



Peer on Peer Abuse

Introduction

At Guilborough Academy we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

Purpose and Aim of Document

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which could be classified as peer on peer abuse. The purpose of this document is to explore the many forms of peer on peer abuse.

At Guilborough Academy we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this document:

Anti-Bullying Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together, 2015, highlighting that every assessment of a child, '*must be informed by the views of the child*' and within that '*It is important to understand the resilience of the individual child when planning appropriate services.* (Working Together, 2015:23) This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2016 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

Introduction to abuse and harmful behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be more gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE, 2016). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.



Physical abuse e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling etc.)

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault etc.)

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 well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

Bullying (physical, name calling, homophobic etc.)

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

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

An Imbalance of Power: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Cyber bullying

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 under section 1 which states that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour.



If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Sexting

Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference. However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies.

The idea behind this practice is that it welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

Prejudiced Behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular, prejudices to do with 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 (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

Teenage relationship abuse

Teenage relationship abuse is defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner.



Safeguarding concerns

If a member of staff believes any young person to be at risk of significant harm it must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Safeguarding Officer immediately who will make a safeguarding referral to the MASH (and the Police where a crime has been committed). If this is the case, school will be informed of the next steps by the MASH or Social Services.

It may also be that the MASH feel that it does not meet their criteria. School may challenge that decision if they disagree with that decision

It is best practice to inform parents before incidents are reported to the MASH or the Police unless it would increase the risk of harm towards the student.

Preventative Strategies for Schools and Settings

For all schools and settings, it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of peer on peer abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way.

Bullying will be the focus of several Year Group Assemblies throughout the school year.

Firstly, and most importantly for schools and settings is recognition that peer on peer abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff.

This can be supported by ensuring that school has an open environment where students feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This can be strengthened through a strong and positive PSHE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another.

We are introducing a weekly drop in session for Years 7 & 8 to speak to an older student if they feel that they are being bullied. This will be led by Sixth Form students, who will be supported by Year 10 students. Challenging behaviour is one of the issues discussed by students in the School Council and Senate and their opinions are sought as to how it can be disseminated throughout the student body.

Information about this and other support within school and externally will be posted around school.

From time to time, external services will be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of peer on peer abuse.