Child on Child Abuse Policy

Policy Reviewed: September 2026

Next Review: September 2027

Introduction

At Everton Primary School, child-on-child abuse is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. It will never be dismissed as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys”. We will respond to all signs, reports and concerns of child-on-child abuse, including those which occur outside school and/or online.

Our approach reflects our school priority to promote our EverTeam ethos, EverTen Characteristics of Learning, British Values and the Protected Characteristics.

We recognise that children can abuse other children and that abuse can occur between two children or within groups, online or face-to-face, inside or outside school and alongside other forms of abuse, exploitation or vulnerability. The absence of reports does not mean that abuse is not happening. Staff maintain an attitude of **“it could happen here”** and remain alert to children who may communicate distress through their behaviour, presentation or engagement rather than through a direct disclosure.

Children who have been harmed require appropriate protection and support. We also recognise that children who harm others may themselves have unmet needs, vulnerabilities or experiences of harm. Our response will safeguard all children involved while remaining clear that abusive behaviour is unacceptable.

Responses will be proportionate and based on the circumstances of each case, including the nature and seriousness of the behaviour, age and developmental stage, SEND or communication needs, power imbalance, coercion, frequency, intent, impact and wider safeguarding context.

Policy Development

This policy has been developed with regard to **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE)** and current statutory and non-statutory safeguarding guidance. The school will also have regard to current UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) guidance when responding to incidents involving the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, including digitally manipulated and AI-generated imagery.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Online Safety Policy, Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy and other relevant safeguarding procedures.

The policy is reviewed at least annually and sooner where statutory guidance, legislation, local safeguarding arrangements or the needs of the school community change.

Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff working with children maintain an attitude of **"it could happen here"**, including when considering child-on-child abuse.

The Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), **Andrew Green**, has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy. The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs) are **Lindsey Lewins and Keely Bailey**.

The DSL/DDSL will lead the safeguarding response to concerns about child-on-child abuse and determine what further action, advice, referral or support is required. All staff, volunteers and visitors must know how and to whom safeguarding concerns should be reported.

Definitions

Child-on-child abuse is abuse of one child by another child or children. It can take many forms and may include, but is not limited to:

- bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying
- abuse within intimate personal relationships between children
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence
- sexual harassment, including sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment
- causing another child to engage in sexual activity without consent
- consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams
- creating, altering or sharing digitally manipulated or AI-generated nude, semi-nude or sexualised imagery of a child
- upskirting
- initiation or hazing-type violence and rituals
- coercive or controlling behaviour

- abuse or harassment facilitated through social media, messaging, gaming or other technology
- behaviour connected with child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, county lines or other forms of extra-familial harm.

Technology can facilitate, amplify and perpetuate abuse. Behaviour may move between the online and offline worlds, and online incidents can have a significant impact on children's safety, wellbeing and relationships within school.

Recognising and Understanding Behaviour

Behaviour between children exists on a continuum and must be considered in the context of children's age, stage of development, individual needs and circumstances. Not every inappropriate interaction between children constitutes abuse. Staff will use professional judgement and, where appropriate, recognised guidance and assessment tools to consider whether behaviour is developmentally expected, inappropriate, problematic, abusive or harmful.

When considering behaviour, particular attention will be given to:

- the age and developmental stage of the children
- the nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- consent
- coercion, intimidation or threats
- differences in power, age, size, status or vulnerability
- whether behaviour is isolated or repeated
- the impact upon the child who has been harmed
- SEND, communication needs or other vulnerabilities
- whether technology has facilitated or increased the harm
- wider family, peer, community or safeguarding information
- whether there is a risk of further harm.

A child's SEND, disability, health needs or diagnosis must never be used to minimise or explain away behaviour which may be harmful to another child.

Staff must remain professionally curious and act on concerns rather than waiting for a child to make a direct disclosure. Changes in behaviour, emotional presentation, attendance, engagement with learning, friendships, use of technology or willingness to attend particular places or activities may form part of the safeguarding picture.

Reporting by Children

Children are encouraged to report anything that makes them feel unsafe, uncomfortable, worried or upset. They may speak to **any trusted adult in school**, including their teacher, teaching assistant, lunchtime staff, office staff, pastoral/inclusion staff or a member of the safeguarding team.

Trusted adults and ways of seeking help are reinforced through the curriculum, assemblies and everyday school practice. Where classroom worry boxes are used, these provide an additional means of communicating a concern but do not replace opportunities to speak directly to a trusted adult.

Children will be reassured that they will be listened to, taken seriously and supported and that they have done the right thing by speaking. Adults will explain what will happen next. No child is expected to recognise or label their experience as "abuse" before an adult takes their concern seriously.

