

# PEER ON PEER ABUSE POLICY

Next Gen  
Support  
Services

**Approved by:** Omar Salahuddin **Date:** 08/08/25

**Last reviewed on:** 08/08/25

**Next review due by:** 31/08/26

At Next Gen Support Services, we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with as soon as possible and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the pupil, with full consideration to impact on that pupil's emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

Peer-on-peer abuse is very closely linked to the provisions' Anti-Bullying Policy and Young Person and Adult Safeguarding and Protection Policy, as well as other key documents which include Positive Behaviour Policy.

Staff should be able to recognise the importance of distinguishing between developmentally expected behaviour and problematic behaviour and highly abnormal / abusive behaviour.

This policy, our child protection policy, government guidance and other references listed provide clear guidance on how schools should manage sexual violence and sexual harassment between children. It is made very clear that such behaviours are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up. Similarly, such behaviours should not be dismissed as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys" or "girls being girls". This section of the policy is fit for purpose, remains unchanged, and should inform all practice in relation to any Harmful Sexual Behaviours between children, specifically the following section:

As support service, where we discover incidents of sexualised behaviours between children, we will respond to this in line with the Warwickshire County Councils and The City of Coventry Cities Protocol for Managing Peer-on-peer Harmful Sexual Behaviour in Schools, Settings and Provisions and with reference to the following documents:

#### **BROOK TRAFFIC LIGHT TOOL - SEE APPENDIX B**

## **BACKGROUND**

Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2025 states that:

*'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer-on-peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer-on-peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with'*

*"Governing bodies should ensure that there are procedures in place to handle allegations against other children".*

The guidance also states the importance of minimising the risks of peer-on-peer abuse.

In order to protect children, we need to be aware of the level and nature of risk to which Young Person/Vulnerable Adults are or may be exposed, take a whole-school approach to preventing and responding to peer-on-peer abuse and use the policy as a preventative measure, recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and encourage Young Person/Vulnerable Adults to speak up should they or a friend feel unsafe.

## **AIMS OF THE POLICY**

1. To be preventative and minimise the risk of peer-on-peer abuse
2. To help identify and manage peer-on-peer abuse
3. To be a working document alongside the child protection policy and other relevant policies

## DEFINITION

### WHAT IS PEER-ON-PEER ABUSE?

Any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and nonintimate), friendships, and wider peer associations.

It can take various forms including (but not limited to): bullying (including cyberbullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, youth produced sexual imagery, youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour and / or be gender-based.

Online peer-on-peer abuse is any form of peer-on-peer abuse with a digital element, for example, sexting, online abuse, coercion and exploitation, peer-on-peer grooming, threatening language delivered via online means, the distribution of sexualised content, and harassment.

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or provision and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of peer-on-peer abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

All staff should understand, that even if there are no reports in their schools or provisions it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important if staff have any concerns regarding peer-on-peer abuse they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy).

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, many of which are listed below, that are actually abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Peer-on-peer abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers;
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse);
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi nudes images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);
- up-skirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; and

- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

All staff should be clear as to the school's or provision's policy and procedures with regards to peer-on-peer abuse and the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

## TYPES OF ABUSE - DETAILS

**Sexually harmful behaviour / sexual abuse** (including inappropriate sexualised language, touching, assault). The Hackett continuum model demonstrates the range of sexual behaviours, which in turn is useful to understand the level of behaviour and therefore how to respond. See [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#).

**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.

**Bullying** including cyber bullying. 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.

In assessing if the behaviour is bullying it is worth considering the level of aggression and if it is repeated behaviour or a significant one-off incident.

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.

**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.

**Relational aggression** is a form of bullying set to intentionally manipulate and damage the relationships of their victims. This may include; spreading rumours, making friendships conditional, making fun of the individual's appearance, coercing or encouraging them to take a particular course of "negative" action or excluding the individual from a social group.

**Relational 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). 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.

**Prejudiced behaviour** 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).

## **RESPONSIBILITY OF STAFF**

Identify the concern, take all concerns seriously never tolerate abuse as “banter”

Log details on Young Person/Vulnerable Adults’ behaviour records as a pastoral concern

In particular, consideration must always be given to whether an issue should be responded to through the first stages of the bullying policy, as high-level bullying, or as peer-on-peer abuse. Staff should seek advice and support from the DSLs if they have any doubt.

