Unit 'Keeping Safe', we explore the risks of being online by incorporating the 'Smartie the Penguin' resources from Childnet, the difference between good and bad secrets, and teaching on physical boundaries (incorporating the PANTS resource the NSPCC). Children also learn about the effects of harmful substances (including alcohol and tobacco), some basic First Aid and what makes a 999 emergency and what they should do if in an emergency situation.

Lower Key Stage Two – The sessions here help children to develop a more complex appreciation of different family structures and there are activities and strategies to help them develop healthy relationships with family and friends; here, they are also taught simplified CBT techniques for managing thoughts, feelings and actions. Once again, for the 'Keeping Safe' unit, we have incorporated some excellent NSPCC resources, as well as teaching on bullying and abuse through a series of animated stories. Children will also learn in greater depth about the effects of drugs, alcohol and tobacco and how to make good choices concerning these as they get older. The final session of the module explores in more detail what to do in emergency situations.

Upper Key Stage Two – The sessions for UKS2 in the 'Personal Relationships' module aim to equip children with strategies for more complex experiences of relationships and conflict; this includes sessions that help children to identify and understand how to respond to spoken and unspoken pressure, the concept of consent and some practical demonstrations of this, and further teaching on how our



thoughts and feelings have an impact on how we act. Over the first three sessions in the Unit 'Keeping Safe', the programme explores the risks of sharing and chatting online at a level more appropriate to Years 5 and 6, and a more complex understanding of different forms of abuse. The final three sessions in this Module explore how drugs, alcohol and tobacco can negatively affect people's lifestyles and the body's natural functioning, 8 discuss how to make good choices even in pressured situations, and teach essential First Aid such as DR ABC and the recovery position. Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco The final two\* sessions in Unit 3 at each learning stage concern age-appropriate teaching about drugs, alcohol and tobacco and First Aid. Through teaching from the eccentric, animated character Dr Datfa, as well as role play, discussions and activities, children will be equipped with facts and figures to help them make good choices – all underpinned by the religious understanding that we are created to love God and love others, so we should look out and care for one another and the bodies we have been given. \*Three sessions in Upper Key Stage Two Module Three: Created to Live in Community explores the individual's relationship with the wider world. Here we explore how human beings are relational by nature and are called to love others in the wider community through service, through dialogue and through working for the Common Good. In the first Unit, Religious Understanding, the sessions help children to develop a concept of the Trinity at a level appropriate for their learning stage. In subsequent sessions, we apply this religious understanding to real-world situations, such as the community we live in, and through exploring the work of charities which work for the Assemblies further reinforce teaching and throughout the year speakers and organisations are invited into school to talk with our children e.g the NSPCC. Children also take part in national days such as 'Internet Safety Day'. In school pupils have a voice. Each class has 'Bubble Time' where children can write their name because they have concerns and worries and time is set aside to discuss these. We have two safeguarding officers who work with our children. They also work with Social Care and Families support as needed. All concerns are taken seriously and are logged on CPOMS and dealt with appropriately in line with policies and guidance. Younger Minds counselling also come into school to work with our children in the 'Pod' once a week and referrals to additional services are made as and when are needed. Our RHE section of the school website and our Safeguarding section provide further information. We also use the SHARP system the (School Help Advice Reporting Page System) here pupils can confidentially e-mail or text if they feel they Need to Talk.

At Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy we all work together to help with any problems the children may have in or out of school. This service is a CONFIDENTIAL way to stop themselves or a FRIEND or SOMEONE they have seen SUFFERING.

#### **4. Child-on-Child Abuse - What is it?**

Child-on-child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse using coercion/power and/or control by an individual child or group of children and is exercised between children and within their relationships (both intimate and non-intimate).

