

<b>Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy</b>	
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Teaching and Learning</b>
<b>Approved on</b>	<b>7 February 2022</b>
<b>Review Cycle:</b>	<b>Annually</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>Appropriate Senior Staff</b>
<b>Version</b>	<b>1.1 for consultation</b>

## **1. Scope**

This policy focuses on the areas of peer-on-peer abuse that include sexual harassment and sexual violence between pupils.

## **2. Aims**

Cambourne Village College recognises that sexual harassment between pupils can take place, encompassing verbal, on-line, and physical abuse. The College will make clear that such behaviours have no place in our community and beyond, and will set out the measures taken to achieve this so that all pupils can be confident to learn in an environment free from such abuse.

## **3. Principles**

We are committed to a whole school approach that ensures that pupils are educated about peer-on-peer sexualised abuse and their rights and responsibilities, thus reducing its prevalence and assisting the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of such behaviours. This practice will be embedded in school policies and the curriculum.

We seek to create an environment in which all pupils are confident to report incidences of unwanted sexualised behaviour and are confident that they will be supported without judgement in resolving their concerns.

The College will take a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved. It is understood that young people who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable and may have been subjected to abusive behaviours themselves.

## **4. Definitions**

4.1 Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which:

- Violates someone's dignity
- Makes someone feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated
- Creates or contributes to a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment

4.2 Sexual harassment can include:

- Unwanted verbal sexual comments or 'jokes' which may constitute bullying
- Physical behaviours including sexual advances, touching and various forms of sexual assault
- Sharing of nude pictures
- Sharing of unwanted explicit content
- Unwanted on-line sexual comments and messages
- Upskirting

- Abuse in intimate relationships
- 4.3 A pupil would be deemed to be harassing another or others if they behaved in a way that:
- amounts to harassment of another and which they ought to know amounts to the harassment of another
  - is repeated more than once
  - is directed towards a single individual or multiple people who share a common characteristic
- 4.4 Peer-on-peer abuse may also be manifested within situations of Child Sexual Exploitation and gang association including County Lines activity.

## 5. National and Local Context

5.1 In June 2021, Ofsted published their report into the issue of sexual abuse in schools, which came to national prominence following the *Everyone's Invited* campaign of Spring 21. The Ofsted report makes sobering reading and its conclusion states:

*This rapid thematic review has revealed how prevalent sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are for children and young people. It is concerning that for some children, incidents are so commonplace that they see no point in reporting them. .... It recommends that schools, colleges and multi-agency partners act as though sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening, even when there are no specific reports.*

5.2 The evidence from the Ofsted report was corroborated in Cambridgeshire's Health Related Behaviour Survey carried out with Year 10 in 30 secondary schools in July 2021, and in Cambourne Village College's internal pupil surveys. At Cambourne Village College, across all year groups, the use of hostile sexualised language is the most prevalent form of such behaviour, with pupils identifying as LGBTQ+, as well as girls, being the most frequent targets. However, this policy seeks to address all areas of sexualised harassment and abuse between our young people.

5.3 As the Ofsted report of June 21 has demonstrated, the long-standing existence of statutory Child Protection and Anti-Bullying policies in schools nationally, have not been effective in preventing these damaging behaviours between pupils. This policy therefore specifically addresses this issue.

## 6. Meeting our Duties

The College has a four-step approach to meeting our duties in this area, which takes account of statutory guidance, existing legislation, school & Cam Academy Trust policy, and continued policy development and awareness of this dynamic issue.

### 6.1 Statutory Guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2021 – Part 5: Child on Child sexual violence and sexual harassment
- [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges \(June 2019\)](#)

- Statutory Relationships and Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

## 6.2 Key Legislation:

- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997<sup>1</sup>
- Protection of Children Act 1978
- Criminal Justice Act 1988<sup>2</sup>
- The Human Rights Act 1998 (Articles 2, 3, 8, 14) including the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment and the right to education
- Compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requiring schools to prevent discrimination in the way education is provided, the accessible benefits and whether there is any loss of opportunity

## 6.3 Related School Policies

- Pupil Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Policy
- Pupil Discipline and Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Acceptable Use of IT Policy

This policy is compliant with the statutory guidance on peer-on-peer abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021) and follows the Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LSCB) Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and relevant practice guidance, in particular that provided by Cambridgeshire County Council's *Safer Corridors Toolkit 2021*.