### Inform the DSL

Support all those involved (victim(s) and perpetrator(s)) through pastoral care system (Case manager, Senior Case Manager, Head of Services, medical centre, DSLs, friends, home)

## **ACTION AND ONGOING REVIEW**

Identify locations that may be vulnerable for Young Person/Vulnerable Adults

Language: Try to steer away from victim and perpetrator, more understanding of the child and the reasoning behind their behaviour before labelling

Identify any Young Person/Vulnerable Adults who may be vulnerable

Communicate with those who need to be aware

Actively promote gender equality and healthy relationships (raise awareness with Prefects)

Young Person/Vulnerable Adults: Raise awareness and frequent messaging about healthy relationships. Examples of what is unhealthy and what is abusive. Link to positive mental health.

Whilst Hackett’s model is focused on sexual abuse, it is a useful generic starting point for categorising other types of peer-on-peer abuse

## **REFERENCES**

### **INTERNAL REFERENCES**

- Anti-bullying Policy
- ICT Acceptable use policy
- Mobile phone and mobile devices policy
- Safeguarding and protection policy
- Provision Rules

## External references

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Provisions (May 2018) Part 5 KCSIE

Preventing and tackling bullying (July 2017)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025)

[Keeping children safe in education 2025 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101311/keeping-children-safe-in-education-2025.pdf)

A continuum of behaviours (Hackett 2010)

Protocol for Managing Peer-on-peer Harmful Sexual Behaviour in Schools, Settings and Provisions (December 2018)

<https://czone.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/4428/protocol-for-managing-peer-on-peerharmful-sexual-behaviour-in-schools-4-final.pdf>

<https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/clients-and-sectors/safeguarding/farrer--cosafeguarding-peer-on-peer-abuse-toolkit-2019.pdf>

APPENDIX A – A CONTINUUM OF BEHAVIOURS

**A continuum of behaviours**

It is vital for professionals to distinguish normal from abnormal sexual behaviours. Chaffin et al (2002, p208) suggest a child's sexual behaviour should be considered abnormal if it:

- occurs at a frequency greater than would be developmentally expected
- interferes with the child's development
- occurs with coercion, intimidation, or force
- is associated with emotional distress
- occurs between children of divergent ages or developmental abilities
- repeatedly recurs in secrecy after intervention by caregivers.

Hackett (2010) has proposed a continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant:

**Normal**

- Developmentally expected
- Socially acceptable
- Consensual, mutual, reciprocal
- Shared decision making

**Inappropriate**

- Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group
- Context for behaviour may be inappropriate
- Generally consensual and reciprocal

**Problematic**

- Problematic and concerning behaviours
- Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected
- No overt elements of victimisation
- Consent issues may be unclear
- May lack reciprocity or equal power
- May include levels of compulsivity

**Abusive**

- Victimising intent or outcome
- Includes misuse of power
- Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance
- Intrusive
- Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim
- May include elements of expressive violence

**Violent**

- Physically violent sexual abuse
- Highly intrusive
- Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator
- Sadism

1 Responses

2 Prevention

3 Assessment

4 Interventions

5 Developments



## APPENDIX B – BROOK MODEL OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

## Behaviours: age 0 to 5 years

All green, amber and red behaviours require some form of attention and response. It is the level of intervention that will vary.

### ● Green behaviours

- holding or playing with own genitals
- attempting to touch or curiosity about other children's genitals
- attempting to touch or curiosity about breasts, bottoms or genitals of adults
- games e.g. mummies and daddies, doctors and nurses
- enjoying nakedness
- interest in body parts and what they do
- curiosity about the differences between boys and girls

### ● Amber behaviours

- preoccupation with adult sexual behaviour
- pulling other children's pants down/skirts up/trousers down against their will
- talking about sex using adult slang
- preoccupation with touching the genitals of other people
- following others into toilets or changing rooms to look at them or touch them
- talking about sexual activities seen on TV/online

### ● Red behaviours

- persistently touching the genitals of other children
- persistent attempts to touch the genitals of adults
- simulation of sexual activity in play
- sexual behaviour between young children involving penetration with objects
- forcing other children to engage in sexual play

#### What is green behaviour?

Green behaviours reflect safe and healthy sexual development. They are:

- displayed between children or young people of similar age or developmental ability
- reflective of natural curiosity, experimentation, consensual activities and positive choices

#### What is amber behaviour?

Amber behaviours have the potential to be outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be:

- unusual for that particular child or young person
- of potential concern due to age, or developmental differences
- of potential concern due to activity type, frequency, duration or context in which they occur

#### What is red behaviour?

Red behaviours are outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be:

- excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening
- involving significant age, developmental, or power differences
- of concern due to the activity type, frequency, duration or the context in which they occur

#### What can you do?

Green behaviours provide opportunities to give positive feedback and additional information.

