



Heathfield Knoll School

Anti-bullying and Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

This policy is supported and complemented by the following policies:

- Acceptable use of ICT
- Accessibility
- Anti-Racism
- Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions
- Child on Child Harmful Sexual Behaviour
- Equal Opportunities
- Online Safety
- PSHE
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- SEND
- Sex & Relationships
- Wellbeing and Mental Health for Pupils
- Whistleblowing

Key personnel:

Headteacher	DDSL	Lawrence Collins
Deputy Headteacher	DDSL	Emma White
Head of Connect		Jane Cain
Head of EYFS	DDSL	Celia Swain
Head of Wellbeing	DSL	Teresa Stooksbury

This document is reviewed at least annually by T. Stooksbury, Head of Wellbeing or as events change or legislation requires. This is then approved by the Governing Board.

The Governing Board have the skills to support and advise the school in its decision making.

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1. Introduction

KSI Education, the Governing Board, the Senior Leadership Team, and all staff and volunteers at Heathfield Knoll School are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of bullying / child-on-child abuse both within and beyond the school.

The aim of the Anti-bullying Policy is to ensure that pupils learn in a supportive, caring, and safe environment where they feel secure and able to express themselves freely, where they can form relationships and learn at their own pace without anxiety. Anti-social behaviour affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Only when all issues of bullying are addressed will pupils be able to fully benefit from the opportunities available at Heathfield Knoll School.

All staff and parents must be vigilant for the signs of bullying and respond promptly and firmly to it in accordance with school policy. The consequences of bullying may be very serious and can cause psychological damage; therefore, we take it very seriously, taking action to reduce the risk of bullying at times and in places where it is most likely. Pupils must be encouraged to report all instances of bullying. Therefore, as a school, we are committed to raising awareness among all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, through training, to equip them to identify and deal with incidents of bullying, and more importantly, to prevent them.

This policy applies to all members of our school community, including those in our EYFS setting.

Heathfield Knoll School is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this Anti-bullying Policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010).

2. Definition

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school-aged children that involves a real perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

To be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can shift over time and in various situations, even when involving the same individuals.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional or psychological, – being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, threatening gestures.
- Physical – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, tripping or any use of violence, threatening or obscene gestures.
- Verbal – teasing and name-calling, including comments made against a particular group because of disability, gender, etc., sarcasm, insults or spreading rumours.
- Racial, religious or cultural – taunts, graffiti, gestures, insulting remarks on racial, religious or cultural grounds.
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments because of gender.
- Homophobic/transphobic – focus on the nature of a person's sexuality.
- Disability-related – focusing on an individual's physical or mental disability.

- Cyber – all areas of the internet, such as email and internet chat room misuse, social network sites, threats by text messages and phone calls. Misuse of associated technology, such as cameras and video facilities. This includes sexting, threatening, or blackmailing a person to share images. Producing fake AI images.
- Family-related – Unkindness because a child is adopted, is a carer, or a family member is in prison.

When assessing the seriousness of an incident and determining whether it constitutes bullying, consider the power relationship between the children carefully. Has the pupil experiencing it said that they don't like it? Does it involve a number of children ganging up on an individual? Does it target an aspect of their appearance, who they are or their personality?

Banter involves people with equal power, where no harm is intended or caused. As soon as the power shifts or hurt is felt or intended, then our alarm bells should sound because it is moving towards something harmful and potentially towards bullying.

This is not to say that children can't make jokes, but rather that we must all be aware of how power dynamics and context can affect the impact of our words and cause harm to others.

3. Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

A child may display signs or behaviour that might indicate they are being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school / doesn't want to go on the school minibus / begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school or takes unusual absences / begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning / feigns illness
- begins to do poorly in schoolwork
- comes home with clothes torn or has possessions which are damaged or 'go missing'
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay a bully) / has money continually 'lost'
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home starving (lunch has been stolen) / stops eating
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- is frightened to say what's wrong / gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous and jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, lack of concentration or truancy from school. Targets of bullying behaviour may experience many immediate mental or physical health-related consequences and may suffer from anxiety disorders and depression. In extreme cases, they are at risk of committing suicide.

Pupils who bully others may also experience short and long-term consequences of their bullying behaviour. They may become depressed as a result of their actions.

4. Procedures for dealing with bullying:

What to do if you think a child is being bullied

In the first instance, it is essential to make it clear to the target that revenge is not appropriate and to the bully that their behaviour is unacceptable and has caused distress. Every effort is made to resolve the problem through counselling of both parties.

At this stage, parents of both parties are informed of what has happened and how it has been dealt with. It is vital that everything that happens is carefully recorded (using Schoolbase or My Concern) in a clear and factual manner.

If you are the target

Share your feelings with someone else – speak to your form teacher/head of wellbeing / your friends about the incident. They will be able to advise and help you.