## 6.4 Policy Development

The policy has been developed in consultation with Trust officers, senior leaders, governors, staff, parents and pupils.

## 7 Understanding Peer on Peer abuse

7.1 Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex or a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. The impact of this behaviour on children can be very distressing and have an impact on academic achievement and emotional health and wellbeing. Sexual harassment and sexual violence can occur online and offline.

7.2 The College Safeguarding Team, under guidance from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Children Partnership Board, will use the Child Sexual Abuse Assessment Tool (See

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<sup>1</sup> Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes an offence of any course of conduct (two or more incidents) of any nature (sexual or otherwise) intended to make someone feel harassed or where the perpetrator(s) 'ought to have known' that their actions would result in this.

<sup>2</sup> Protection of Children Act 1978 and Criminal Justice Act 1988 reference the problematic situations we encounter with the possession of, production of, and distribution of indecent imagery of children, and offences pertaining to incitement of children to make such images.

Including [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges \(Sept 2021\)](#)

appendices) to identify, understand and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours in young people, and to distinguish between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour, harmful sexual behaviour being defined by the NSPCC as "sexual behaviours expressed by children...that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child...or adult."

7.3 We recognise that all children can abuse their peers, however we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable. This can include those who have experience of abuse within their family; are living with domestic violence; young people in care; children who go missing; children with additional needs (SEND); children who identify or are perceived as LGBT and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

7.4 Whilst research tells us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers and girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools, this is not confined to girls. Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviour such as antisocial behaviour. Boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs. We recognise that both boys and girls experience peer on peer abuse, but they do so in gendered ways.

## **8 The Curriculum**

The harmful effects of sexualised abuse between peers is specifically addressed in PSHE/RSHE lessons and reflected across the wider curriculum of the school, through which pupils will gain a clear understanding of the issues outlined in this policy. This will include input within timetabled lessons, additional activities in tutor time or additional planned time, and in assemblies. This learning will help pupils to develop attitudes and behaviours that reduce incidents of peer-on-peer abuse and make them fluent in the language they require, and conscious of the systems available, to report any incidents that occur.

The topic of peer-on-peer abuse will be visited by all students during curriculum time within the RSHE / PSHE programme

## **9 Staff Training**

9.1 Staff learn to recognise signs of peer-on-peer abuse with their statutory Safeguarding training. This includes the requirement that the use of sexualised and homophobic language by pupils must be challenged whenever it is heard.

9.2 Staff are trained to be aware of indicators which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

9.3 Staff are trained in the requirement to log any incidences or reports of sexual harassment or violence as a Prejudice Related Incident within the My Concern system. Any such reports are triaged by the Safeguarding team and a multi-agency approach adopted where indicated.

9.4 The College takes all reports seriously and will reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe. A written report will be logged recording the facts as presented by the child as soon as possible. Where the report includes an online element, the school or college will follow DfE

advice on searching and confiscation. Any incident involving images will be investigated by a member of the Safeguarding team who will seek guidance from the Police on the appropriate steps to take depending on the situation. Staff will not view images.

## **10 Risk Assessment**

10.1 When there has been a report of sexual violence between pupils at any time or place, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will make an immediate personalised risk and needs assessment, engaging with the MASH as appropriate. This will consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support
- The alleged perpetrator
- All other pupils and staff at the College, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them

Risk assessments will be recorded within My Concern, shared with limited staff members as appropriate, and be kept under review.

10.2 Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment will consider:

- The wishes of the victim in how they want to proceed
- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including harmful or criminal sexual behaviour
- The ages of the pupils
- Any power imbalance between the children, for example of age of disability/vulnerability
- Whether the alleged incident is a one-off or part of a sustained pattern of abuse
- Any ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school staff and wider context

10.3 While investigations take place, consideration will be given to how the pupils involved are to be kept separate from each other on school premises and on journeys to and from school. The wishes of the victim(s) in such arrangements will be given preference, in keeping with established legal frameworks, but should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator.

## **11 Managing Outcomes of an Investigation**

Outcomes will be managed according to the College Continuum of Response to Incidents of Peer-on-Peer Abuse, (See Appendices) and based on the principle that sexual harassment and sexual violence are never acceptable and will not be tolerated. Decisions on outcomes will be stored on My Concern. Where appropriate, referrals will be made to Early Help or to the MASH, following locally agreed protocols.