#### What can you do?

Amber behaviours signal the need to take notice and gather information to assess the appropriate action.

#### What can you do?

Red behaviours indicate a need for immediate intervention and action.

Brook has taken every care to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate and up-to-date at the time of being published. As information and knowledge is constantly changing, readers are strongly advised to use this information for up to one month from print date. Brook accepts no responsibility for difficulties that may arise as a result of an individual acting on the advice and recommendations it contains.

Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool adapted with permission from True Relationships & Reproductive Health, (2012), Traffic Lights guide to sexual behaviours in children and young people: identify, understand and respond. Brisbane: True Relationships & Reproductive Health, Australia.

Limited Company registered in England and Wales, number 2466940. Registered Charity in England and Wales, number 703015. Registered Charity in Scotland, number SC045788.

## Behaviours: age 5 to 9 years

All green, amber and red behaviours require some form of attention and response. It is the level of intervention that will vary.

### Green behaviours

- feeling and touching own genitals
- curiosity about other children's genitals
- curiosity about sex and relationships, e.g. differences between boys and girls, how sex happens, where babies come from, same-sex relationships
- sense of privacy about bodies
- telling stories or asking questions using swear and slang words for parts of the body

### Amber behaviours

- questions about sexual activity which persist or are repeated frequently, despite an answer having been given
- sexual bullying face to face or through texts or online messaging
- engaging in mutual masturbation
- persistent sexual images and ideas in talk, play and art
- use of adult slang language to discuss sex

### Red behaviours

- frequent masturbation in front of others
- sexual behaviour engaging significantly younger or less able children
- forcing other children to take part in sexual activities
- simulation of oral or penetrative sex
- sourcing pornographic material online

#### What is green behaviour?

Green behaviours reflect safe and healthy sexual development. They are:

- displayed between children or young people of similar age or developmental ability
- reflective of natural curiosity, experimentation, consensual activities and positive choices

#### What can you do?

Green behaviours provide opportunities to give positive feedback and additional information.

#### What is amber behaviour?

Amber behaviours have the potential to be outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be:

- unusual for that particular child or young person
- of potential concern due to age, or developmental differences
- of potential concern due to activity type, frequency, duration or context in which they occur

#### What can you do?

Amber behaviours signal the need to take notice and gather information to assess the appropriate action.

#### What is red behaviour?

Red behaviours are outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be:

- excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening
- involving significant age, developmental, or power differences
- of concern due to the activity type, frequency, duration or the context in which they occur

#### What can you do?

Red behaviours indicate a need for immediate intervention and action.

Brook has taken every care to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate and up-to-date at the time of being published. As information and knowledge is constantly changing, readers are strongly advised to use this information for up to one month from print date. Brook accepts no responsibility for difficulties that may arise as a result of an individual acting on the advice and recommendations it contains.

Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool adapted with permission from True Relationships & Reproductive Health, (2012), Traffic Lights guide to sexual behaviours in children and young people: identify, understand and respond. Brisbane: True Relationships & Reproductive Health, Australia.

Limited Company registered in England and Wales, number 2466940. Registered Charity in England and Wales, number 703015. Registered Charity in Scotland, number SCD45788.

## Behaviours: age 9 to 13 years

All green, amber and red behaviours require some form of attention and response. It is the level of intervention that will vary.

### Green behaviours

- solitary masturbation
- use of sexual language including swear and slang words
- having girl/boyfriends who are of the same, opposite or any gender
- interest in popular culture, e.g. fashion, music, media, online games, chatting online
- need for privacy
- consensual kissing, hugging, holding hands with peer

### Amber behaviours

- uncharacteristic and risk-related behaviour, e.g. sudden and/or provocative changes in dress, withdrawal from friends, mixing with new or older people, having more or less money than usual, going missing
- verbal, physical or cyber/virtual sexual bullying involving sexual aggression
- LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) targeted bullying
- exhibitionism, e.g. flashing or mooning
- giving out contact details online
- viewing pornographic material
- worrying about being pregnant or having STIs

### Red behaviours

- exposing genitals or masturbating in public
- distributing naked or sexually provocative images of self or others
- sexually explicit talk with younger children
- sexual harassment
- arranging to meet with an online acquaintance in secret
- genital injury to self or others
- forcing other children of same age, younger or less able to take part in sexual activities
- sexual activity e.g. oral sex or intercourse
- presence of sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- evidence of pregnancy

#### What is green behaviour?

Green behaviours reflect safe and healthy sexual development. They are:

- displayed between children or young people of similar age or developmental ability
- reflective of natural curiosity, experimentation, consensual activities and positive choices

#### What is amber behaviour?

Amber behaviours have the potential to be outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be:

- unusual for that particular child or young person
- of potential concern due to age, or developmental differences
- of potential concern due to activity type, frequency, duration or context in which they occur

#### What is red behaviour?

Red behaviours are outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be:

- excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening
- involving significant age, developmental, or power differences
- of concern due to the activity type, frequency, duration or the context in which they occur

#### What can you do?

Green behaviours provide opportunities to give positive feedback and additional information.

