Learning Community Trust

KICKSTART ACADEMY

Child on Child Abuse Policy

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1. Our Safeguarding Approach

Our approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse reflects the Learning Community Trust's mission to create exceptional learning communities where every child feels safe, valued, and inspired to achieve their full potential. This policy supports the Trust's ethos by putting children first through robust safeguarding that ensures every child's right to learn in a safe, respectful environment; promoting inclusion and equality by challenging discrimination, prejudice-based bullying, and harmful behaviours; fostering respect and responsibility through education on healthy relationships, consent, and online safety; working in partnership by engaging students, parents, and the wider community through consultation; and driving continuous improvement.

The Learning Community Trust (LCT) is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All children have the right to be cared for and protected from harm, and all adults working within LCT schools share a collective duty of care to ensure that children are kept safe, both within and beyond the school environment.

LCT schools are committed to providing a secure, welcoming, and supportive environment in which all children can develop and grow into confident, resilient, and responsible individuals. Safeguarding is central to the ethos and daily practice of every school within the Trust and is a priority for school leaders at all levels. Robust systems are in place to ensure that children are protected from abuse and neglect, including child-on-child abuse, so that they are able to achieve their full potential.

All staff across LCT schools are expected to build positive, professional relationships with pupils and families and to remain vigilant to safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding information is highly visible within school environments, and all staff receive regular safeguarding training. Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and Deputy DSLs undertake additional, role-specific training to ensure they are equipped to respond effectively to concerns and to provide appropriate support to pupils and families.

LCT schools work proactively and collaboratively with local authorities and external agencies to safeguard children. Strong pastoral and inclusion teams operate within schools, working closely with senior leaders and teaching staff to identify, support, and nurture vulnerable pupils. Schools also engage with a range of wider professionals, such as Educational Welfare Officers, counsellors, mentors, and police-linked services, where appropriate.

All safeguarding concerns, disclosures, and incidents, including those relating to child-on-child abuse, are recorded accurately and confidentially in line with Trust and statutory requirements. These records are monitored by senior leaders, and swift, proportionate action is taken to ensure that children receive the protection and support they need.

Pupil voice is actively encouraged across LCT schools. Children are supported to understand safeguarding issues, to identify trusted adults, and to feel confident in reporting concerns. Schools promote a culture in which pupils feel safe, listened to, and assured that any concerns will be taken seriously and addressed appropriately, whether they occur in school, online, at home, or within the wider community.

1.b School Context

Kickstart Academy is a specialist SEMH Academy Alternative Provision serving up to 60 young people referred primarily from the Telford and Wrekin area through the well-established Fair Access Process.

Reasons for referral include being at risk of permanent exclusion, or those that are permanently excluded from school.

We recognise the challenges our pupils face, including disrupted education histories, low trust in the education system, low prior attainment, few opportunities in school to be successful, attendance difficulties, high number of suspensions and managed moves, poor lived experiences and

vulnerabilities linked to social care involvement and community risks such as exposure to extremist narratives.

In addition, our pupils face significant and complex barriers to learning, including social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs, neurodevelopmental conditions such as Autism and ADHD, language and learning difficulties, and high levels of social disadvantage.

2. Context and Definition

Child-on-child abuse (also referred to as peer-on-peer abuse) is defined as behaviour by an individual child or group of children that is intended to, or does, cause physical, sexual, or emotional harm to another child. All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers and that such abuse can occur both inside and outside of school, including online.

All staff must remain alert to the indicators of child-on-child abuse and understand that safeguarding concerns may arise from a wide range of behaviours. These may include, but are not limited to:

- bullying, including cyberbullying and online harassment
- physical abuse, such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence and sexual harassment
- sharing of sexual images or videos (also referred to as sexting or youth-produced sexual imagery)
- initiation or hazing-type violence and rituals

Child-on-child abuse can be motivated by perceived differences between children, including but not limited to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other protected or personal characteristics. Such abuse can result in significant, long-lasting, and traumatic harm to the victim, including isolation, intimidation, and violence. Children with vulnerabilities or additional needs may be at increased risk of harm.