## **12 Reporting to the Police**

12.1 Victims or their families may report alleged incidences of sexualised harassment or abuse independently, directly to the Police. When this does not happen and the DSL considers that a threshold for criminal behaviour may have been reached, the College will report this to the Police, seek advice from the Education Safeguarding Team and follow this advice which will be communicated to parents. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this will always be passed on to the police. The College will cooperate fully with all agencies in any investigation and will seek to support all pupils involved, including potential witnesses and

the safeguarding of an alleged perpetrator/identified suspect. Wherever possible, the victim and their parents or carers will be consulted as to the sharing of information with staff, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. The anonymity of the victim and alleged perpetrator will be protected as far as possible.

12.2 The College will uphold a professional responsibility and duty of care to remain independent and impartial regarding questions of guilt and criminal findings. The College does not have a role in the drawing of criminal verdicts and will always focus on its duty of care and the safety and wellbeing of students.

12.3 Whilst protecting children and/or taking any internal disciplinary measures, the College will work closely with the police and other agencies as required, to ensure any actions taken do not jeopardise the safety or wellbeing of any person, or undermine the primacy of any police investigation.

12.2 Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator, the College will work closely with the police and other agencies as required, to ensure any actions taken do not jeopardise the police investigation.

### **13 Conclusion of Criminal Process**

13.1 Where cases are classified as “No Further Action” (NFA’d) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a Not Guilty verdict, we will continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. A Not Guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case is likely to be traumatic for the victim and the College recognises that because an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. We will continue to support all parties in this instance.

13.2 If a pupil is convicted or receives an ‘out of court disposal’ for a sexual offence, the College will update its risk assessment, ensuring relevant protections are in place for all pupils. We will consider any suitable action following our Continuum of Response Frameworks, and make clear our expectations of future conduct. The College will impose any restrictions on behaviour and access, including of timetable, that we consider proportionate and reasonable. We will take into account interest generated amongst other pupils and will seek to provide protection from any bullying or harassment (including online).

### **14 Pupils Affected by Sexual Assault or Allegations of Sexual Assault**

Support for victims of sexual assault is available from a variety of agencies.

14.1 We will support any victim of sexual assault to remain in school but if they are unable to do so, we will support them to continue their education elsewhere, at the request of the pupil and family, ensuring the new setting is aware of ongoing needs.

14.2 Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or ‘out of court disposal’, the College will consider any suitable sanctions for the perpetrator(s) with reference to our behaviour policies and Continuum of Response frameworks, including permanent exclusion.

14.3 Should the perpetrator remain at the school, all appropriate measures to limit contact with the victim will continue to be managed as during the investigation. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining such cases, which will be kept under regular review.

14.4 Where a person has been accused of sexual assault, but has been found 'not guilty' in court, 'NFA'd' by the police or where an investigation led by the school has deemed that there is insufficient evidence to support a sanction under the Continuum of Response framework, the school will support and safeguard them, and monitor their mental and emotional health and wellbeing, acknowledging that they are likely to have suffered reputational damage and may be subject to peer hostility.

### **Online Behaviour**

Many forms of peer-on-peer abuse have an element of online activity, e.g. unwanted sharing of sexualised images, requests for 'nudes' and sexting. The College response to these types of behaviour is set out in the Continuum of Response frameworks.

## **15 Prevention**

Cambourne Village College actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of peer-on-peer abuse by educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Group, staff and volunteers, pupils and parents about the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes:

### 16.1 Education

- Ensuring that pupils understand that such behaviours are unacceptable and never tolerated
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse
- Educating our pupils about the nature and prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum. This learning emphasises the nature of healthy relationships and the importance of consent, and raising pupils' awareness in particular of the distorting impact of pornography on their understanding of intimate relationships

### 16.2 Pupil Support

- Ensuring that pupils know what to do if they witness or experience sexual harassment or abuse, and understand the possible reasons for it and the effect that it can have on those who experience it
- Creating a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to
- Providing forums and opportunities for pupils to discuss related issues, to contribute to decision making, and to play an active role in eliminating unwanted sexualised behaviours between peers, both in school and beyond