#### What can you do?

Amber behaviours signal the need to take notice and gather information to assess the appropriate action.

#### What can you do?

Red behaviours indicate a need for immediate intervention and action.

Brook has taken every care to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate and up-to-date at the time of being published. As information and knowledge is constantly changing, readers are strongly advised to use this information for up to one month from print date. Brook accepts no responsibility for difficulties that may arise as a result of an individual acting on the advice and recommendations it contains.

Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool adapted with permission from True Relationships & Reproductive Health, (2012). Traffic Lights guide to sexual behaviours in children and young people: identify, understand and respond, Brisbane: True Relationships & Reproductive Health, Australia.

Limited Company registered in England and Wales, number 2466940, Registered Charity in England and Wales, number 703015, Registered Charity in Scotland, number SC045788.

## Behaviours: age 13 to 17 years

All green, amber and red behaviours require some form of attention and response. It is the level of intervention that will vary.

### Green behaviours

- solitary masturbation
- sexually explicit conversations with peers
- obscenities and jokes within the current cultural norm
- interest in erotica/pornography
- use of internet/e-media to chat online
- having sexual or non-sexual relationships
- sexual activity including hugging, kissing, holding hands
- consenting oral and/or penetrative sex with others of the same or opposite gender who are of similar age and developmental ability
- choosing not to be sexually active

### Amber behaviours

- accessing exploitative or violent pornography
- uncharacteristic and risk-related behaviour, e.g. sudden and/or provocative changes in dress, withdrawal from friends, mixing with new or older people, having more or less money than usual, going missing
- concern about body image
- aking and sending naked or sexually provocative images of self or others
- single occurrence of peeping, exposing, mooning or obscene gestures
- giving out contact details online
- joining adult-only social networking sites and giving false personal information
- arranging a face to face meeting with an online contact alone

### Red behaviours

- exposing genitals or masturbating in public
- preoccupation with sex, which interferes with daily function
- sexual degradation/humiliation of self or others
- attempting/forcing others to expose genitals
- sexually aggressive/exploitative behaviour
- sexually explicit talk with younger children
- sexual harassment
- non-consensual sexual activity
- use of/acceptance of power and control in sexual relationships
- genital injury to self or others
- sexual contact with others where there is a big difference in age or ability
- sexual activity with someone in authority and in a position of trust
- sexual activity with family members
- involvement in sexual exploitation and/or trafficking
- sexual contact with animals
- receipt of gifts or money in exchange for sex

#### What is green behaviour?

Green behaviours reflect safe and healthy sexual development. They are:

- displayed between children or young people of similar age or developmental ability
- reflective of natural curiosity, experimentation, consensual activities and positive choices

#### What is amber behaviour?

Amber behaviours have the potential to be outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be:

- unusual for that particular child or young person
- of potential concern due to age, or developmental differences
- of potential concern due to activity type, frequency, duration or context in which they occur

#### What is red behaviour?

Red behaviours are outside of safe and healthy behaviour. They may be:

- excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening
- involving significant age, developmental, or power differences
- of concern due to the activity type, frequency, duration or the context in which they occur

#### What can you do?

Green behaviours provide opportunities to give positive feedback and additional information.

#### What can you do?

Amber behaviours signal the need to take notice and gather information to assess the appropriate action.

#### What can you do?

Red behaviours indicate a need for immediate intervention and action.

Brook has taken every care to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate and up-to-date at the time of being published. As information and knowledge is constantly changing, readers are strongly advised to use this information for up to one month from print date. Brook accepts no responsibility for difficulties that may arise as a result of an individual acting on the advice and recommendations it contains.

Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool adapted with permission from True Relationships & Reproductive Health, (2012). Traffic Lights guide to sexual behaviours in children and young people: identify, understand and respond. Brisbane: True Relationships & Reproductive Health, Australia.

United Company registered in England and Wales, number 2466940. Registered Charity in England and Wales, number 703015. Registered Charity in Scotland, number SC045788.