

“Together in Achievement”



CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY

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Child-on-child Abuse Policy

1. Introduction to MAT Policy

- Each academy within the Aspire Multi-Academy Trust is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.
- Aspire is committed to maintaining the autonomy of all successful academies; as such, this central policy constitutes a statement of intent and of key principles to which all our academies adhere.
- There is no statutory requirement for schools or academies to have a separate Child-on-child Abuse policy.
- Whilst not required to produce a policy, we have chosen to do so to affirm our commitment to maintaining high levels of child protection and safe-guarding procedures and to set out some key principles according to which our academies will operate.

2. Procedures

Introduction

In all Aspire Partner Academies, we have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse including sexual violence, sexual harassment (SVSH) and harmful sexual behaviour (HSB). We believe that child-on-child abuse is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. It will never be passed off as “banter,” “just having a laugh,” “a part of growing up” or “boys being boys.” We will respond to all signs, reports, and concerns of child-on-child abuse, including those that have happened outside of our school premises, and/or online. We recognise that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers, we take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. We recognise that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. We acknowledge that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable. We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse within each Trust academy and beyond.

In cases where child-on-child abuse is suspected or identified we will follow our Child Protection procedures, taking a contextual, trauma-informed, and strengths-based approach to support all children who have been affected by the situation including the victim and alleged perpetrator.

Aspire staff know to respond immediately to concerns and disclosures and not to wait for a disclosure. If staff have concerns about a child’s welfare, they act on these immediately. A detailed process can be found in section 3 at the end of this policy.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff working with children maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here,’ and this is especially important when considering child-on-child abuse.

The Headteacher of each Academy has overall responsibility for the policy’s implementation and they liaise with the Governing body, parents/carers and outside agencies.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all and all staff, parents/carers and pupils need to be aware of who to report to and how to report any safeguarding concerns. All staff are aware of the important role they have in preventing and responding to concerns where a child may be at risk.

All staff must be aware of the identity of the key nominated individuals responsible for safeguarding in their schools. These are the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and their deputies and the nominated Governor with responsibility for child protection and safeguarding.

Definitions

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudiced-based and discriminatory bullying).
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children, (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse').
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse).
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence).
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes, and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery).
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm.
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse, or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element). This may also be an indicator of wider exploitation such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and/or Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and/or County Lines.

Recognising

All Aspire academies recognise that behaviours associated with child-on-child abuse take place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on this spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

We recognise that all children grow and develop at their own pace. We will use our professional judgement and knowledge of child development when responding to child-on-child abuse.

Reporting and Responding

At Aspire Multi Academy Trust, we want children, parents/carers, staff, and visitors to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously. We recognise that individual academies initial response to a report of child-on-child abuse is incredibly important - how we respond to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims to report or come forward. Academies will also respond to reports of alleged child-on-child abuse that have occurred online or outside of school. These reports will be treated seriously, and the school remains committed to

supporting and safeguarding all parties including the victim, alleged perpetrator, and any other child(ren) who may be affected.

We will make decisions on a case-by-case basis, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) taking the leading role and using their professional judgement and supported by other agencies, such as MASH, Children's Social Care, and the Police as appropriate. We will ensure that we reference and follow other policies and procedures as appropriate.

We have clear reporting systems for each group of our school community, the effectiveness of these reporting systems is reviewed throughout the academic year and may be expanded to meet the needs of all members of our community. The process for responding to allegations or concerns is outlined in full detail below.

Children (including bystanders)

It is important to understand that a victim may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report. We recognise that in some instances another child may report on another child's behalf. All children will know how to report concerns or incidents of child-on-child abuse.

We ask that all children report any concerning behaviour to a member of staff – this can be any member of teaching or non-teaching staff, including a class teacher, a TA, the Head teacher, a lunchtime supervisor, or a member of the office team. We talk about trusted adults regularly in class and in assemblies to remind our children of who they can report concerns to.

The member of staff will listen to the child and make an initial note of their concerns, they will then discuss next steps with them and reassure them that they will be supported. In line with the statutory guidance provided in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, we will never promise a child that we will not tell anyone about a report of any form of abuse, as this may not be in the best interests of the child. The member of staff will make a formal record of the concern/report on the academy's recording system and the Safeguarding Leads will be alerted. The member of staff will directly alert the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead if the report is deemed urgent or if a child is considered at risk.

Reports of child-on-child abuse or concerns relating to this from members of staff recorded on the system will be reviewed by the Designated Safeguarding Leads

In addition, children have access to nurture teaching assistants who they may feel more comfortable talking to. Many of our academies also have worry box systems in place.