Children who harm others may themselves have additional or complex needs. These may include, but are not limited to:

- disruption or instability within their own lives
- exposure to domestic abuse or experiences of abuse or neglect
- educational underachievement
- involvement in criminal or anti-social behaviour

It is recognised that stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the first priority of any educational setting. However, emotional harm and bullying can be equally, and in some cases more, damaging than physical abuse. School staff, working in close partnership with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and/or Deputy DSL, must exercise professional judgement in responding to each individual case. This policy and its associated procedures should be used to support consistent, proportionate, and child-centred decision-making.

3. Responsibility

The Learning Community Trust recognises its statutory responsibilities under *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*. This policy aligns with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025. This guidance makes clear that all staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that such abuse can occur both within and outside of the school or college environment, including online. All staff must be familiar with their school's policy and procedures relating to child-on-child abuse and understand the vital role they play in preventing abuse and responding appropriately where there is a concern that a child may be at risk.

All adults working in LCT schools have a responsibility to maintain a culture of vigilance, to challenge inappropriate behaviour, and to act promptly on any concerns, disclosures, or indicators of child-on-child abuse. This includes reporting concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL in accordance with Trust safeguarding procedures.

KCSIE also places clear emphasis on the importance of hearing and valuing the voice of the child. Governing bodies, proprietors, and school and Trust leaders must ensure that a child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Effective systems must be in place to enable children to express their views, raise concerns, and provide feedback. All safeguarding systems and processes must operate with the best interests of the child as their central focus.

LCT schools are committed to ensuring that all forms of abuse and harmful behaviour are addressed promptly, proportionately, and consistently. Responses will prioritise the safety and welfare of all children involved, with careful consideration given to the emotional, mental health, and wellbeing impact on the child who has been harmed, as well as any safeguarding needs of the child who has caused harm.

4. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on the identification, prevention, and management of child-on-child abuse. It outlines the Trust's approach to recognising the different forms such abuse may take and sets out a planned, consistent, and supportive response to incidents and concerns. The policy aims to ensure that all children are safeguarded, that concerns are responded to promptly and appropriately, and that the welfare of all children involved remains central to decision-making.

This policy supports schools within the Learning Community Trust to respond effectively to child-on-child abuse by promoting a culture of vigilance, early intervention, and restorative and protective practice where appropriate. It is designed to ensure that staff understand their responsibilities and are equipped to take proportionate action in line with statutory guidance and Trust expectations.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Trust and school-level policies and procedures:

4.1. Related Policies

- Complaints Policy
- Low Level Concerns Policy
- Provider access policy
- Pupil Behaviour Policy
- Pupil Exclusion & Suspension Policy
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Uniform Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Together, these policies provide a comprehensive framework to support the prevention of child-on-child abuse and the effective management of incidents when they occur.

5. Framework and Legislation

This policy is underpinned by key safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, which place the welfare and best interests of the child at the centre of all decision-making.

The Children Act 1989 establishes the fundamental principle that the welfare of the child is paramount. This principle informs all safeguarding practice across the Learning Community Trust and underpins the approach taken in responding to child-on-child abuse.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) further reinforces the importance of a child-centred approach, stating that every assessment of a child "must be informed by the views of the child." This guidance emphasises the need for professionals to listen to children, take their concerns seriously, and ensure their experiences and perspectives shape the support and protection they receive.

This focus on the voice of the child is echoed in *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, which requires schools and colleges to have clear procedures in place to enable children to share their views, raise concerns, and feel confident that they will be listened to. Schools within the Trust must ensure that safeguarding systems and responses are accessible, responsive, and operate consistently in the best interests of the child.

Together, these legislative and statutory frameworks inform the Trust's approach to preventing, identifying, and responding to child-on-child abuse and guide all actions taken under this policy.

6. Abuse and Harmful Behaviour

In responding effectively to child-on-child abuse, it is necessary for schools to consider:

- what constitutes abuse and how it may present
- how incidents and concerns should be managed
- what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual child
- what preventative strategies can be implemented to reduce the risk of further harm

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or dismissed as "banter" or "part of growing up". All incidents of abusive or harmful behaviour must be taken seriously and addressed promptly and appropriately.

All forms of child-on-child abuse; physical, emotional, sexual, discriminatory, and online, are unacceptable and will never be dismissed as "banter" or "part of growing up." This includes:

- Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB)
- Bullying (including prejudice-based and discriminatory)
- Online harms (including AI-generated content, deepfakes, and grooming).

Children can be vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be treated with the same seriousness as abuse perpetrated by adults and must be managed in accordance with established child protection and safeguarding procedures.

