St Mary's CE Primary School

Sexual Harassment and Violence between Children in School Policy

Investing in the uniqueness of each individual.

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made"
Psalms 139 v 14

Version: 1
Date of Next Review: October 2027

St Mary's CE Primary is determined to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to protect children and young people from harm.

This policy sets out what sexual violence and sexual harassment is, how to minimise the risk of it occurring and what to do when it does occur, or is alleged to have occurred.

Context

- Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex.
- It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.
- Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment.
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.
- It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are extremely complex to manage. It is essential that victims are protected, offered appropriate support and every effort is made to ensure their education is not disrupted. It is also important that other children, adult students and school and college staff are supported and protected as appropriate.
- It is important that all school staff have an understanding of what sexual violence and sexual harassment might look like and what to do if they have a concern or receive a report. Whilst any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should be taken seriously, staff should be aware it is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys.

Our school will ensure that staff are aware of the importance of:-

• making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up;

• not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys";

• challenging behaviour (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia and flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them;

• understanding that all of the above can be driven by wider societal factors beyond the school and college, such as everyday sexist stereotypes and everyday sexist language.

SEND

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in SEND children. These can include:

• assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;

• the potential for children with SEND being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying and harassment, without outwardly showing any signs; and

• communication barriers and difficulties overcoming these barriers.

Any reports of abuse involving children with SEND will therefore require close liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) and the SENCOs.

LGBT

- Children who are lesbian, gay, bi, or trans (LGBT) can be targeted by their peers. In some cases, a child who is perceived by their peers to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT.

Our school recognises and is aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way. When referring to sexual violence in this advice, we do so in the context of child on child sexual violence.

Definitions Sexual violence

Sexual Offences

• Rape

• Assault by Penetration

• Sexual Assault: intentionally touching another person in a way that is sexual.

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.

Sexual harassment

In the context of child on child sexual harassment, this means 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline.

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.

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 displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature;

• online sexual harassment.

This may include:

• non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos.

• sexualised online bullying;

• unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media;

• sexual exploitation; coercion and threats.

Harmful sexual behaviours

Harmful sexual behaviours are described as problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviours that are developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than 2 years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. Children displaying harmful sexual behaviours have often experienced their own abuse and trauma.

Legal responsibilities

Our school has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of our children. As part of this duty, schools and colleges are required to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. All schools and colleges must have regard to:

Keeping children safe in education (2026) and **Working together to safeguard children(2026)**

Schools and colleges should also be aware of their obligations under:

Human Rights Act 1998

Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

The guidance states that schools and colleges should:

• consider the makeup of their own student body, including the gender and age range of its pupils, and whether additional support for children with protected characteristics - who are potentially at greater risk - is appropriate

• consider what they can do to foster healthy and respectful relationships between boys and girls including through relationship and sex education (RSHE) and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE)

• ensure that their response to boy on boy and girl on girl sexual violence and sexual harassment is equally robust as it is for sexual violence and sexual harassment between children of the opposite sex.

Responding and taking action.

Our school staff will respond to any incidents/allegations/disclosures immediately, appropriately and effectively by following our safeguarding principles and procedures. (See separate Safeguarding policy) The DSL will be informed who will then take appropriate action depending on the nature of the incident. Appropriate actions include:-

• If a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger or has been harmed then a referral will be made to children's social care.

• Reports of rape, penetration and sexual assaults are crimes. The DSL will contact the police.

• Parents or carers should normally be informed unless this would put the victim at greater risk

Nominated Persons (trained to Level 3)

Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mrs T Ferris.

Deputy Safeguarding Leads are:

Ceridwen Heaney (Senior Teacher)

Joanne Jack (TA and Wraparound Care Supervisor)

Anonymity

Where an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system, schools and colleges should be aware of anonymity, witness support and the criminal process in general so they can offer support and act appropriately. Information is available from *CPS: Safeguarding children as victims and witnesses.*

Prevention

Our school has a clear set of values and standards, and these are upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life. They are underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and also taught through our RSHE curriculum.

Topics can include:-

- healthy and respectful relationships;
- what respectful behaviour looks like;
- body confidence and self-esteem.

Advice and guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children July 2026
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges DfE September 2021
- Barnados
- NSPCC
- Anti-Bullying Alliance

This policy is to be reviewed by the Head of School annually. The next scheduled review is October 2027.