**All** staff in our setting recognise that children can abuse their peers and are aware of the different forms that these safeguarding issues take:

- Bullying-emotional/physical so **repeated** behaviour which is intended to hurt someone either emotionally or physically (hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm)
- Online/Cyber bullying
- Prejudiced relating bullying
- Sexual Violence, Sexual Harassment and Sexually Harmful behaviour.
- Sexting sharing of nude or indecent (youth produced sexual imagery).
- Abuse in intimate relationships, including teenage relationship abuse
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.
- Hate crime
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Gang association and serious violence - County Lines
- Radicalisation

This abuse can be motivated by perceived differences. e.g. on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other differences and result in significant, long lasting, and traumatic isolation, intimidation, and/or violence to the victim.

We will record all instances of child-on-child abuse and inform parents /carers of such incidents.

**Bullying** is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is **repeated** or has the potential to be repeated over time. Children and young people who are bullied and/or who bully others may have serious and lasting problems.

To be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include the following:

- an imbalance of power such as physical strength, access to

embarrassing information, or popularity to control or harm others. These imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

- repetition as these behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.
- 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.

Any behaviours that may need to be handled with sanctions will be in line with our policies relating to behaviour or other appropriate policy.

**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. It can take many forms and this list is not exhaustive:

- 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 menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chat rooms 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.

**Prejudiced 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, e.g. 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.

### **Sexual Violence, Sexual Harassment and Sexually Harmful Behaviour (SHB)**

Sexual Violence, Sexual Harassment and Sexually Harmful Behaviour (SHB) can occur between two children of any age and sex or with groups of children by sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

We recognise that this behaviour can take place in a Our Lady and

Saint Benedict Catholic Academy or any setting where pupils are together and that the impact of this behaviour on children can be extremely distressing, impacting on their emotional health and wellbeing as well as affecting their academic achievement.

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment **must** be referred **immediately** to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

**Sexual Violence** - For this policy we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

- Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
- Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
- Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

**Sexual Harassment** - For this policy we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. We refer to this in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment. Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- Sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, and calling someone sexualised names
- Sexual "jokes" or taunting
- Physical behaviour, such as deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes and displaying pictures, photos, or drawings of a sexual nature; and
- Online sexual harassment, which might include non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos and sharing sexual images and videos (both often referred to as sexting); sexualised online bullying and inappropriate sexual comments on social media; exploitation; coercion and threats. Online sexual harassment may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence

**Sexually Harmful Behaviour (SHB)** In this policy we recognise the importance of distinguishing between healthy, problematic, and sexually harmful behaviour.

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. It may include:

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse

**Consent** is when someone **agrees by choice** and has the **freedom** and **capacity** to make that choice. It is important to note that:

- A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- The age of consent is 16
- Sexual intercourse without consent is rape

### **Sexting - the sharing of nude or indecent imagery (youth produced sexual imagery)**

The term 'sexting' relates to 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. These images may have been because of upskirting.

### **Initiation/Hazing**

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as sports team, etc. There are several 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 passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

### **Teenage relationship abuse**

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, to gain power and maintain control over the partner. This abuse may be child sexual exploitation.

### **Hate Crime**

Hate crimes happen because of race, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, and disability. They can happen anywhere, home, Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy and in the community and can be frightening for both victim and witnesses and is an offence.

Hate crimes can include:

- physical attacks - physical assault, damage to property, offensive graffiti, neighbour disputes and arson
- threat of attack - offensive letters or emails, abusive or obscene telephone calls, groups hanging around to intimidate you and unfounded, malicious complaints
- verbal abuse or insults - harassment over the phone, by text or face to face, abusive gestures, and remarks, bullying and threats

### **5. Indicators that a child may be suffering from Child-on-Child abuse**

Indicators and signs that a child may be suffering from child-on-child abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse and can include:

- failing to attend Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy, disengaging from classes, or struggling to carry out Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected
- physical injuries
- experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing
- becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much
- broader changes in behaviour including alcohol or substance misuse.
- changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age
- abusive behaviour towards others

Abuse affects our children and their presenting behaviours in different ways and the list above is not exhaustive. Children who present with one or more of these signs are not necessarily victims of abuse and their behaviour will depend on their individual circumstances.

**ALL** staff are alert to behaviour that may cause concern and think about what the behaviour might signify. We actively encourage children to share with us any underlying reasons for their behaviour, and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents/carers so that the cause(s) of their behaviour can be investigated and understood with the appropriate support in place.

All staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.

## **6. Responding to a concern/incident/disclosure of child-on-child abuse**

Child-on-child abuse may occur in our Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy, on the way to or from Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy or out in the community. Consideration will be given to many aspects of the abuse and here are a few examples:

- Does it involve a single incident or has occurred over time?
- Is the behaviour problematic and concerning?
- Does it involve any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination, e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability?
- Is there any element of coercion or pre-planning?
- Does it involve a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power?
- Has there been a misuse of power?

It is also important that we:

- ascertain if there were there any witnesses to the abuse
- make notes and record **all** conversations with children spoken to as well as parents/carers/other professionals, including any actions taken
- treat all children involved as being at potential risk - while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves

- ensure that a safeguarding response is in place for both victim and alleged perpetrator

Consideration should also be given to supporting children who have witnessed child-on-child abuse of any kind. This is likely to be traumatic and support may be required. We will signpost to agencies and support services available where needed.

We will do all that we can to ensure both the victim and alleged perpetrator, and any witnesses, are not being bullied or harassed following this. Social media is likely to play a part in the fall out from any incident and friends from either side could well harass the victim or alleged perpetrator online as well as face to face. Any evidence we have of students using social media or inappropriately will be sanctioned according to our existing policies.

## **7. Responding to all reports and concern of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment between children.**

We have covered at point 6 what we do when responding to child-on-child abuse concerns/disclosures and these **all** apply to sexual violence and sexual harassment between children's disclosures; however, we recognise the complexity and challenges that we face following the report of this particular type of abuse.

Guidance is clear in that it does not attempt to provide (nor would it be possible to provide) detailed advice on what we should do in any or every particular case; it provides effective safeguarding practice and principles for us to consider in our decision-making process and on a case-by-case basis.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputy (ies) (DDSLs) will take the lead role when dealing with this type of abuse using their professional judgement and working together practices. 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 and it is important to maintain a calm, considered and appropriate response to any reports.

We understand that it is not easy for children to tell us about this type of abuse, and they may struggle to make a direct verbal report. Therefore, observations of changes in presenting behaviours are key. See Point 5 above.

We understand the importance of our initial response to a report and how this can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of



sexual violence and sexual harassment. The culture in our setting is key to this.

On occasions the victim may not wish for their identity to be known and there are no easy or definitive answers when this is requested. If the victim does not give consent to share information, we may still lawfully share it, if it can be justified to be in the public interest. For example, to protect children from harm and to promote the welfare of children.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider the following:

- The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed
- The victim(s) should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered - we will balance this aspect and the need to balance our duty and responsibility to protect other children
- The nature of the alleged incident(s) including might a crime have been committed and consideration of any display of harmful sexual behaviour
- The ages of the students involved
- The developmental stages of the students involved
- Any power imbalance between the students (e.g. Is the alleged perpetrator significantly older? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?)
- If the alleged incident is a one off or a sustained pattern of abuse (the sustained pattern of abuse may not just be of a sexual nature)
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers
- Whether there are ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students, or staff
- Other related issues and wider context, including links to any forms of child exploitation

When we talk about Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children, we will refer to 'victim' and 'alleged perpetrator'. This does not mean that we are taking sides nor making any judgement, but for the purpose of this policy we will refer to children involved in this way.

**Victim** - When we speak to the 'victim' we will:

- listen and take any disclosure seriously
- never make them feel that they are creating a problem or be ashamed
- reassure them that they will be kept safe
- handle the situation with sensitivity
- use proper names for body parts but record exactly any language or vocabulary used by the child

- ask open questions and not lead the victim
- ascertain where the abuse occurred as this may highlight 'hot spots' or vulnerable locations in our setting or within the community which may need to be revisited by either ourselves (in Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy) or by alerting police/partners if it is in the community
- ascertain if other children witnessed this abuse
- consider ongoing support within our setting
- consider any referrals for external support