Responding to a Disclosure

When a child reports or discloses child-on-child abuse, staff should:

- listen calmly and give the child their full attention
- allow the child to speak at their own pace
- use open prompts only where clarification is necessary and avoid leading, investigative or repeated questioning
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing
- explain that information will need to be shared with adults who can help
- never promise confidentiality
- avoid making judgements about any child involved
- never confront the child alleged to have caused harm
- not ask the child to write a statement or repeatedly recount their experience
- record the child's own words, wishes and feelings as accurately as possible
- report the concern promptly in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

Staff must not investigate child-on-child abuse themselves. The DSL/DDSL will determine the appropriate safeguarding response.

Reporting and Recording

All concerns about child-on-child abuse must be reported to the DSL or a DDSL without delay and recorded promptly on **CPOMS**. Records should be factual and accurate and distinguish clearly between what the child has said, direct observations, information provided by others and professional opinion.

Where a concern is urgent, indicates immediate risk or requires prompt safeguarding action, staff must **speak directly to the DSL or a DDSL immediately**. Recording a concern on CPOMS does not replace direct verbal reporting where urgent action is required.

Records will include relevant decisions, the rationale for those decisions, action taken, outcomes and review arrangements. Any individual safety or support plan will be recorded appropriately and kept under review.

Harmful Digital Material

Where a concern involves nude, semi-nude, intimate, sexually explicit or otherwise harmful imagery involving a child, including digitally altered or AI-generated imagery, staff must report the concern to the DSL or a DDSL **immediately**.

Staff must not intentionally view, copy, print, screenshot, save, store, forward or otherwise share the imagery. They must not ask a child to show, send or download it, investigate the child's device themselves or ask children involved to provide detailed information about the imagery. If a member of staff inadvertently sees such material, they must report this immediately to the DSL/DDSL. Children must not be blamed or shamed.

The DSL/DDSL will manage the safeguarding response in accordance with current KCIS guidance, including an initial assessment of risk and consideration of the safety and needs of all children involved. The incident and safeguarding decisions will be recorded on CPOMS; **the imagery itself must not be uploaded or attached to CPOMS**.

Parents or carers will normally be informed at an appropriate stage unless doing so may place a child at additional risk or prejudice a safeguarding or police response. Where material has been shared online, appropriate action will be considered to support its reporting and removal and prevent further circulation.

Assessment and Decision-Making

The DSL/DDSL will take the lead in determining the school's response. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and will consider immediate safety and welfare; the nature and seriousness of the allegation; the wishes and feelings of the child who has been harmed; age and developmental stage; SEND and communication needs; power imbalance; coercion, threats or intimidation; whether behaviour has been repeated; online and offline elements; whether other children may be at risk; previous safeguarding information; wider peer, family or contextual concerns; whether a criminal offence may have occurred; and whether advice or referral is required.

The school will not undertake an investigation that should properly be undertaken by statutory safeguarding agencies. Where appropriate, advice will be sought from children's social care, the police or other relevant safeguarding partners.

Supporting the Child Who Has Been Harmed

The needs and safety of the child who has been harmed will be central to the school's response. Support will be proportionate to the child's needs and may include a trusted adult, regular check-ins, pastoral or emotional support, adjustments to routines or arrangements, an individual safety plan, support with peer relationships, adaptations to ensure continued access to education, work with parents or carers and referral to Early Help, Family Help or specialist services.

A **safety plan is not an automatic response to every report or incident**. The DSL/DDSL will determine whether a safety plan is necessary following assessment of the individual circumstances, identified risks and needs of the children involved. Where one is required, it will be proportionate, recorded and kept under review.

The child should, as far as reasonably possible and appropriate, be involved in decisions affecting them. Arrangements intended to protect a child should not inadvertently isolate, punish or disadvantage them. Support will be reviewed as circumstances and risks change.

Supporting a Child Alleged to Have Caused Harm

A child who is alleged to have harmed another child will also be treated as a child with safeguarding and welfare needs. The school will consider their age and developmental understanding, SEND or communication needs, previous experiences or vulnerabilities, whether they may themselves have experienced abuse, neglect or exploitation, their understanding of boundaries and consent, the risk of repeated behaviour and any support or intervention required.

Appropriate consequences may be applied in accordance with the Behaviour Policy, but disciplinary action will form only one part of the response. Safeguarding support, education, intervention and risk management will be considered alongside any behavioural response.

Supporting a child alleged to have caused harm does not diminish the seriousness of the impact upon the child who has been harmed.

Other Children, Witnesses and Bystanders

Child-on-child abuse may affect children beyond those directly involved. The DSL/DDSL will consider whether witnesses, siblings, friendship groups, classes or other children require support.

