

Shelton Junior School



*Managing allegations against
other pupils: Peer on Peer abuse*

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Managing Allegations against other Pupils

At Shelton Junior School we believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the school and other students. We recognise that children may abuse their peers physically, sexually and emotionally; abuse is abuse and this will not be tolerated or passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', 'boys being boys' or 'part of growing up'. We will take this as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult, and address it through the same processes as any safeguarding issue.

We also recognise that children who abuse others and any other child affected by peer on peer abuse are also likely to have considerable welfare and safeguarding issues themselves.

What is peer on peer abuse?

- *Peer on peer abuse features physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse of a child/young person by their peers. This is most likely to include but is not limited to:*
 - *Bullying (including cyberbullying);*
 - *Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm;*
 - *Sexual violence and sexual harassment;*
 - *Sexting, also known as youth produced sexual imagery; and*
 - *Initiating/hazing type violence and rituals.*

- *It can affect any child/young person, sometimes vulnerable children are targeted. For example:*
 - *Those living with domestic abuse or intra-familial abuse in their histories*
 - *Young people in care*
 - *Those who have experienced bereavement through the loss of a parent, sibling or friend*
 - *Black and minority ethnic children are under identified as victims but are over identified as perpetrators*
 - *There is recognition of the gendered nature of peer on peer abuse; it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators. However both girls and boys can experience peer on peer abuse but they are likely to experience it differently i.e. girls being*

sexually touched/assaulted or boys being subject to homophobic taunts/initiation/hazing type (rituals and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group) violence.

- It is influenced by the nature of the environments in which children/young people spend their time - home, school, peer group and community - and is built upon notions of power and consent. Power imbalances related to gender, social status within a group, intellectual ability, economic wealth, social marginalisation etc, can all be used to exert power over a peer.
- Peer on peer abuse involves someone who abuses a 'vulnerability' or power imbalance to harm another, and have the opportunity or be in an environment where this is possible.
- While perpetrators of peer on peer abuse pose a risk to others they are often victims of abuse themselves.

The above information is based on information in [Practitioner Briefing: What is peer on peer abuse? MsUnderstood Partnership \(2015\)](#)

We recognise that some pupils will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy, including bullying/online bullying and prejudice-based bullying
- E-Safety Policy including sexting/'youth produced sexual imagery' and extremist material
- Children who runaway or go missing protocols
- Relationships and sex education Policy

We will also act to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse by ensuring we provide a safe environment, promote positive standards of behaviour, have effective systems in place where children can raise concerns and provide safeguarding through the curriculum via PSHE and other curriculum opportunities. This may include targeted work with children identified as vulnerable or being at risk and developing risk assessment and targeted work with those identified as being a potential risk to others.

Action on concerns

Peer to peer abuse may be a one off serious incident or an accumulation of incidents. Staff may be able to easily identify some behaviour/s as abusive however in some circumstances it may be less clear. Reports of sexual violence and harassment are likely to be complex and require difficult professional decisions to be made. In all cases the member of staff should take the concerns seriously and reassure the child that they will be supported and kept safe. Staff must follow the school's Child Protection Policy and notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another pupil, members of staff should consider if the issues raised indicate that the child and/or alleged perpetrator may have emerging needs, complex/serious needs or child protection concerns and follow the processes set out in the Child Protection Policy.

Particular considerations for cases where peer on peer abuse is a factor include:

- What is the nature, extent and context of the behaviour including verbal, physical, sexting and/or online abuse. Was there coercion, physical aggression, bullying, bribery or attempts to ensure secrecy? What was the duration and frequency? Is the incident a one off or a sustained pattern of abuse? Were other children and /or adults involved? Has a crime been committed?*
- What is the child's age, development, capacity to understand and make decisions (including anything that might have had an impact on this i.e. coercion), and family and social circumstances?*
- What are the relative chronological and developmental ages of the children? Does the victim or perpetrator have a disability or learning difficulty? Are there any differentials in power or authority?*
- Is the behaviour age appropriate or not? Does it involve inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation?*
- Are there any risks to the child victim or alleged perpetrator themselves and others i.e. other children in school, adult students, school staff, in the child's household, extended family, peer group or wider social network?*

- What are the wishes of victims in terms of how they want to proceed?

Immediate consideration should be given to how best to support and protect the victim and alleged perpetrator and any other children involved/impacted. This may include consideration of the alleged perpetrator being removed from any classes they share with the victim, ensuring there is a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport to and from the setting.

All decisions will be made in the best interests of the child and on a case by case basis with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) taking a leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as Children's Social care and the Police as required. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will refer to relevant assessment tools and guidance as appropriate such as:

- [Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges](#)
- [Sexting in Schools and Colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people](#)
- [Brook Traffic Light Tool](#)
- [DSCBs' Thresholds Document](#)
- [DSCBs Safeguarding Children Procedures](#), in particular Children who present a risk of harm to others and E-Safety and Internet Abuse

Whenever there is an allegation of abuse, including concerns about sexual harassment and violence, made against a child, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and other appropriate staff will draw together separate risk and needs assessments and action plans to support the victim and the perpetrator. These will consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support;
- The alleged perpetrator; and
- All the other children (and if appropriate adult pupils and staff) at the school, especially any actions that are needed to protect them.

All reports of peer on peer abuse (including sexual harassment and/or sexual violence) will be recorded in the child's safeguarding/child protection file. This will include all decision making, risk and needs assessment and plans must be recorded in writing as outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

Where appropriate incidents may be managed internally (low level needs), via early help (emerging needs) or through children's social care (complex/serious needs or child protection concerns); reports to the police will be run in parallel with Children's Social Care as outlined in the DSCBs' safeguarding children procedures.

All risk and needs assessment and action plans whether internal or multi-agency will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Where the victim or alleged perpetrator transfer to another education setting the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will ensure the new provider will be made aware of any on-going support needs (and will discuss this with the victim and where appropriate their parents, as to the most suitable way of doing this) as well as transferring the safeguarding/child protection file. In the case of the alleged perpetrator, where appropriate, this will also include potential risks to other children and staff.

Any suspicion or allegations that a child has been sexually abused or is likely to sexually abuse another child (or adult) or where there are concerns about any other form of abuse, a referral must be made immediately to Children's Social Care and where appropriate the Police.

This policy enables Shelton Junior School to carry out our functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children under Sections 175 and 157 of the [Education Act \(2002\)](#). The policy is in line with the following legislation and guidance:

- [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#)
- [The Children Act \(1989\) and Children Act \(2004\)](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(September 2018\)](#)
- [Information Sharing \(2018\)](#)
- [Protection of Freedoms Act \(2012\)](#)
- [The Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales \(2015\)](#)
- [The Prevent Duty: departmental advice for schools and childcare providers \(2015\)](#)
- [Prevent Duty Guidance: for further education institutions in England and Wales \(2015\)](#)
- [Mandatory reporting of Female Genital Mutilation – procedural information \(2015\)](#)

- [Sexual Offences Act \(2003\) and Serious Crime Act \(2015\)](#)

Please refer to Shelton Junior School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy which is consistent with [Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children web-based procedures](#) which can be found via the school website: www.sheltonjuniors.co.uk and is also located on the [Policy and Procedures](#) page of www.derbyscb.org.uk. The school will adhere to the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children procedures.