

Amotherby CP School Child on Child Abuse Policy



January 2026

Amotherby School is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all pupils. We take a zero-tolerance approach to any form of child-on-child abuse, recognising that it can have a lasting impact on children's emotional and psychological well-being. This policy sets out our approach to preventing and responding to incidents of child-on-child abuse, in line with the updated recommendations from the Department for Education (January 2024) and our broader safeguarding practices.

Definition of Child-on-Child Abuse

Child on child abuse can manifest in many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, and online abuse. It also includes bullying, discrimination, and harmful sexual behaviours between pupils. This abuse may occur in a range of settings, including during school hours, in the community, and online. Amotherby School acknowledges that all children, regardless of age, sex, or background, can be both perpetrators and victims of abuse. We are committed to addressing and preventing such incidents with sensitivity, care, and respect for the rights of all children involved.

What is Child on Child Abuse?

Child on child abuse refers to harmful behaviour carried out by one child against another. It encompasses a range of behaviours that can have a serious impact on the physical and emotional well-being of the child affected. This abuse may happen in any setting, including school, online, or within the community, and can occur between children of any age or background.

Types of Child-on-Child Abuse Include:

1. **Physical Abuse:** This involves deliberate harm, such as hitting, kicking, slapping, or any form of physical aggression.
2. **Emotional Abuse:** This includes actions that harm a child's sense of self-worth, such as bullying, verbal abuse, or manipulation.
3. **Sexual Abuse:** Any form of sexualised behaviour or contact, including unwanted touching, sexual comments, or coercion into sexual acts.
4. **Bullying and Harassment:** Persistent actions that cause emotional or physical harm, including verbal bullying, exclusion, and intimidation. This may also involve racial, homophobic, or discriminatory abuse.
5. **Online Abuse:** This includes cyberbullying, sexting, online harassment, and other forms of abusive behaviour via digital platforms, such as social media or messaging apps.
6. **Harmful Sexual Behaviour:** Behaviour that is inappropriate for a child's age or development, including sexualised language, gestures, or actions that are coercive or manipulative.
7. **Initiation/Hazing:** This is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, 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 have something in common with older members of the

organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

8. **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.

Factors Staff Should Be Alert To

Staff should be alert to a variety of signs and behaviours that may indicate child on child abuse. These can include, but are not limited to:

- **Changes in Behaviour:** A child who is being abused may become withdrawn, anxious, or show sudden changes in behaviour. They may avoid certain peers, places, or activities that they previously enjoyed.
- **Physical Marks or Injuries:** Unexplained bruises, cuts, or injuries, particularly in patterns that suggest intentional harm.
- **Sexualised Behaviour or Language:** Children exhibiting sexualised behaviours or language that is not developmentally appropriate. This could indicate either experiencing or perpetrating harmful sexual behaviour.
- **Social Isolation or Withdrawal:** A child who is experiencing abuse may withdraw socially or show signs of depression or distress. They may express reluctance to attend school or have difficulty concentrating in class.
- **Frequent Complaints of Illness or Physical Symptoms:** Children who are being abused may exhibit frequent complaints of headaches, stomach aches, or general malaise as a way of avoiding school.
- **Significant Differences in Peer Interactions:** Bullying, harassment, and other forms of abuse may cause children to feel unsafe or fearful in their interactions with peers, leading to isolation or withdrawal from group activities.
- **Changes in Academic Performance:** A sudden decline in academic performance or an unwillingness to engage in learning may signal emotional distress related to abuse.

Staff should also be particularly vigilant where there are power imbalances or situations where one child may have more influence or control over another, such as in cases of bullying or coercion. In situations where harmful sexual behaviour is suspected, staff should follow specific safeguarding procedures and seek expert advice as required.

It is essential that all staff understand the signs of child-on-child abuse and are trained to respond appropriately. Any concerns or suspicions must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Lucy Wade (Headteacher), or another member of the safeguarding team. Timely intervention and support are crucial in protecting children and ensuring their safety and well-being.

Reporting and Responding to Concerns

If a pupil, staff member, or parent is concerned about a child-on-child abuse incident, it is important to report it immediately. Reports can be made to any member of staff, who will then refer the matter to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL at Amotherby School is **Lucy Wade (Headteacher)**, who has overall responsibility for safeguarding. Staff will respond quickly and appropriately to all concerns, ensuring that all parties are listened to, and the necessary steps are taken to address the situation.

We take a trauma-informed approach to responding to child-on-child abuse, ensuring that victims are supported and treated with care and understanding. Perpetrators will also be supported to understand the impact of their behaviour and given opportunities for rehabilitation, education, and change.

In responding to incidents of child-on-child abuse staff will consider the following:

- age of children involved.
- any aspects of power imbalance
- all aspects of the incidents (physical and verbal)
- the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery.
- the effect on the victim
- any attempts to keep the incident a secret.
- the motivation or reason for the behaviour
- whether it was a one-off incident or if it is a repeated incident

In recording incidents of child-on-child abuse staff will:

- be clear in their wording and not give an opinion.
- speak to the DSL or DDSL face-to-face immediately if they feel a child is at risk of significant harm.
- log the incident to CPOMs as soon as possible.
- use proper names for body parts but record exactly what the child said.
- note where and when the incident happened.

Preventative Measures

At Amotherby School, we believe that prevention is as important as intervention. We work proactively to raise awareness of the importance of respectful relationships, online safety,

and the effects of child-on-child abuse through our curriculum. Pupils are taught about healthy relationships, the importance of consent, and how to report concerns about peer abuse, both in school and online. We also regularly provide training for staff to ensure they can recognise the signs of child-on-child abuse and respond effectively.

Confidentiality and Record Keeping

All concerns and incidents of child-on-child abuse will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis, in line with safeguarding protocols. Accurate records will be kept of all reports and actions taken, and these will be monitored regularly to ensure the safety and well-being of all children involved.

Support for Victims and Perpetrators

Both victims and perpetrators of child-on-child abuse require support and intervention. For victims, this will include providing emotional and practical support, including access to counselling services, if needed. For perpetrators, the focus will be on educating them about their behaviour, providing restorative justice where appropriate, and working with them to address the underlying causes of their actions.

Conclusion

Amotherby School is dedicated to fostering an environment where all pupils feel safe, valued, and respected. Child on child abuse is unacceptable in any form, and we are committed to preventing and addressing it promptly and effectively. Our approach ensures that every child receives the support they need, and that all staff are equipped to manage any concerns that arise with professionalism and care. If you have any questions about this policy or would like to discuss any concerns, please contact **Lucy Wade (Headteacher)**, our Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly, in line with the school's safeguarding procedures and any updates to national guidance.

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