Parents or carers of the victim will be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risk). Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes and the DSL will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children within the Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy setting. If we do decide to make a referral to children's social care and/or a report to the police against the victim's wishes, this will be handled extremely carefully, the reasons will in most cases be explained to the victim and appropriate specialist support offered. We will also consider the following:

- The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed
- That the victim(s) should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. (We will balance this aspect and the need to balance our duty and responsibility to protect other children)
- The nature of the alleged incident(s) including might a crime have been committed and consideration of any display of harmful sexual behaviour.
- The ages of the students involved
- The developmental stages of the students involved
- Any power imbalance between the students (e.g. is the alleged perpetrator significantly older? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?)
- If the alleged incident is a one off or a sustained pattern of abuse (the sustained pattern of abuse may not just be of a sexual nature)
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students, or staff
- Other related issues and wider context, including links to any forms of child exploitation

We will give all the necessary support for the victim to remain in Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy; however, if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy or college will be

considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This will only be at the request of the victim (and following discussion with their parents or carers).

**Alleged perpetrator** - When we speak to the 'alleged perpetrator' we will:

- listen to what they say and not dismiss their account
- handle the situation with sensitivity and a non-judgemental approach
- offer ongoing support
- record all conversations and all action taken
- consider any referrals for external support, e.g. Youth Offending Service/Catch 22

When to inform the alleged perpetrator will be a decision that will be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to children's social care and/or the police, then, as a general rule, we will speak to the relevant agency and discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator will be informed of the allegations.

There are four likely scenarios we will need to consider when managing any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment:

- a) Manage internally - In some cases of sexual harassment (for example, one-off incidents), we may take the view that the students concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally using our own sanctions in line with all policies and by providing pastoral intervention and support.
- b) Early Help - We may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help where we are the lead professional. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence. This will help to evidence the support that we have given, the work undertaken and if desired outcomes have been achieved
- c) Referral to the police - See Section 8 below
- d) Referral to the police - See Section 9 below

## **8. Reporting to the Police**

At **OUR LADY AND SAINT BENEDICT CATHOLIC ACADEMY** we understand our responsibilities to call the Police and reporting forms of child-on-child abuse. This does not mean that we are looking to criminalise children, and this may not always be necessary.

The guidance that we follow is:

When to call the police (guidance for Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academics and colleges)

Outcome 21 Sexting Guidance

In any form of child-on-child abuse where it is believed that an offence has been committed, a report may be made to the Police.

Where a report has been made to the police, we will consult with the police and agree what information is appropriate to disclose to staff and others, in particular the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. We will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

This may also include the development of a clear and robust safety and support plan as part of this early help process. However, as you will see further on in this policy, risk assessing, and safety planning is a key aspect of all child-on-child abuse (see Post Incident Management section 12).

Regarding sexual violence and sexual harassment between children, where there is a report of a rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, the starting point is that this should be passed to the police who will advise and log according to their own guidelines.

## **9. Referring to Staffordshire Childrens Advice and Support**

In all cases of child-on-child abuse, but in particular with sexual violence and sexual harassment, consideration will be given to the reporting of the matter to Childrens Social Care via Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support service on 0300 1313 126. In making this decision, we must consider whether a child is at risk of harm or is in immediate danger.

In some cases, children's social care will review the evidence and decide that a statutory intervention is not appropriate, and, in these circumstances, we will consider other support mechanisms, such as early help, specialist support/referrals and pastoral support within a formalised plan. We will consider starting an Early Help process where we are the lead professional.

However, if the DSL/DDSL feels that the child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm, they may refer again. The threshold document will help and support our decision making.

#### Threshold Framework: Accessing the right help at the right time

At this referral stage, we will inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk). Any such decision will be made with the support of children's social care.

If a referral is made, children's social care will then make enquiries to determine whether any of the children involved need protection or other services.

Where statutory assessments are appropriate, we will work alongside, and cooperate with, the relevant lead social worker. This collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children requiring support.

We will not wait for the outcome, or even the start of a children's social care investigation before protecting the victim and other children in the Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy. It will be important for us to work closely with children's social care (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions we take do not jeopardise a statutory investigation.