Children may abuse other children in a variety of ways. This can include, but is not limited to: abuse within intimate or peer relationships; bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; the sharing of sexual images; and initiation or hazing-type violence and rituals. Staff must not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal behaviour between children, nor should they develop high thresholds before taking action. All staff should remain vigilant and respond appropriately to early signs of harm.

Staff should also be aware of the potential role of information technology in facilitating bullying, harassment, and abusive behaviour, including online platforms, messaging applications, and social media.

Particular consideration must be given to children who may be more vulnerable, including those who have been victims of violent crime or trauma. Such experiences may increase the risk that a child responds to harm by displaying abusive behaviour towards younger or more vulnerable peers. Children who are alleged to have harmed others may themselves have significant unmet needs. Evidence indicates that such children may have experienced disruption, trauma, abuse, or neglect, may present with educational difficulties, or may be involved in other harmful behaviours. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and may require safeguarding support. Any long-term plan to reduce risk must address both the safety of others and the needs of the child who has caused harm.

7. Types of Abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers. The list below is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse requires careful consideration, appropriate safeguarding action, and tailored support.

7.1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may include hitting, kicking, nipping or pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another child. There may be a range of reasons why a child harms another, and it is important to understand the context and intent behind the behaviour, including whether harm was accidental, before determining appropriate actions or sanctions. Safeguarding procedures must always be followed where there is a concern that a child has been harmed or is at risk.

7.2. Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

All incidents or concerns relating to sexual violence or sexual harassment must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL. The DSL will respond in line with current Department for Education guidance on sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges and will consider the most appropriate course of action, which may include:

- managing the incident internally
- initiating Early Help support
- making a referral to children's social care
- reporting the matter to the police

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between children of any age or sex and may involve individuals or groups of children. It may include behaviour directed at a single child or multiple children.

Sexually harmful behaviour by children is not always planned or intended to cause harm. There may be a range of underlying factors contributing to such behaviour, and it may be distressing for both the child who has caused harm and the child who has been harmed. Sexually harmful behaviour may include, but is not limited to:

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate sexualised role play
- unwanted sexual touching
- sexual assault or abuse

Staff must be clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated, and are not an inevitable part of growing up. Such behaviour must never be dismissed as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh", or similar.

Staff must challenge behaviours that may be criminal in nature, including grabbing bottoms, breasts or genitalia, flicking bras, or lifting skirts. Failing to challenge or address such behaviours risks normalising them and causing further harm.

Upskirting, which involves taking a photograph or video under a person's clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their knowledge or consent, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks, obtaining sexual gratification, or causing humiliation, distress, or alarm, is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender can be a victim of this behaviour. Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019

7.3. Bullying

Bullying is defined as unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both children who are bullied and children who bully others may experience serious and long-lasting negative effects.

For behaviour to be considered bullying, it must be aggressive in nature and include one or both of the following characteristics:

- **Imbalance of power:** Children who bully others may use power such as physical strength, social status, popularity, or access to sensitive or embarrassing information to control or harm

others. Power imbalances may change over time and may vary across different contexts, even when involving the same individuals.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviours occur more than once or have the potential to be repeated.

Bullying may take many forms, including making threats, spreading rumours, verbal abuse, physical assault, or deliberate exclusion from a group. Bullying behaviour may be targeted at individuals based on perceived or actual differences, including appearance, size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

7.4. Online Bullying (Cyberbullying)

Online bullying, also referred to as cyberbullying, is the use of technology to harass, threaten, intimidate, or harm another person. This may occur through social networking sites, messaging services, text messages, email, online games, or chat rooms, and may be related to the same motivations and power imbalances as offline bullying.

Online bullying may include, but is not limited to:
- sending abusive or threatening texts, emails, or messages
- posting or sharing abusive or discriminatory comments on social media platforms
- sharing humiliating or distressing images or videos of another person
- stealing or misusing another person's online identity
- spreading rumours or false information online
- trolling, including sending menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chat rooms, or online games
- creating or contributing to hate-based online content
- prank calls or messages intended to cause distress
- group bullying or deliberate exclusion online
- anonymous messaging intended to intimidate or harass
- encouraging or coercing a child to self-harm
- pressuring a child to send sexual messages, images, or to engage in sexualised online conversations

LCT implements robust filtering and monitoring systems to mitigate risks from harmful content, contact, conduct, and commerce. School staff will receive training on AI-related risks, including exposure to harmful content generated by algorithms. Students will be taught how to critically assess online content and report concerns.