The Sharp System

Pupils in Years 5 and above can anonymously report an incident that is happening to themselves or others using the school's Sharp System. The Sharp System is accessible online, and pupils are able to report a concern they may have – the alert is then sent to the trusted user (Mrs Stooksbury), and she will deal with the concern. The Sharp system also delivers educational content to raise awareness on a wide range of subjects, including bullying, weapons and hate crime.

There are people outside of school who would be willing to help, e.g., Childline (0800 1111) or Samaritans (08457 90 90 90).

If you know someone is being bullied, support the target by offering your friendship and make it clear to them that, in your opinion, they should tell a trusted adult.

Parents

If you feel your child may be a target of bullying, inform the school immediately. Your concern will be taken seriously, and appropriate action will follow. Always take an active role in your child's education. Look for unusual behaviour in your children. It is essential that you advise your child not to retaliate. It can make matters worse!

If you know or suspect that your child is involved in bullying, please report the matter to the school. It will be in their best interests to bring the matter to a speedy conclusion by having it dealt with where it is happening.

5. Dealing with incidents of bullying

The school maintains a central record of bullying incidents to identify trends or patterns. From time to time, pupils have the opportunity to comment on anti-bullying procedures and their opinions are sought to check that they do not identify bullying as a problem in this school.

The following steps may be taken when dealing with incidents:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached
- A clear account of the incident will be recorded (on Schoolbase or My Concern), and interviews with all concerned will also be added
- Staff will be kept informed
- Parents will be kept informed
- Punitive measures will be used as appropriate
- In cases of severe and persistent bullying, exclusion may be a necessary measure.

Children involved in bullying will meet regularly with the relevant Key Stage lead at the end of the school day to discuss the events of the day. A diary may need to be kept by both children and the school. Regular contact will be kept with parents. Once the situation has been addressed, meetings will be held less frequently unless further action is required.

Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by:

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with a form tutor or member of staff of their choice
- Reassuring the pupil
- Offering continuous support
- Restoring self-esteem and confidence
- Taking the necessary steps to prevent more bullying

Pupils who have been involved in bullying as a perpetrator will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened
- Discovering why the pupil became involved
- Establishing the wrongdoing and the need to change
- Informing parents or guardians to help change the attitude of the pupil

The following disciplinary steps may be taken:

- Official warnings to cease offending
- Detention
- Exclusion from some area of the school premises
- Fixed-term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion

Within the curriculum, the school raises the awareness of the nature of bullying through inclusion in PSHE, form tutorial time, assemblies and subject areas, as appropriate, in an attempt to eradicate such behaviour. This policy applies equally to all areas of the School.

6. Online Bullying

Online Bullying (Cyberbullying) is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, e-mail, chat rooms, etc.) to harass, threaten or intimidate someone.

Online bullying can take many forms.

- Abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites
- Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- Stealing someone's online identity
- Spreading rumours online
- Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chat rooms or games
- Developing hate sites about another person
- Creating hurtful AI images of another person
- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Encouraging a young person to self-harm
- Pressuring children to send sexual messages or engage in sexual conversations

Online bullying is insidious; it can be conducted 24 hours a day, seven days a week, following children into their private space and outside school hours. It can be anonymous. The audience is large and can be reached rapidly. Unlike other forms of bullying, a single incident can be experienced as a multiple attack – a video posted to a website can be copied and shared on many different sites. Bystanders can become accessories by passing

on a humiliating message. Messages on social networking sites can harm social life and friendships, and, in the case of teaching staff, their reputation and credibility.

7. Strategies to address and prevent Online Bullying

All Heathfield Knoll school tutors make it clear to their tutor group what constitutes online bullying. They raise awareness of online bullying and remind pupils of their responsibilities in the use of ICT, both in school and beyond. Instances of online bullying will be taken very seriously, and any pupil who is a target should not hesitate to report it to their form tutors or a trusted adult. Any allegations will be investigated in conjunction with the ICT Technician, and sanctions will be imposed, the nature of which will be related to the individual situation.

- All pupils are reminded that they have signed an acceptable use policy to use ICT in school. Abuse of the school ICT system could result in that pupil being banned from use for a specified period.
- All computers / Chromebooks are monitored weekly by Mrs Stooksbury, and any improper usage is investigated. The ICT technician will also conduct searches of the internet following an allegation of cyberbullying.
- Mobile phones are not permitted in school
- E-safety is embedded within the PSHE and ICT programmes of study.
- We send out information advising parents on the issues surrounding the internet and helping them stay informed about emerging technologies their child might be using.
- We hold staff training sessions on e-safety.
- We ensure that all children know where to go for help, either through a member of staff, the 'Think you know' website, or by reporting it online.

8. Sharing nude or indecent imagery (youth-produced sexual imagery)

The term 'sexting' relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content; these are created and sent electronically. They are often 'shared' via social networking sites and instant messaging services.

Upskirting: 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 target humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone, regardless of gender, can be a target.

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The DSL will follow the UKCIS: Sexting in schools and colleges (updated March 2024).

[sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people](#)

9. Child-on-Child Abuse Context and Definition

All our staff must understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers that are actually abusive in nature, many 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 usual and not coming forward to report it.