### 16.3 School Response

- Taking seriously all forms of peer-on-peer abuse (no matter how low-level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of peer-on-peer abuse is ever dismissed as 'banter', horseplay or a joke
- Working actively with parents to understand their views and concerns.
- Working with Governors, the Cam Academy Trust, Senior Leadership Group, all staff and volunteers, pupils and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the school community

## 16 The Role of the Safeguarding Team in Prevention

17.1 The DSL will lead the Safeguarding team in providing active, contextual safeguarding and identifying specific behaviours

17.2 The DSL will record all issues of peer-on-peer abuse and monitor frequency and ongoing trends. This information will form part of the termly Safeguarding report to Governors.

17.3 The Safeguarding team will continue to engage actively with the LCSB and local partners through multi-agency working, and will undertake ongoing, relevant training to remain abreast of emerging trends in the areas of peer-on-peer abuse. This will enable the team to:

- Maintain strong awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in the local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist;
- Ensure that our pupils can access the range of services and support they need
- Ensure that in cases involving children who are subject to risk, harm and abuse and who have LAC status, the children's social worker must be informed, and a coordinated approach adopted

## 17 Appendices

<https://www.everyonesinvited.uk/>

Cambridge and Peterborough Safeguarding Children Partnership Board: Child Sexual Abuse Assessment Tool

Cambourne Village College: Response to Incidents of Peer-on-Peer Abuse Between Pupils

### Consultees:

Philippa Boyns: Deputy Principal Pastoral

Paul Lawrence: Trust Director of Education

Phil Priestley: Behaviour Consultant

CamVC Safeguarding team

Governors

### Consultation Pending:

Staff

Parents



## Appendix: Continuum of Response to Incidents of Peer-on-Peer Abuse Between Pupils

Use of language that is body-shaming or that references protected characteristic: gender / race / sexual orientation		
Mitigating Circumstances	Aggravating Circumstances	School action – dependent on circumstances
<p>Didn't understand slur Speaker is vulnerable No harm intended Language is relatively mild Reciprocal situation Expresses remorse. Appropriate apology made Didn't understand term</p> <p><i>The intention of a joke or 'banter' is not a mitigating circumstance.</i></p>	<p>Recipient is vulnerable Full understanding of term In front of audience Intended hurt Language is strong / repeated / swearing Age imbalance Language is threatening Language references misogyny, sexual violence or child abuse Sender has previously been warned for such behaviour</p>	<p><b>First Incident</b> Event logged on My Concern Conversation with tutor Apology made</p>
		<p><b>Second Incident</b> Event logged on My Concern Conversation with tutor Phone call home Apology made Restorative approach if appropriate</p>
		<p><b>Third / Further Incidents</b> Each event logged on My Concern Each event reported home Conversation with Safeguarding Team/ Designated member of staff Referral to Behaviour Consultant / Counsellor Loss of all privileges – clubs/fixtures/non-curricular visits – variable periods Loss of social time After-School detention Isolation Seclusion Fixed term exclusion Personal Support Plan Managed Move</p>

		PREVENT / POLICE referral Permanent exclusion
<b>Online behaviour that breaches Acceptable Use Policy: Sending messages of a hateful or abusive nature</b>		
<b>Mitigating Circumstances</b>	<b>Aggravating Circumstances</b>	<b>School action – dependent on circumstances</b>
<p>Isolated incident Offender has responded to a message and over-reacted The offender is under exceptional emotional pressure / extenuating Exceptional provocation / victim has also sent abusive and hateful content The sender is vulnerable and lacking in awareness or understanding / Lack of capacity Message causes subjective distress that is greater than the sender anticipated Objectively the content is not severe The sender is genuinely remorseful and has shown a responsible attitude to what they have done</p> <p><i>The intention of a joke or ‘banter’ is not a mitigating circumstance.</i></p>	<p>The victim has asked the offender to stop Content is grossly offensive Message references a specifically hurtful, personal topic The message is part of a course of conduct intending to cause harassment or whereby the offender ought to know that harassment would be caused Message contains both words and imagery The message is threatening The message encourages other people to target the victim The message is sent in support of other hateful or abusive messages sent by someone else. Racially or religiously aggravated Message refers to a protected characteristic / sexuality or gender change The message advocates extremism or a radicalised purpose Offender has taken active steps to overcome being blocked or prevented</p>	<p><b>In all incidences, the full range of actions and sanctions below may be applied, according to severity of event:</b> <b>Always</b> Event logged on My Concern Safeguarding Team direct involvement Conversation with tutor Phone call home Apology /apologies made Restorative approach if appropriate <b>Depending on severity / more than one incident</b> Loss of social time Loss of IT privileges Loss of all pupil privileges – clubs/fixtures/non-curricular visits – variable periods After-school detention Isolation Fixed-term exclusion Referral to Behaviour Consultant / Counsellor Police referral and further action Personal Support Plan Managed Move Permanent exclusion</p>