7.5. Sharing Nude or Indecent Imagery

Sharing, or possession of nude or indecent images, videos, live streams or written messages of a sexual nature that are sent electronically. Such content may be shared through mobile phones, social media platforms, or instant messaging services.

The sharing of sexual images of children is a safeguarding concern and may be a criminal offence. Any incident or concern involving the creation, possession, or distribution of nude or indecent imagery must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL and managed in line with statutory guidance and Trust procedures.

Upskirting, which involves taking a photograph or video under a person's clothing without their knowledge or consent, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks, obtaining sexual gratification, or causing humiliation, distress, or alarm, is a criminal offence. Anyone, regardless of gender, can be a victim of this behaviour.

7.6. Initiation / Hazing

Hazing refers to initiation practices or rituals used to induct individuals into a group, team, or organisation. These practices may range from seemingly minor activities to severe and sometimes violent acts. Hazing is often justified as a way of promoting bonding or a sense of belonging; however,

many hazing practices involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, or harassment and can cause significant physical and emotional harm.

Hazing is not acceptable within LCT schools and must be treated as a safeguarding concern. Any incidents or allegations must be reported and responded to in line with this policy and the Trust's safeguarding procedures.

7.7. Prejudiced Behaviour

Prejudiced behaviour refers to a range of abusive or harmful actions, whether physical, emotional, or both, that cause a child to feel powerless, excluded, marginalised, or devalued. Such behaviour is often linked to prejudice relating to identity, belonging, or equality within wider society.

This may include behaviour related to, but not limited to:

- disability or special educational needs
- ethnic, cultural, or religious background
- gender or gender identity
- family circumstances or home life, including issues relating to care, parental occupation, poverty, or social class
- sexual orientation or sexual identity

Prejudiced behaviour will not be tolerated and must be addressed promptly, with appropriate safeguarding and pastoral support put in place for all children involved.

7.8. Teenage Relationship Abuse

Teenage relationship abuse refers to a pattern of abusive behaviours used by one young person to control, manipulate, or harm another within an intimate or romantic relationship. This abuse may occur in person or online and can affect young people of any gender or sexual orientation.

Teenage relationship abuse can include physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological abuse and may be a single incident or a repeated pattern of behaviour. It may involve coercion, threats, intimidation, or controlling behaviour and can have a significant and lasting impact on a young person's emotional wellbeing, mental health, and ability to engage safely in education.

Examples of teenage relationship abuse may include, but are not limited to:

- physical violence or threats of violence
- controlling behaviour, including monitoring movements, isolating from friends or family, or dictating appearance or behaviour
- emotional or psychological abuse, including intimidation, humiliation, or manipulation
- sexual abuse, including pressure to engage in sexual activity, sexual contact, or sharing sexual images
- digital abuse, including excessive messaging, password sharing, online monitoring, or threats to share private information or images

Teenage relationship abuse is a safeguarding concern and must never be dismissed as "normal relationship conflict" or "teenage behaviour". Staff must be alert to indicators such as changes in behaviour, withdrawal from peers, anxiety, reduced attendance, or controlling behaviour by a partner.

Education around healthy relationships, consent, boundaries, and respect is a key preventative strategy and is addressed through Relationship and Sex Education (RSE), PSHE, and wider safeguarding education across LCT schools.

8. Expected Staff Action

All staff have a responsibility to respond promptly and appropriately to concerns relating to child-on-child abuse. Where an incident or disclosure raises safeguarding concerns, staff must consider the seriousness of the matter and make an immediate decision as to whether the Designated

Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL should be informed before any further in-school action is taken.

In cases where there is an immediate risk of harm, or where sexual violence or sexual harassment is alleged, the DSL must be informed without delay. Staff should not investigate concerns independently but must follow Trust safeguarding procedures at all times.