Children are encouraged to report concerns they witness or become aware of and will be reassured that reporting is the right thing to do. The school will also consider whether an incident indicates a wider concern within a peer group, class, online space or school culture which requires further action.

Children with SEND and Additional Vulnerabilities

Some children may experience additional barriers to recognising, communicating or reporting child-on-child abuse. Staff will consider individual communication, sensory, emotional and developmental needs and adapt reporting and support arrangements where necessary.

This may include familiar trusted adults, visual or communication supports, simplified or adapted language, additional processing time or alternative methods of communication. Staff must avoid assumptions that behaviour, distress or injury relates solely to a child's SEND, disability or health condition.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school if they believe their child has experienced, witnessed or caused child-on-child abuse. Reports will be taken seriously and considered through the school's safeguarding procedures.

Parents or carers of children involved will normally be informed at an appropriate stage. Information will not be shared where doing so may place a child at additional risk, compromise another child's confidentiality or prejudice action by children's social care or the police.

The school will explain, as far as it is able, the action being taken in relation to a parent or carer's own child. Information about another child, including disciplinary or safeguarding action, will not ordinarily be shared.

Parents and carers are asked not to investigate incidents themselves, confront other children or families, or circulate safeguarding allegations through social media or community groups. Where a parent or carer remains dissatisfied with the school's handling of a matter, they may use the school's Complaints Procedure.

Visitors, Volunteers and Other Adults

Visitors, volunteers and other adults working in school must report concerns about child-on-child abuse to the DSL/DDSL at the earliest opportunity. Where a child may be at immediate risk, the concern must be reported immediately and must not wait until the end of the visit or school day.

Visitors should not investigate concerns themselves or leave safeguarding information solely in a written note or email where urgent action may be required.

Strategies for Prevention

Everton Primary School seeks to prevent child-on-child abuse through a whole-school safeguarding culture. This includes:

- clear expectations for respectful behaviour and relationships
- a culture in which children are confident that adults will listen and act
- regular reinforcement of trusted adults and reporting routes
- age-appropriate Relationships, Health and PSHE education
- online-safety education
- teaching about friendships, boundaries, personal space and consent
- challenging prejudice, stereotypes and discriminatory language
- teaching children to recognise unsafe or unhealthy behaviour
- helping children understand how to seek help for themselves or others
- staff safeguarding training and updates
- appropriate information and support for parents and carers
- monitoring safeguarding information for patterns and emerging concerns.

Online Safety and Emerging Risks

Children are taught that the same expectations for safe and respectful behaviour apply online and offline. Age-appropriate education addresses messaging and group chats, social media, gaming and online communities, cyberbullying, inappropriate or sexualised content, grooming and exploitation, sharing personal information and imagery, coercion and

pressure, misinformation and harmful content, and digitally manipulated or AI-generated imagery.

Staff receive appropriate updates about emerging online safeguarding risks. The school's filtering and monitoring arrangements operate alongside education, supervision, safeguarding reporting and parental engagement and do not replace professional vigilance.

Monitoring Patterns and School Culture

The safeguarding team will consider child-on-child concerns both individually and collectively. Safeguarding information may be reviewed to identify repeated concerns, particular locations or times, peer or friendship-group dynamics, online trends, vulnerable children or groups, discriminatory or sexualised language, emerging harmful behaviours and curriculum or training needs.

Relevant information will inform safeguarding practice, staff training, curriculum provision, pastoral support and, where appropriate, risk assessment. The absence of reported incidents will not in itself be regarded as evidence that child-on-child abuse is not occurring.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information about child-on-child abuse will be shared only with those who need it for safeguarding, welfare, educational or statutory purposes. Children and parents will be treated sensitively and with respect for their privacy.

The school cannot promise confidentiality where information indicates that a child may be at risk of harm. Information will be shared with safeguarding partners where this is necessary and proportionate to protect a child.

Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policy
- Filtering and Monitoring Procedures
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy
- SEND Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Allegations and Low-Level Concerns Procedures
- Attendance and Children Missing Education Procedures
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection and Information Sharing Policy.

Further Information and Guidance

The school will have regard to current national and local safeguarding guidance, including **Keeping Children Safe in Education**, **Working Together to Safeguard Children**, UKCIS guidance on sharing nudes and semi-nudes, relevant Nottinghamshire safeguarding partnership procedures and NSPCC guidance relating to harmful sexual behaviour and child development.

Monitoring and Review

The DSL will monitor the implementation of this policy and consider safeguarding information for patterns, emerging risks and areas requiring further preventative work.

The Governing Body will maintain oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements and receive appropriate anonymised safeguarding information to support its assurance role.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where statutory guidance, legislation, local safeguarding arrangements or the needs of the school change.

Date approved by the Governing Body: October 2026
Date to be reviewed: September 2027