## Online behaviour that breaches Acceptable Use Policy: Sending/distributing indecent image(s) or pornography

Mitigating Circumstances	Aggravating Circumstances	School action – dependent on circumstances
<p>The sender is vulnerable and lacking in awareness / capacity Possible coercion of sender The nature of the image is sexual, and indecent, but is of a lower severity It is reasonably believed that the image has been contained, not widely leaked The subject of the image cannot be identified The offender is under exceptional emotional pressure / extenuating circumstances The sender is genuinely remorseful and has shown a responsible attitude to what they have done</p> <p><i>The intention of a joke or ‘banter’ is not a mitigating circumstance.</i></p>	<p>Unsolicited image is grossly offensive or exceptionally graphic Image is threatening in nature The victim/recipient is exceptionally vulnerable Age disparity between sender and recipient Multiple images sent Sender has previously been warned for such behaviour More than one person is shown in the image Sender is sharing images of a third party The person shown in the image is not known and hasn’t been identified The person in the image is not aware that they have been photographed/image appears to have been obtained covertly Imagery shows genitals School uniform, logo or crest appears within the image Imagery has been doctored to enhance the severity or impact Imagery contains any personal information that identifies the person shown and/or shares contact information/address Image has been uploaded to the internet in an open forum or social media platform Image has been shared to cause shame, embarrassment or social isolation</p>	<p><b>In all incidences, the full range of actions and sanctions below may be applied, according to severity of event:</b></p> <p><b>Always</b> Event logged on My Concern Safeguarding Team direct involvement Conversation with tutor Phone call home Apology /apologies made Restorative approach if appropriate</p> <p><b>Depending on severity / more than one incident</b> Loss of social time Loss of IT privileges Loss of all pupil privileges – clubs/fixtures/non-curricular visits – variable periods After-school detention Isolation Seclusion Fixed-term exclusion Referral to Behaviour Consultant Police referral and further action Personal Support Plan Managed Move Permanent exclusion</p>

<b>Unwanted Sexualised Touching or Abuse</b>		
<b>Mitigating Circumstances</b>	<b>Aggravating Circumstances</b>	<b>School action – dependent on circumstances</b>
<p>Touching is unintentional            Toucher is vulnerable / lacking in awareness / capacity            Toucher misinterpreted behaviour of victim            Touching is of less sensitive areas of body            Toucher expresses remorse.            Appropriate apology made            Victim is not highly offended or traumatised</p> <p><i>The intention of the behaviour as a 'joke' is not a mitigating circumstance.</i></p>	<p>The victim/recipient is exceptionally vulnerable            Age disparity between toucher and victim            Touching continued after victim requested to stop            Toucher has previously been warned for such behaviour            Touching is intended to cause embarrassment or humiliation            Toucher attempts to hide behaviour, e.g. touching under desk/ in crowd            Touching is done in front of audience            Touching is of breast/genital area            The victim is humiliated / hurt / traumatised</p>	<p><b>In all incidences, the full range of actions and sanctions below may be applied, according to severity of event</b></p> <p><b>Always:</b>            Event logged on My Concern            Safeguarding Team direct involvement            Conversation with tutor            Phone call home            Apology /apologies made            Restorative approach if appropriate</p> <p><b>Depending on severity / more than one incident:</b>            Loss of social time            Loss of all pupil privileges – clubs/fixtures/non-curricular visits – variable periods            After-school detention            Isolation            Seclusion            Fixed-term exclusion            Referral to Behaviour Consultant / Counsellor            Police referral and further action            Personal Support Plan            Managed Move            Permanent exclusion</p>

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