Parents/carers

We understand that parents and carers may well struggle to cope with making or receiving a report that their child has been the victim of or is an alleged perpetrator of child-on-child abuse.

In line with the statutory guidance provided in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 Part 5, we will seek advice and support from other services as decided on a case-by-case basis. All decisions and actions taken by the school will consider the needs of the individual children involved, and the wider community.

We ask that if parents/carers have concerns about their child experiencing or allegedly perpetrating child-on-child abuse, that they contact the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy (in person/via telephone call/via email) to explain their concerns. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will take an initial note of the concerns but may ask to schedule a meeting to allow for more time to discuss the concerns in detail. Following the report and/or the meeting, the Designated

Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will make a formal record of the report on the academy's recording system and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will seek advice from Statutory Services if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

We ask that parents/carers to come directly to the school with their concerns rather than discussing them with other members of the community in person or online.

Our school remains committed to supporting pupils and their families in all instances of child-on-child abuse. We will endeavour to ensure that all parties are kept informed of progress and any developments, but we will also need to show due regard to GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and ongoing investigations by statutory services. This may mean, at times, that we are not able to provide or share information or updates.

If a parent/carer is not satisfied with actions taken, we ask that they follow the complaint policy and procedures. This is available online from our Aspire website, the academy website and on request from the school office.

Staff

Our staff work closely with our children and therefore may notice a change in a child's behaviour or attitude that might indicate that something is wrong before receiving a report from a child or a member of the school community. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare or are concerned that a child is displaying behaviours that may show they have been the victim of or that they are perpetrating child-on-child abuse, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told. Our staff maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'.

We ask that staff report their concerns to a Designated Safeguarding Lead/directly to the Head teacher. The member of staff receiving the report will take an initial note of the concerns and will then make a formal record of the report on the academy's recording system and other relevant staff members will be alerted. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will seek advice from Statutory Services if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

Visitors

We ensure that all visitors to our academies are aware of our Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures and which staff member they should report any concerns to (the member of staff may differ depending on the purpose of the visit e.g., supply teacher, governor, external agency etc.).

We ask that if any visitor has any concerns about child-on-child abuse that they have witnessed, or have been told about, that they report their concerns at the earliest opportunity in person to the Designated Safeguarding Lead/the Headteacher/a member of the Senior Leadership Team. We ask that visitors report their concerns in person by the end of the school day. For example, it would not be appropriate to wait until the following day or leave a written note with concerns. The member of staff receiving the report will take an initial note of the concerns and will then make a formal record of the concerns on the school's recording system and other relevant staff members will be alerted. The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will seek advice from Statutory Services if the report is deemed urgent or if a child is considered at risk.

Recording and evaluating

We will ensure a written report is made as soon after the disclosure as possible recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated. We will ensure the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) will be informed as soon as possible, if they were not involved in the initial report. This information will be recorded onto the

relevant system. We will ensure that details of decisions made and reasons for decisions are recorded as well as any outcomes.

We will ensure that any 'safety plans' are recorded and kept under review and these will be stored on the system.

Strategies for Prevention

Aspire Multi Academy Trust, actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by Staff training, including:

- Contextual safeguarding.
- Identification and classification of specific behaviours
- Making it clear there is a zero-tolerance approach to child-on-child abuse (especially in relation to SVSH) that it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. Ensuring it is never passed off as "banter," "just having a laugh," "a part of growing up" or "boys being boys."
- Recognising, acknowledging, and understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported.
- Challenging physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts, and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts.
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside of the classroom).
- Responsibilities of the Governing body – they must be aware of their statutory safeguarding responsibilities (effective child protection policy – child-on-child abuse policy).
- Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the safeguarding lead/team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify those children who may need additional support.

Information for children:

- Creating an ethos and culture in which all children feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgemental environment, and have them listened to.
- All children are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience any form of child-on-child abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it.
- They are regularly informed about the approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse, including the academy's zero-tolerance approach towards all forms of child-on-child abuse, the process for reporting their concerns of child-on-child abuse and where to go for further help, support, and advice.
- Educating all children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via a well embedded RHE curriculum and wider curriculum.
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside of the classroom).

Information for parents/carers

- Talking to parents, both in groups and one-to-one.
- Encouraging parents to hold the school to account on this issue.
- Asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the school address those risks.

- Challenging the attitudes that underlie child-on-child abuse – in school and/or the wider community.
- Ensuring parents /carers are aware of the ethos and culture of the academy.