9. Recognising Child-on-Child Abuse

When assessing an incident involving peer abuse, staff, in consultation with the DSL where appropriate, must consider a range of factors in order to determine the nature and level of risk. This assessment should include consideration of:

- the chronological and developmental ages of all children involved
- any imbalance of power or authority, including differences in age, race, gender, physical strength, emotional maturity, or intellectual vulnerability
- the nature of the alleged behaviour, including all physical and verbal elements
- whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge, language, or motivation
- the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour, coercion, or bribery
- the impact on the child who has been harmed
- any attempts to conceal the behaviour or maintain secrecy
- the child's motivation or explanation for the behaviour, where this is admitted
- whether the behaviour was a one-off incident or part of a pattern over time

Persistent absence will be treated as a safeguarding concern. DSL will review attendance data weekly to identify patterns linked to vulnerability or abuse, including child-on-child abuse. Escalation routes for unexplained absences will be documented and followed.

Incidents of child-on-child abuse must be addressed immediately and sensitively. Information should be gathered as soon as possible to establish an accurate understanding of events. Staff must use careful, appropriate language and remain mindful of the impact of that language on children and parents or carers. Language that implies blame or labels a child should be avoided.

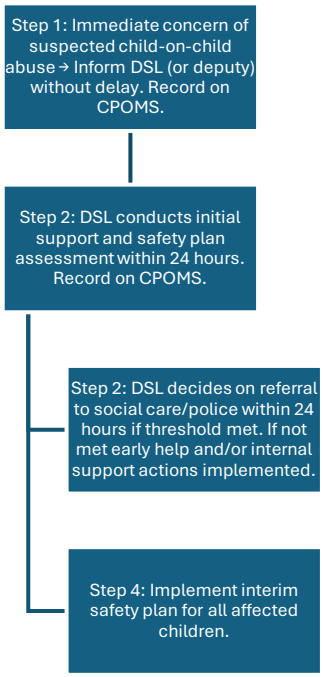
Staff will use the following terms:

- Child who has been harmed
- Child who has allegedly harmed

Staff must engage with children in a calm, professional, and consistent manner and must not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive, or negligent when responding to such sensitive matters.

9.1. Taking Action

Staff reporting flowchart



Support and safety plan timescales

- Initial assessment: within 24 hours of concern.
- Full support and safety: within 5 working days.
- Review: every 3 months or sooner if circumstances change.

In responding to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse, staff should:

- take all complaints and disclosures seriously
- listen, reassure, record, and refer to the DSL
- assess the immediate and longer-term needs of the child who has been harmed and the child alleged to have caused harm
- consider, in consultation with the DSL, whether a referral to children's social care or the police is required
- contribute to any multi-agency assessments or meetings as appropriate
- convene a risk management meeting where necessary
- ensure that all incidents, decisions, and actions taken are recorded accurately and promptly

9.2. Recording Sexualised or Harmful Behaviour

Accurate and timely recording is essential. When recording incidents involving sexualised or harmful behaviour, staff must:

- be clear, explicit, and factual, avoiding vague language or euphemisms
- record information as soon as possible to ensure accuracy
- follow Trust safeguarding and child protection recording procedures
- use correct anatomical terms for body parts, while recording the child's exact language or vocabulary in quotation marks where used
- record the date, time, location of the incident, and whether any other individuals were present

9.3. Gathering the Facts

All children involved must be spoken to separately. Staff should obtain a factual account using consistent language and open-ended questions. Children should be encouraged to describe what happened in their own words. Appropriate open questions may include:

- What happened?
- When and where did it take place?
- Who was present or observed the incident?

- What was seen or heard?
- Did anyone intervene?

Staff must not interrogate children or ask leading or suggestive questions.

9.4. Considering Intent

Staff, in consultation with the DSL, should consider whether the behaviour was deliberate or contrived, and whether there was an intention to cause harm. This assessment should take into account the child's age, development, understanding, and any contextual factors.

9.5. Deciding on the Next Course of Action

If there is reason to believe that any child is at risk of significant harm, this must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will then take action in accordance with the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and relevant statutory guidance.

Where the police determine that further investigation is required, they may request to speak to children on the school site or ask parents or carers to attend school. Schools must be prepared to support such processes and recognise that they may require time and careful management.

9.6. Informing Parents and Carers

Parents or carers should be informed of concerns or incidents involving child-on-child abuse but not where doing so may increase risk, compromise police/social care action, or place a child at further harm. Wherever possible, this should be done face to face with the parent/carer, as the sensitive nature of such incidents can cause significant anxiety and distress for families, regardless of whether their child has been harmed or has caused harm.

In circumstances where there is an evident risk of harm, schools should encourage children to share information with their parents or carers, while offering reassurance and support. Some children may be fearful of disclosing concerns at home, and this should be handled sensitively and in line with safeguarding guidance and DSL advice.