### **10. Working with our parents and carers**

At OUR LADY AND SAINT BENEDICT CATHOLIC ACADEMY we will, in most instances, engage with both the victim's and the alleged perpetrator's parents or carers when there has been a report of child-on-child abuse including sexual or sexual harassment. The exception to this rule is if there is a reason to believe that informing a parent or carer will put a child at additional risk.

We will carefully consider what information provided to the respective parents or carers about other children involved and when to do so.

In some cases, children's social care and/or the police will have a very clear view on this aspect, and it will be important for us to work with relevant agencies to ensure a consistent approach is taken to information sharing.

It should be the case that we will meet the victim's parents or carers with the victim present to discuss what arrangements are being put in place to safeguard the victim and understand their wishes in terms of support they

may need and how the report will be progressed. (See Post Incident Management-Point 12)

It is also likely that we will meet with the alleged perpetrator's parents or carers to discuss any arrangements that are being put into place that impact the alleged perpetrator, such as, for example, moving them out of classes with the victim and what this means for their education.

We will be clear and transparent and explain the reason behind any decisions. Support for the alleged perpetrator will be discussed including any referrals, if appropriate.

We realise that parents and carers may well struggle to cope with a report that their child has been the victim of an assault or is alleged to have assaulted another child. Details of organisations that support parents are provided on the Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy website and at the end of the policy.

## **11. Sanctions**

We will decide appropriate sanctions on a case-by-case basis in line with our Behaviour Policy and any graduated response required. As previously mentioned, it may be that other children in our setting start to 'take sides' and become involved and may behave in ways that can cause upset and distress to other children.

We will take their behaviour seriously and again use a graduated response to this, whilst also educating them the importance of resolving any conflict in a respectful and restorative way.

If there is police involvement, we will work closely with them to ensure that any disciplinary action taken by us, as a result of the incident, does not jeopardise the police investigation.

## **12. Post Incident Management**

It is vital that all children involved in child-on-child abuse are given appropriate and ongoing support for as long as it is required/needed. This may include referrals to other agencies/professionals outside our setting and this decision will be made in conjunction with the children, their parents/carers, and other professionals. If there are other professionals involved, then we will liaise with those colleagues to ensure that we are working together and understand one another's role in this support.

There may be delays in any case that is being progressed through the criminal justice system. However, we will not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a police investigation before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator, and other children in the Our Lady and Saint Benedict

Catholic Academy and moving forward with our post incident management.

**Support planning** is vital, and it is imperative that following any incident the children involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they tell us that they are coping and managing. Sometimes feelings of embarrassment, remorse, regret, or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage. We will do our best to ensure that they 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) will happen as part of this plan.

**Referrals** may have already happened as mentioned previously in this policy, but it is important to establish which professionals continue to work with **all** children involved in this process and this is helped with robust planning

### **Safety planning/Risk assessment**

Integral to post incident management is robust safety planning/risk assessment and this is an invaluable and necessary process. It is one of our key priorities as part of the post incident management. When looking at this process, consideration should be given to the following:

- if this is an ongoing police investigation, we will ask the police if we have any questions about the progress of the matter for example, are there any bail conditions in place or has there been a charging decision. It is key to have a central point of contact with the police for updates and progress. Where required, advice from the police will be sought to help us to manage our safeguarding responsibilities. Where bail is deemed proportionate and necessary, as above, we will work with children's social care and the police to manage any implications and safeguard our children
- the importance in ensuring that the victim can continue in their normal routine, including continuing to receive a suitable education
- the importance of the alleged perpetrator in continuing to access education and support
- do the victim and alleged perpetrator share classes
- what measures need to be put in place when children move between lessons/classes
- what measures need to be put in place for unstructured time (break and lunchtimes)
- what measures need to be put in place for the arrival at the start of the Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy day and leaving at the end of the Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy day

- do the victim and alleged perpetrator travel to and from Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy using the same form of transport
- appropriate information sharing with staff in our setting in order that the plan is manageable and as successful as possible
- if it is the case that the alleged perpetrator is moved to another educational institution (for any reason), then we will ensure that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs.

