

Child on Child Sexual Abuse

ISP Whitstable

Action Plan 2024-2025



Approved by:	Local Governing Body	Date: July 2025
Last reviewed on:	July 2025	
Next review due by:	July 2026	

Introduction

Child-on-child sexual abuse is sexual abuse that happens between children of a similar age or stage of development. It can happen between any number of children and can affect any age group (Department for Education (DfE), 2018). Children can experience child-on-child sexual abuse in a wide range of settings, including:

- at school
- at home or in someone else's home
- in public spaces
- online

(NSPCC, 2018).

Child-on-child sexual abuse can be harmful to the children who display it as well as those who experience it.

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online. (KCSiE 2024)

All staff should be clear as to the school or college's policy and procedures regarding child-on-child 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.

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

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature. Examples of which are listed below. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" 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.

Child-on-child 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 children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- 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 nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- upskirting 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).

Recognising Child-on-Child sexual abuse

It can be difficult to work out if a child is displaying appropriate, inappropriate, problematic or abusive sexual behaviour.

Examples of sexually abusive behaviour may include:

- inappropriate or unwanted sexualised touching
- pressurising, forcing or coercing others to perform or take part in sexual acts
- pressuring, forcing or coercing someone to share nude images (sexting)
- sharing sexual images of a person without their consent
- taking a picture under a person's clothing, without their consent ('upskirting')
- sexual harassment
- sexual or sexist name calling

(Contextual Safeguarding Network, 2020).

Signs that a child may have experienced child-on-child sexual abuse

Indicators that a child has experienced child-on-child sexual abuse may be physical or behavioural. A child or young person may appear withdrawn, frightened or begin to act differently from usual. They may also display physical signs such as noticeable discomfort in their genital or anal area.

Barriers to disclosure

Children do not always feel able to speak out about their experiences of child-on-child sexual abuse.

They may be afraid of:

- being considered a 'snitch'
- getting in trouble themselves
- how they will be perceived by others
- teachers or other adults not being discrete
- their parents being informed

(Contextual Safeguarding Network, 2020).

If a child is unsure about whether they have been sexually abused, they might be worried about causing a fuss or getting someone else in trouble for 'no reason'.

Children's understanding of child-on-child sexual abuse

Children may not always understand that they have experienced or carried out child-on-child sexual abuse. This might be because:

- they don't understand what constitutes appropriate, inappropriate, problematic or abusive sexualised behaviour
- they have experienced sexual abuse themselves and don't realise that what happened to them was wrong
- they don't know whether consent was given
- the abuse happened between friends or partners
- the abuse took place online
- they blame themselves for the abuse they received
- younger children lack knowledge of sex and sexuality as they are less likely to have received any relationships and sex education

Preventing child-on-child sexual abuse

All organisations and individuals that work with children have a responsibility to keep them safe. At ISP we understand the importance of creating a healthy and safe environment for all children and young people and challenge societal norms that may allow child-on-child sexual abuse to take place.

Child-on-child Sexual Abuse Action Plan

This action plan focusses on areas where a dedicated action plan will improve the safeguarding afforded to children who may be at risk of child on child sexual abuse.

Area of responsibility	Actions to be taken	Outcome	Deadline	Update
Leadership and values	• Creation and maintenance of an appropriate school policy to reflect child-on-child sexual abuse in which current advice from the DfE and KCSIE 2024 is followed. • Development and maintenance of rigorous recruitment policies which include core school values and ensure signs of child-on-child sexual abuse are identified and addressed as appropriate • Key individuals amongst governors, managers and staff with responsibility for safeguarding also understand the subject of child-on-child sexual abuse. • Creation and maintenance of a culture where child-on-child sexual abuse is not tolerated in any form and where children are explicitly taught social norms and are encouraged to speak up about any concerns they may have.	• A safe learning environment is created across the school, behaviours which harm the ability of different individuals and groups to work together are challenged • All new staff are aware of the school's expectations and subscribe to its values • All members of SLT undertake safer recruitment training. • The school leadership takes ownership of child-on-child sexual abuse concerns and appropriate oversight is provided • Child-on-child sexual abuse is considered as a risk at a leadership level within the organisation with any such concerns being reported promptly to SLT • Daily staff group debriefs ensure an appropriate culture is maintained and modelled.	July 2026	Ongoing compliance

