

# NEWLANDS GIRLS' SCHOOL

## POLICY DOCUMENT



# Sexual Violence and Harassment (Child-on-Child Abuse) Policy

<b>POLICY TYPE</b>	Voluntary/School Policy
<b>REVIEW DATE</b>	Annually – July 2024

<b>RESPONSIBLE</b>	
Leadership Team	Assistant Headteacher / DSL
Governing Committee	School Policy

<b>APPROVED</b>		
Approved by:	Headteacher	
Meeting date:	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	

**COURAGE COMMITMENT COMPASSION**

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. It is important that schools are 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 policy, we do so in the context of child on child sexual violence.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and upsetting. 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 that every effort is made to ensure their education is not disrupted. It is also important that other children, adult students and school staff are supported and protected as appropriate.

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage.

**As part of their safeguarding duties, all Staff must:**

- **Maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'.**
- Challenge inappropriate behaviours;
- make clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up;
- not tolerate or dismiss sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys"; and
- challenge physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.
- understand 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.

**What do we mean by sexual violence and sexual harassment between children?**

Definitions of what we mean by sexual violence, sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour can be accessed in Part five of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment:

[Keeping children safe in education 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92222/Keeping-children-safe-in-education-2023.pdf)

When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school/college. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. 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.

**The different forms that sexual harassment (child-on-child abuse) can take 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 and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature.
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.
- non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and videos. Taking and sharing nude photographs of under 18s is a criminal offence.
- sexualised online bullying;
- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media; and
- sexual exploitation; coercion and threats.

Coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they're not comfortable with online.

- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.

**Prevention**

The school has a clear set of values and standards. These will be upheld and demonstrated through all aspects of school life, including PSHE, assemblies, the Pastoral Programmes, the Behaviour Policy and our pastoral support system.

**PSHE topics include:**

- healthy and respectful relationships
- what respectful behaviour looks like
- consent
- gender roles, stereotyping, equality
- body confidence and self-esteem
- prejudiced behaviour
- that sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong
- addressing cultures of sexual harassment

**Dealing with Incidents**

In the first instance, normal safeguarding procedures of referral should be followed (please see *Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy*).

The initial response to a report from the student is important. It is essential that all victims are *reassured* that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up”. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report. For example, a friend may make a report or a member of school staff may overhear a conversation that suggests a girl has been harmed. As with all safeguarding concerns, it is important that in such instances staff take appropriate action in accordance with our Child Protection policy. They should not assume that someone else is responding to any incident or concern. **If in any doubt, staff should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a Deputy).** In such cases, the basic safeguarding principles remain the same.

### **School Procedure Following a Report:**

- When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, the incident should be passed to the Head of Year and DSL for investigation.
- A factual record should be made of the allegation.
- The DSL should contact RBWM to discuss the case where relevant. The DSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a referral where appropriate. Ultimately, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children.
- Where the complaint is reported and references inappropriate use of language, social media, or is associated with pupils from another school, the DSL will investigate and make a decision on a case-by-case basis about the way forward.
- If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place, the school will refer the case to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) where the police will likely become involved.
- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of referring to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice approach, in these cases.
- Parents, of both the student being complained about and the alleged victim, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral, unless this would put either student at greater risk.
- The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in both girls' files. The incident will also be recorded on the Child on Child Abuse log.
- It may be appropriate to suspend the girl identified as the perpetrator, for a period according to the school's behaviour policy and procedures.
- Where neither Social Care nor the police accept the complaint, a thorough school investigation should take place into the matter using the usual disciplinary procedures.
- In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a Preventative Supervision Plan.

(See Annex A)

- The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.
- In some cases of **sexual harassment**, for example, one-off incidents, the school may take the view that the children concerned are not in need of early help or that referrals to statutory services are not required, and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, utilising the behaviour policy and by providing pastoral support.
- Whatever the response, it will be underpinned by the principle that there is a **zero-tolerance** approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment and it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- **All** concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions will be recorded.

It is important to consider the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Victims should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. This will however need to be balanced with the school's or college's duty and responsibilities to protect other children.

## **Support**

Following the outcome of an allegation there are several ways in which students will be supported in school:

1. Outside Agency support. The law is there to protect children.
2. 1:1 sessions in the Student Focus Centre.
3. Support from Form Tutor and Head of Year.
4. Completion and revision of a Preventative Supervision Plan.
5. Through PSHE and a whole school approach to challenging sexual violence and harassment. This includes an annual bespoke safeguarding assembly on this topic.

It is important to recognise the importance of intra familial harms associated with any pupil involved in an allegation or assault of this nature and consideration should be given to any sibling or family support required.

## **Links with other policies:**

- Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy
- Behaviour Policy

## Annex A

### Preventative Supervision Plan – Child-on-Child Abuse

<b>In the classroom</b>
<b>Outside the classroom</b>
<b>Coming to and going from school</b>
<b>Communication with staff</b>
<b>Communication with parents</b>
<b>Monitoring and review arrangements</b>