In all cases, we will record our decision making together with the rationale behind those decisions. All the above will be considered with the needs and wishes of the victim at the heart of all that we do as part of this process (supported by parents and carers as required). Our safety plan/risk assessment will be kept under review.



## **Additional support and guidance**

- [Keeping children safe in education 2024](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)
- [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academics and colleges](#)
- [Review of sexual abuse in Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academics and colleges](#)
- [Staffscb-Responding to Sexting Guidance](#)
- [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education](#)
- [Mental health and behaviour in Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academics 2018](#)
- [Exclusion from maintained Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academics, academies, and pupil referral units](#)
- [Children missing education](#)
- [CEOP-Safety centre](#)
- [Disrespect NoBody – Safe4Me](#)
- [Behaviour and discipline in Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academics](#)
- [UKCIS Guidance: Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes](#)
- [Searching, screening and confiscation](#)
- [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#)
- [Preventing sexual bullying](#)
- [Preventing bullying](#)
- [Harmful online challenges and online hoaxes](#)
- [London Grid for Learning 'Undressed' guidance](#)
- [Cyberbullying advice](#)
- [Equality & Human Rights Commission](#)
- The NSPCC email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)
- Specialist Sexual Violence [Rape Crisis](#)
- The UK safer internet centre email at [helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)
- [Internet Watch Foundation](#)
- [UK Council for Child Internet Safety \(UKCCIS\)](#)
- [Think u know](#)



## APPENDIX A

### Sexual Harassment or Violence Incident Form

Academy name.....

Date & time of the incident.....

Personal Information	Victim (please tick)	Perpetrator (please tick)
Pupil (s)		
Outside person including:		
Parents		
Teaching staff		
Support staff		
Unknown/Victimless incident		
Gender		
Ethnicity		
Age/Year group		
<b>Summary nature of incident</b>	<b>Please tick</b>	
Sexual comments, jokes or taunting		
Sexual comments in the course of discussions in lessons or other activities, or on Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy premises		
Physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature.		
Abusing computer systems by accessing and/or distributing sexual images		
Online Sexual Harassment		
Sexual Assault		
Other		

Please describe the incident and actions taken

**Appendix B**

**Risk Assessment/Safety planning guidance**

<b>Basic information</b>		
Referrer Name and role		
Referrer Contact details (email address and phone number)		
Name of Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy(s) for victim(s)		
Name of Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy(s) for child/ren alleged to have caused harm		
Did incident occur on Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy premises? If not, where did the incident occur?		
Date for risk assessment/safety plan review		

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)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the incident?</li> <li>• Who was involved?</li> <li>• Where did it happen</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this incident constitute a crime? Assault, sexual assault, rape, sharing of indecent images of children, etc. etc. As such has this been referred to the police?</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it necessary to limit contact between the children involved? Refer to KCSiE and DFE guidance on sexual harassment and sexual violence in Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academeys and colleges.</li> </ul>				

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)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there an actual or perceived threat from the child alleged to have caused harm to the victim and/or others?</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is either the victim or the child alleged to have caused harm at risk of physical harm because of this incident (for example, bullying or 'retribution' by peers)?</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do they share any classes/lessons?</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do they share break times?</li> <li>• Do they share peer/friendship groups?</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do they share transport to/from Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy?</li> </ul>				

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)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are they likely to meet each other (or anyone else involved in/with knowledge of the incident) outside of Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy?</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can this contact be limited?</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a risk of harm from social media and gossip?</li> </ul>				

**Further action taken by the Our Lady and Saint Benedict Catholic Academy or college: Please complete for each child involved.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>	<b>Date</b>
Police informed		
Referral to MASH		
Referral to external support services		
Referral to internal support services		
Referral to CAMHS		
Referral to early help		
Other		

<b>Action</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>	<b>Date</b>
Police informed		
Referral to MASH		
Referral to external support services (specify)		
Referral to internal support services (specify)		
Referral to CAMHS		
Referral to early help		
Other		