10. Points to Consider

When responding to concerns or incidents involving child-on-child abuse, staff, in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where appropriate, should consider the following factors as part of a balanced and child-centred assessment.

10.1. Age of the Children Involved

The chronological and developmental ages of the children involved must be carefully considered, including any age difference between them. In relation to sexualised behaviour, it is recognised that very young children, particularly those under the age of five, may show curiosity or exploratory behaviour as part of their developmental stage, especially during early toileting and personal care learning. However, such behaviour should not be dismissed or overlooked and must always be considered within a safeguarding context.

10.2. Location of the Incident

Consideration should be given to where the incident or incidents took place. Was the behaviour observed in an open or supervised area, or did it occur in a more private or hidden location? If the incident was not observed, staff should consider whether additional supervision, environmental changes, or risk-reduction measures are required within that area.

10.3. Accounts of the Incident

Staff should consider the explanations provided by all children involved. Do the accounts align, or are there significant differences? Consideration should also be given to the impact of the incident on the children involved. Where behaviour appears repetitive, targeted, or sustained, it may indicate bullying or abusive behaviour rather than a one-off incident. Differences in accounts should be explored sensitively, without apportioning blame.

10.4. Children's Understanding of the Behaviour

An assessment should be made of each child's understanding of what occurred. This includes considering whether the children understand concepts such as privacy, consent, personal boundaries, and appropriate behaviour. Staff should consider whether the behaviour may have been influenced by external factors, such as exposure to inappropriate material, conversations, or learning content. It is also important to consider whether the behaviour was deliberate or contrived and whether the child understands the impact of their actions on others.

10.5. Communication of the concern for pupils with an identified SEND

Communication of concern from pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) often differs from that of their peers and may be expressed verbally, non-verbally, or through changes in behaviour. Many SEND pupils communicate distress, anxiety, or unmet needs indirectly, for example through withdrawal, increased rigidity, emotional outbursts, or physical symptoms, rather than explicit statements of worry. Effective recognition of these concerns requires adults to understand each pupil's individual communication profile, observe patterns over time, and respond consistently and sensitively. Creating a predictable, supportive environment and offering alternative communication methods can help ensure that SEND pupils feel safe and able to express concerns in ways that are accessible to them.

10.6. Repetition and Persistence

Staff must consider whether the behaviour has occurred more than once or has continued despite previous intervention or guidance. Repeated or persistent behaviour, particularly after concerns have been raised or addressed, may indicate an increased level of risk and require escalation through safeguarding procedures.

11. Next Steps

Once the outcome of an incident or concern has been established, it is essential to take steps to prevent further incidents and to ensure that appropriate support and intervention are provided for all children involved. Responses must be proportionate, child-centred, and informed by ongoing risk assessment, with the welfare of all children as the primary consideration.

11.1. Support for the Child Who Has Been Harmed

The support required will depend on the individual needs, wishes, and circumstances of the child. This may include access to counselling services, one-to-one mentoring, or additional pastoral support. Some children may feel able to manage the impact of the incident with the support of their family or trusted peers; however, even in these cases, schools must continue to monitor the child's wellbeing and offer ongoing support as required.

Where incidents involve bullying or relational harm, targeted interventions may be required to support the child in rebuilding peer relationships. Restorative approaches may be considered where appropriate and where it is safe to do so. In some cases, interventions aimed at a whole class or year group may be beneficial.

Schools should also consider the role of the wider curriculum in addressing underlying issues. Relationship and Sex Education (RSE), Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education,

and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development provide opportunities to reinforce expectations around respectful relationships, consent, and personal safety.

If a child feels particularly vulnerable following an incident, a risk assessment or safety plan may be implemented. This may include identifying a named trusted adult, agreed strategies for managing future concerns, and referrals to additional support services as required.

11.2. Support for the Child Who Has Displayed Harmful Behaviour

It is essential to understand the underlying reasons for the behaviour displayed. In some cases, the child may be experiencing their own difficulties or may have been harmed themselves. As such, safeguarding support, including one-to-one mentoring, counselling, or therapeutic intervention, may be required.

Where appropriate, an Early Help referral or support from specialist services may be necessary, alongside engagement with parents or carers. Any support provided should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the child and aimed at reducing the risk of further harm.