All Heathfield Knoll School staff who work with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff should always act in the best interests of the child.

The DfE states that, " All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (referred to as child on child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or online." Child-on-Child abuse is the term chosen by the DfE and, by definition, it applies to abuse by one child of another child - regardless of the age, the stage of development or any age differential between them.

Child on Child abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others.

All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. All staff should be aware of safeguarding issues from peer abuse, including:

- bullying (including online bullying)
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence and sexual harassment
- sharing of nudes and semi-nudes; and
- initiation /hazing violence and rituals.

This abuse can:

- Be motivated by perceived differences, e.g. on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other differences
- Result in significant, long-lasting and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to the target; vulnerable adults are at particular risk of harm

Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs, e.g.:

- Significant disruption in their own lives
- Exposure to domestic abuse, or witnessing or suffering abuse
- Educational under-achievement
- Involved in crime

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the first priority of Heathfield Knoll School, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical bullying. School staff, alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or deputies, must make their own judgements about each specific case and will use this policy guidance to inform their decisions.

10. Heathfield Knoll School Responsibilities

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2026 states that

'All staff should be aware of systems within their school which support safeguarding, and these should be explained to them as part of induction. This should include the:

- *Safeguarding / child protection policy (which should include the procedures to deal with child-on-child abuse)'*

It also emphasises that the voice of the child must be heard.

'Governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, all systems and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.'

Child on Child abuse is referenced in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The

sensitive nature and specific issues involved with child-on-child harmful sexual abuse necessitate separate policy guidance (see child-on-child harmful sexual behaviour policy).

At Heathfield Knoll School, we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to the impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

11. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to explore some forms of child-on-child abuse. The policy also includes a planned and supportive response to the issues.

At Heathfield Knoll School, we have policies in place (listed on the front cover) that should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act 1989, which states that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document is [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#), highlighting that every assessment of a child, '*must be informed by the views of the child*'. This is echoed by [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2026\)](#), which emphasises the importance of ensuring that procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

Abuse and harmful behaviour

It is necessary to consider

- What abuse is and what it looks like
- How can it be managed
- What appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual
- What preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm?

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

- Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.
- Children can abuse other children. This can include (but is not limited to): abuse within intimate partner relationships; bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.
- Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action.
- Staff should be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.
- Staff should be aware of the added vulnerability of children and young people who have been the targets of violent crime (for example, mugging), including the risk that they may respond to this by abusing younger or weaker children.

The alleged perpetrator is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as pose a significant risk of harm to other children. Evidence suggests that such children may have

suffered considerable disruption in their lives, may have witnessed or been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, may have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and be in need of protection. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the alleged perpetrator must address their needs.

12. Types of abuse

Many forms of abuse may occur between peers, and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail, followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

Physical abuse

This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another, and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally, before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The DSL will follow the DfE Guidance within [KCSIE 26](#)

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.

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour, and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may include

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- Making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and are 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 behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them
- **Upskirting:** where someone takes a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the target humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone, regardless of gender, can be a target.

Please refer to the HK School Child-on-Child Harmful Sexual Behaviour policy for more information.

Initiation / Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony used to induct newcomers into an organisation, such as a private school or sports team. There are various forms, ranging from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies. The ceremony welcomes newcomers by

subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also share something in common with older members of the organisation, as they have all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

Prejudiced Behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – for example disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity.

Teenage relationship abuse

Teenage relationship abuse is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, to gain power and maintain control over the partner. This abuse may be child sexual exploitation.

13. Recognising child-on-child abuse

All staff should be alert to the mental health and well-being of pupils and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ. Signs that a child may be suffering from child-on-child abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse (please see the Safeguarding policy for indicators of abuse)

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed, and consider:

- Chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved
- Difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability
- All alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident
- Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
- What was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery
- The effect on the target
- Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret
- The child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred
- Whether this was a one-off incident or longer in duration

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is essential to gather information as soon as possible to obtain accurate facts. It is equally essential to deal with it sensitively and consider the language used, as well as its impact on both the children and their parents when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

14. Taking Action

Staff should consider the seriousness of the case and decide whether to inform the DSL immediately before taking any further actions.

- Always take complaints seriously
- Gain a statement of facts from the pupil(s)
- Assess the needs of the target and the alleged perpetrator
- Consider referral to the Police or Social Care
- Contribute to multi-agency assessments
- Convene a risk management meeting
- Record all incidents and all actions taken

15. Amendments to the Policy

26/08/22	Staff changes - KCSIE 2022 and WCF Updates	T. Stooksbury
24/07/23	Staff changes and KCSIE 23 updates	T. Stooksbury
25/03/24	Wording Changes - Governors	T. Stooksbury
07/10/24	Changes to company name	T. Stooksbury
25/06/25	Wording and publication updates - removal of child on child sexual harm - separate policy created	T. Stooksbury
03/08/26	Updates to KCSIE & Working together documents - in red	T. Stooksbury