



Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

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Review: February 2022

This policy has been created in line with **the DfE Advice Behaviour and Discipline in Schools 2016, DfE Advice Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges (May 2018) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2018)**

Section 1

1.1 Aims of the Policy

Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2018 states that ‘Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with.

While it is recommended that Peer on Peer abuse is associated with the School Safeguarding Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse this separate policy has been completed as an addition to the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

At Manorway Independent School we are committed to ensure that any form of peer on peer abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently. This will reduce the extent of harm to the young person and minimise the potential impact on that individual child’s emotional and mental health and well-being.

1.2 Rationale

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as bullying, sexual experimentation etc. This is a matter of professional judgement.

If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse: bullying, fighting and harassment between children are not generally seen as child protection issues. However, it may be appropriate to regard a young person’s behavior as abusive if:

There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned; or the perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or there are concerns about the intention of the alleged young person.

If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

Section 2

2.1 Prevention

As a school we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:

Providing an appropriate PSHE syllabus which develops pupils understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe. Having a robust approach to Internet Safety which develops pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, to ensure personal safety and self-protection when using the internet and social networking. Having robust monitoring and filtering systems in place to ensure pupils are safe and act appropriately when using information technology in school. Having systems in place for any pupil to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued. Providing support and advice on assertiveness and keeping safe to those pupils identified as being at risk. Developing robust risk assessments and support and advice for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils.

For all schools and settings, it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of peer on peer abuse rather than only manage the issues in a reactive way.

Firstly, and most importantly for schools and settings is recognition that peer on peer abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff. This involves staff analysing any incidents for trends, patterns and identifying any areas around the setting that may appear to be 'less safe'. Staff should also have access to regular CPD and training to ensure a consistent approach to managing peer on peer issues.

A Safe Environment to share concerns alongside a Positive Curriculum, it is important that each school/setting has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This can be strengthened through a strong and positive PHSE/SMSC curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. To enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure the whole workforce and governing body feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is necessary for whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to young people in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice. It is incredibly important that staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a young person seeking no further help or advice.

Staff must also feel enabled to discuss issues about online access and support and reinforce appropriate behaviours online including understanding why age limits are in place on social media platforms, encouraging children to share online concerns, talking about issues that have happened in an open forum and working closely with parents. (Farrer and co, 2019)

Involve Parents

Parents need to be informed and included in policy forming, lesson plans and through open and frank conversations, training/courses about what peer on peer abuse is and how the school and setting will be tackling it. This can help to alleviate any concerns and worries and create a joined-up approach.

Schools and settings need to ensure open two-way communication is available through a variety of platforms so that both parents and staff are working together to deal with any issues.

2.2 Allegations against other pupils which are safeguarding issues

Occasionally, allegations may be made against pupils by other young people in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, teenage relationship abuse and sexual exploitation, bullying, cyber bullying and sexting. It should be considered as a safeguarding allegation against a pupil if some of the following features are present.

The allegation: - Is made against an older pupil and refers to their behavior towards a younger pupil or a more vulnerable pupil. Is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence, raises risk factors for other pupils in the school, indicates that other pupils may have been affected by this student, indicates that young people outside the school may be affected by this student.

Examples of safeguarding issues against a pupil could include:

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, 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 behavior, including accidentally, before considering the action or sanctions to be undertaken.

Bullying

Bullying is 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 young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious lasting problems.

Manorway Independent School makes students and staff aware that bullying may involve:

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 change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people. Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e. g. size, hair colour, race, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour **under the Communications Act 2003, Section 127** which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could be deemed to be criminal behaviour. If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence **under the Sexual Offences Act 2003**. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Sexting

Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, regardless of their age, gender or sexual preference. However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images can end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences **under the Sexual Offences Act 2003**.

Emotional Abuse

Can include blackmail or extortion and may also include threats and intimidation. This harmful behaviour can have a significant impact on the mental health and emotional well-being of the victim and can lead to self-harm.

Sexual Abuse

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 well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse. It can also include indecent exposure, indecent touching /serious sexual assaults or forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting.

Teenage Relationship Abuse

Teenage relationship abuse is defined as 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, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner.

Sexual Exploitation

This can include encouraging other young people to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour or grooming and recruiting members of the peer group into being sexually exploited by other young people or adults. It can also include photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts.

Section 3

3.1 Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Peer on Peer Abuse

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern.

1. If there is a safeguarding concern the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) should be informed immediately, both verbally and documented in line with the Manorway Independent School Safeguarding Policy.
2. A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances.
3. The DSL or the DDSL should meet with the Headteacher to discuss the case.
4. The DSL or the DDSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a referral where appropriate.
5. If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police will be involved.
6. Parents, of both the student/s being complained about and the alleged victim/s, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral.
7. The DSL or the DDSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in the Secure Safeguarding records.
8. If the allegation highlights a potential risk to the school and the pupil, the school will follow the school's behaviour policy and procedures and take appropriate action.
9. In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan.
10. The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.

Manorway Independent School believes it is very important that policies relating to safeguarding students are read in conjunction with one another to quickly identify and take any necessary and appropriate action to help prevent children and young people being at risk of harm

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is up-dated annually or as necessary depending on new statutory guidance or legislation, and this Peer on Peer Abuse Policy will be reviewed and updated as part of the same cycle.

Students are requested to complete a termly bullying questionnaire in order to assess if bullying is an issue within Manorway Independent School. This will enable us to monitor bullying or potential bullying.

A copy of the Peer-on-Peer Policy is available online at Manorwayacademy.com/policies and a printed version is available from the school office upon request.

Signposting

It is important that signposting is available to young people in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. It is useful to have a resource board with support services on a wide range of issues so young people can seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of peer on peer abuse.

Forums for Children to Make Changes/Have Their Voice Heard

It is useful to ensure young people are part of changing their circumstances and that of the procedures within schools. Having a school council and pupil voice and encouraging young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour' will go far in helping to create a positive ethos in school and one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

Partnership Working

Multi agency working can consolidate in house procedures in schools/settings. By accessing advice, support and guidance, effective decisions can be made in collaboration to improve outcomes for children who may be at risk of harm. Seeking advice and guidance can act as a preventative measure so that the right course of action is taken at the earliest opportunity. It is also necessary that the school/setting actively refers concerns/allegations of peer on peer abuse where necessary to front door services/children's social care and the police where appropriate. This is particularly important because peer on peer abuse can be a complex issue, and even more so where wider safeguarding concerns exist. It is often not appropriate for one single agency (where the incident cannot be managed internally) to try to address the issue alone – it requires effective partnership working (Farrer and Co. 2019).

Schools which excel at tackling bullying (and peer abuse) have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. That culture extends beyond the classroom to the corridors, the dining hall, the playground, and beyond the school gates including travel to and from school. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest. (Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017).