



## DAUNTSEY'S SCHOOL

### CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY

*Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)* states that **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. **All** staff should be clear as to the school's policy and procedures with regard to 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 school 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 child-on-child abuse they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or deputy).

It is essential that **all** staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children, many of which are listed below, that are abusive in nature. 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. Staff recognise that while both boys and girls can abuse their peers, it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys instigators of such abuse.

*Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)* also states that the fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are LGBT can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT.

Risks can be compounded where children who are LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced, and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

***Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)*** also makes clear that boarding schools have additional factors to consider with regard to safeguarding and should be especially alert to signs of abuse, for example inappropriate pupil relationships. Such schools must comply with their obligations as set out in the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

The Governors, SMT, and all staff and volunteers at Dauntsey’s are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of ‘child-on-child’ abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the School and online.

**This Policy should be read in conjunction with:**

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy	Anti-Bullying Policy
Boarding Aims	Policy and Procedures to Deal with the Sharing of Nudes and Semi-Nudes
Complementary Curriculum (PSHE) Policy	Rules, Rewards and Sanctions
Acceptable Use Policy for Pupils	
E-Safety Policy	

**This Policy should also be read with the understanding of the following principles based on the KCSIE Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges September 2023:**

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children at Dauntsey’s is the responsibility of **all** staff.
- Staff approach must be child-centred which means that they should always consider what is in the best interests of the pupils in our care.
- Prompt action and sharing of information is crucial in order to safeguard the welfare of pupils.
- Staff should be aware that abusive behaviour amongst peers can put children in danger: abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter” or “part of growing up”.
- Staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child-on-child abuse.
- As regarding any safeguarding issue, all members of the community are asked to cultivate an understanding that ‘it could happen here’ and be prepared to ‘think the unthinkable’.

**Definition and Forms of ‘Child-on-Child’ Abuse:**

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that should be dealt with by the School’s disciplinary procedures. If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse; unkindness, physical fighting and harassment between children are not always or inevitably seen as child protection issues. However, it may be appropriate to regard ‘child-on-child’ behaviour as abusive if harm is caused because:

- There is a significant **power imbalance** between the young people concerned. The abuse of children is often constructed around the age differential between the abuser and the abuse, but in cases of ‘child-on-child’ abuse this may not always be the case. In such circumstances, power

imbalances can manifest in other ways, for example gender, social status within peer groups, intellectual ability, physical development, economic wealth, social marginalisation and so on. It is important to note that the perpetrator and/or victim may well be subject to power imbalance with other individuals in an incident of abuse and so it is important to investigate any incident as fully as possible.

- The perpetrator has **repeatedly** tried to harm one or more children.
- There are concerns about the **intention** of the alleged perpetrator. If evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether severe harm was caused or not.

Different forms of abuse are well documented in our **Safeguarding and Child Protection policy**. These include physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect. In the context of ‘Child-on-Child’ abuse examples include:

- 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);
- upskirting (which is a criminal offence), 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).

Issues surrounding Honour Based Violence (HBV), Forced Marriage and Radicalisation may also be relevant where coercion or power imbalances are involved between peers. It is also important to recognise that child-on-child abuse may well involve pupils at Dauntsey’s and young persons and children in other contexts e.g. outside Dauntsey’s, thus making a full range of abuse types possible. When dealing with any disclosure of abuse it is important to remember the three bullet points above (under Definition and Forms of Child-on-Child Abuse) regarding **power, frequency and intention**. The extent to which any victim has given consent is also important.

## **Prevention:**

In the broadest sense it is hoped that the School's Code of Conduct creates and sustains an environment that helps to minimise the risk and occurrence of child-on-child abuse.

The School looks to take a proactive, preventative and educative approach to safeguarding issues with its staff and pupils. We seek to give teaching and learning opportunities to our pupils in a number of different areas of School life, including Complementary Curriculum, School and House assemblies, visiting speakers and chapel services.

Pupils should be aware that there are a variety of ways in which they can express their views and feelings on any pastoral matter, to access support in order to prevent abuse from occurring, to report abuse that is happening, and to find ongoing support after abuse has been identified. Options for pupils to find help and support if they feel they are being abused, or that one of their peers is at risk from abuse or child-on-child abuse, are published on the Safeguarding posters and Pastoral Information for Pupils leaflet clearly displayed throughout the school. Pupils can also make an anonymous report through Student Voice.

## **Procedures Adopted when a Disclosure of 'Child-on-Child' abuse is made:**

The following general principles and guidelines should be followed:

### *Initial response*

- Any direct disclosure by a pupil of an incident of abuse should be taken very seriously and managed sensitively. Basic principles of listening sensitively, providing reassurance, not asking leading questions and not guaranteeing confidentiality should be remembered.
- The pupil will be reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. They will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by making a disclosure nor will they ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- The response to all incidents should be conducted in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Any incident should be referred to the DSL/DDSL without delay.
- The DSL/DDSL should meet with staff involved and there should be subsequent interviews with the young people involved, if appropriate.
- If the incident involves the sharing of nudes or semi-nudes, the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) guidance 'Advice for education settings, responding to incidents and safeguarding children and young people' will be referred to.

### *Investigation*

- The DSL/DDSL will decide if further information is required in order to decide on the best response.

- House staff should be asked to provide relevant facts about the circumstances of pupils involved which House could influence the decisions of the DSL/DDSL.
- In incidents that involve young people not at Dauntsey's, the DSL will decide if there is a need to contact another school, college, setting or individual.
- If it is felt that there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that' the victim is 'suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm', it might be appropriate to temporarily exclude from School the pupil against whom an allegation of abuse has been made whilst the investigation is carried out.
- When necessary, the DSL will take advice from Children's Social Care on the investigation of such allegations and will take all appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils involved, including the pupil or pupils accused of abuse.
- If a pupil against whom an allegation of abuse has been made is required to be interviewed by the police, then the pupil will be supported during the interview by an appropriate adult.

#### *Risk Assessment and Referral*

- The DSL will assess the risk presented by the incident to the pupil/pupils involved and, in conjunction with the Head Master, will decide whether a referral to the police or social services is required, or whether to proceed using the School's pastoral support and disciplinary system or, if required, Early Help from our local network of supporting services as outlined in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Parents should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm.
- At any point in the process, if there is a concern a young person has been harmed, or is at risk of serious harm, a referral should be made to Children's Services or the MASH. Any staff member can make such a referral but should inform the DSL as soon as possible that a referral has been made.

#### *Recording Process and Outcomes*

- Notes should be made of all conversations and meetings to do with any incident of child-on-child abuse. Formal written records should be completed immediately or within 24 hours via the safeguarding platform MyConcern. Records should include date, time, place, persons involved, nature of disclosure and any relevant details. Records of all safeguarding concerns are kept by the DSL.
- The DSL and pastoral team will offer ongoing support in the best interests of the pupils in our care and action may need to be co-ordinated where there is a wider investigation involving Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

A. L. Jackson  
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