Area of responsibility	Actions to be taken	Outcome	Deadline	Update
Partnership	• Maintenance of a single point of contact for child-on-child sexual abuse to coordinate information sharing between different departments and curriculum areas • Development of links with other schools on the agenda • Development of links between key school staff/governors and external partners, including the Local Authority and Police	• School communications and the sharing of concerns relating to child-on-child sexual abuse are coordinated effectively • SPoC sits with the DSL/Deputy DSL • The school can benefit from existing best practice and resources • The school shares information and can access statutory assistance where necessary to support vulnerable individuals	July 2026	Ongoing compliance
Safeguarding and pastoral care	• Inclusion of child-on-child sexual abuse within safeguarding policy and procedure • Development and implementation of rolling cross-organisation training plan to increase organisational awareness • Consideration of a cross-school safeguarding panel to assess and manage concerns relating to extremism and radicalisation	• All are aware of the safeguarding procedure and that child-on-child sexual abuse is included within it • All understand what is meant by the term's child-on-child sexual abuse and are comfortable sharing concerns about child-on-child sexual abuse • A whole school approach is taken to the support of learners who may be vulnerable to any sexual abuse	July 2026	Ongoing compliance

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Area of responsibility	Actions to be taken	Outcome	Deadline	Update
		• Staff feel confident and protected in raising any concerns which may place the safety of learners at risk • Learners are protected whilst they are studying or working externally to the school.		

Student and learner resilience	• Include activities within existing lesson structure to enhance student and learner resilience for example, internet safety sessions and activities to improve critical thinking skills • Raise awareness and confidence amongst tutors and enrichment colleagues about the importance of critical thinking skills • Raise awareness of all colleagues and students or learners about the risks which may occur outside school times • All staff receive appropriate training to educate and challenge on the principals of mutual respect and tolerance and encourage democratic participation	• Students and learners have good critical engagement skills and understand the need and value of mutual respect and tolerance • Students and learners feel comfortable sharing any concerns they have about behaviour or information in or outside school • Development of school council and greater understanding of the responsibility of being a representative and all it entails. • All learners are encouraged to respect others with regard to sexual behaviour and are educated in the options for civic engagement • Learners understand what the school values mean in practice	July 2026	School council to be further developed as numbers grow. Ongoing compliance
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Area of responsibility	Actions to be taken	Outcome	Deadline	Update
	• Opportunities to promote values are identified and utilised within the curriculum and within enrichment activities			

Internet safety	• Inclusion of reference to child-on-child sexual abuse within ICT code of conduct • Deliver awareness raising training to ICT colleagues about how child-on-child sexual abuse may manifest itself	• Colleagues understand what child-on-child sexual abuse looks like and are confident to share concerns through the appropriate processes if they do encounter such incidences • Students and learners understand the risks attached regarding child-on-child sexual abuse and understand the social norms, standards of behaviour expected and the school's process in dealing with these areas	July 2026	Ongoing compliance. Closely monitored internet access through Smoothwall
Reputation and brand	• Development of policies which outline when the school's branding can be used and the responsibilities which come with its use • Development of a protocol for monitoring the school's online presence which includes sexual or sexualised references • Delivery of awareness raising training to communications colleagues	• Any references to the school online are picked up quickly and referred for action if they have links to child-on-child sexual abuse or sexualised connotations • School administration, tutors and learners are aware of their responsibility in the online space regarding the school's brand and reputation	July 2026	Search engine alerts utilised for this purpose. Ongoing compliance
Area of responsibility	Actions to be taken	Outcome	Deadline	Update
	• Delivery of awareness raising to all administration, tutors and students or learners advising of responsibility in the online space			

School Environment	• Development of policies governing events organised by staff, learners or visitors on school premises • Creation of a code of conduct policy and communication plan for setting expectations on learner behaviour	• Learners are aware of the conduct expected by the school in creating a safe space for all groups on site • A safe learning space is created, avoiding the likelihood of child-on-child sexual abuse and where sexualised behaviour is not tolerated	July 2026	Ongoing compliance
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1.	July 2023
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