In addition to support, it is important that the child receives clear and proportionate consequences for their behaviour in line with the school's Behaviour Policy. Where appropriate and safe, restorative approaches may be used, such as making amends to the child who has been harmed.

In cases involving sexually harmful behaviour, the child may be required to engage in structured intervention with a specialist service or agency. Where a criminal offence may have been committed, involvement from the police or youth justice services may be necessary. If an active criminal investigation is ongoing, alternative educational arrangements may be required to ensure the safety of all children.

Where behaviour continues to pose a risk to others, an individual risk assessment must be completed. This should be informed by a multi-agency approach and involve the child and their parents or carers. Risk management strategies may include increased supervision, environmental controls, or agreed protective strategies to reduce the likelihood of further harmful behaviour.

11.3. Aftercare and Ongoing Monitoring

Following an incident, it is important that all children involved continue to feel supported, even where they report that they are coping well. Emotional responses such as distress, remorse, or anxiety may emerge some time after the incident.

Regular review meetings with the children involved should be arranged to monitor wellbeing, assess ongoing risk, and ensure that no further harm occurs. Staff should remain alert to indicators of further harmful behaviour, including towards others or towards themselves, such as self-harm.

Ongoing monitoring and review are essential to ensure that interventions remain effective and that all children continue to feel safe, supported, and protected.

Staff wellbeing is recognised as a key consideration when responding to child-on-child abuse concerns. Any member of staff involved in managing or supporting such cases will have access to appropriate support, including timely debriefing with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Ongoing support and reflective supervision will be provided in line with the Supervision Policy, particularly where concerns are serious, complex, or emotionally challenging.

12. Preventative Strategies

Child-on-child abuse can occur in any educational setting, even where robust safeguarding policies and support systems are in place. The Learning Community Trust recognises the importance of proactive and preventative strategies to reduce the risk of peer-on-peer abuse and to promote a culture of safety, respect, and openness.

LCT schools are committed to creating an environment in which children feel safe to share concerns, worries, or experiences that are causing them distress. Clear systems are in place to ensure that pupils know how and where to seek help, including visible and accessible “support and report” mechanisms.

A strong and well-sequenced Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education programme, alongside Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development, is central to prevention. These curricula address issues such as respectful relationships, consent, online safety, equality, diversity, and prejudiced behaviour. They provide opportunities for open discussion and reflection, helping to reduce the likelihood that children seek harmful one-to-one interactions with peers.

All staff are expected to challenge inappropriate behaviour and language and must not dismiss concerns as “banter”, “growing up”, or comparable to their own childhood experiences. Each incident and individual must be considered on its own merits, with responses informed by professional judgement and safeguarding guidance.

Pupil participation is an important element of prevention. Through mechanisms such as school councils, pupil voice activities, and peer leadership roles, children are encouraged to contribute to shaping a positive school culture. Pupils are supported to understand and agree upon clear expectations and boundaries of acceptable behaviour, helping to ensure that behaviour does not escalate into abuse.

By fostering an inclusive, respectful, and transparent ethos, LCT schools aim to empower children to recognise unacceptable behaviour, report concerns early, and play an active role in maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment for all.

13. Monitoring and Review

The Learning Community Trust is committed to ensuring that this policy remains effective, relevant, and compliant with statutory safeguarding requirements. The implementation and impact of this Child-on-Child Abuse Policy will be monitored regularly at both school and Trust level.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) are responsible for monitoring incidents, concerns, and patterns relating to child-on-child abuse within their school, including the effectiveness of responses, interventions, and support strategies. Safeguarding records will be reviewed to identify trends, emerging risks, or training needs, and appropriate action will be taken where necessary.

School leaders and governing bodies will receive regular safeguarding updates, including anonymised data and thematic analysis relating to child-on-child abuse. This oversight supports accountability and ensures that safeguarding practice remains robust and consistent across the Trust.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or earlier where required, in response to changes in legislation, statutory guidance (including *Keeping Children Safe in Education*), local safeguarding arrangements, or following a significant safeguarding incident. Reviews will take into account staff feedback, pupil voice, parental feedback where appropriate, and lessons learned from safeguarding practice.

Any updates to this policy will be communicated clearly to all staff, and training will be provided as necessary to ensure effective implementation. All staff are expected to familiarise themselves with the most current version of the policy and to adhere to its procedures at all times.