RHE (Relationships and Health Education) curriculum:

- Each academy has a clear set of values and standards, upheld, and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life, which is supported by a planned programme of evidence based RHE curriculum, updated inline with 2025 recommendations.
- RHE is fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and/or other vulnerabilities).
- Each academy will, through our RHE programme, promote:
 - Healthy and respectful relationships.
 - Boundaries and consent.
 - Equality and raise awareness of stereotyping and prejudice.
 - Body confidence and self-esteem.
 - How to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour.
 - The concepts of, and laws relating to – sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, teenage relationship abuse (intimate personal relationships between children), and how to access support, and
 - What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable.

Breaches / Complaints

Breaches to this policy will be dealt with in the same way that breaches of other policies are dealt with, as determined by the Head teacher, Governing Body and wider Trust Board.

If a parent/carers is not satisfied with actions taken, we ask that they follow our complaint policy and procedures. This is available online on our Trust website www.aspire-mat.co.uk and on request from the academy office.

Links with other policies

You may find it helpful to read this child-on-child abuse policy alongside the other following school policies:

Policy	How it may link
Safeguarding Policy	Includes information about child protection procedures and contextualised safeguarding
Behaviour Policy	Includes details about the school’s behaviour system including potential sanctions for pupils
Anti-Bullying policy	Includes information about bullying behaviours and vulnerable groups
Online Safety / E-Safety / Acceptable Use Policies	Includes information about children’s online behaviour and details about online bullying/cyberbullying

Equalities Policy	Includes information about our school's approach to tackling prejudice and celebrating differences. Links to prejudice-related language and crime and the protected characteristics
RSHE	Includes information about our school's RSHE programme and how we teach about healthy relationships, friendships, and bullying
Complaints Policy	Includes information about how to make a complaint if you are not satisfied with the school's response

3. Process

Process

If the member of staff who takes the disclosure is not the DSL, or a deputy DSL, the DSL or deputy should be informed as soon as possible and responses to disclosures will be:

- Decided on a case-by-case basis
- Underpinned by the principle of a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, meaning it's never acceptable and it won't be tolerated
- The DSL (or a deputy) will take the lead, supported by other agencies as required.
- Where there's been a report of sexual violence, the DSL (or a deputy) should make an immediate risk and needs assessment, considering:
 1. The victim, especially their protection and support
 2. Whether there may have been other victims
 3. The alleged perpetrator(s)
 4. All other children at the school (and adult students and staff, if appropriate), especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them
 5. Where there's been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Risk assessments are kept under review and the DSL (or a deputy) will engage with children's social care and specialist services as required for instance, where there's been a report of sexual violence, a risk assessment will likely need input from social workers or sexual violence specialists within your local multi-agency safeguarding team (NOTTINGAMSIRE MASH TEAM)

Assessments will inform our approach and our risk assessment accordingly.

The DSL will also, if required, discuss the local response to sexual violence and sexual harassment with police and local authority children's social care colleagues to prepare the school's or college's policies (especially the child protection policy) and responses, and be confident that they know what local specialist support is available to support all children involved (including victims and alleged perpetrators) in sexual violence and sexual harassment, and be confident as to how to access this support.

Determining how to manage and escalate the report

Staff are aware of, and respond appropriately, to all reports and concerns about sexual violence and/or harassment both online and offline, including those that have happened outside of school and

will do all they can to reasonably protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, for example, carefully considering which staff should know about the report and any support for the children involved.

- The potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours and exposing victims' identities is also carefully considered.
- The academy DSL (or a deputy) will decide how to manage the report, including when to inform the alleged perpetrator(s). This depends on a number of important considerations, including:
 - The wishes of the victim and how they want to proceed
 - The nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour
 - The ages and developmental stages of the children involved
 - Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator(s) significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
 - Whether the alleged incident is a one-off or part of a sustained pattern of abuse
 - That sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers
 - Whether there are ongoing risks to the victim (or anyone else)
 - Any related issues and wider context, including links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation

In terms of informing parents, the DSL should consider that:

- Parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risk)
- The basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to local authority children's social care, and
- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is 10, if the alleged perpetrator is under 10, the starting principle of referring to the police remains

Next Steps:

1. Manage internally, where this is considered appropriate in the circumstances, and early help or statutory interventions aren't required
2. Early help, as outlined in chapter 1 of Working Together to Safeguard Children, where statutory interventions aren't required. Your DSL should know what this process is and where to access support
3. Referrals to children's social care*, where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger
4. Report to the police**/** (usually in parallel with a referral to children's social care), where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made. Police will consider what action to take to manage the assessed risk of harm, which could include the use of police or court bail

*Where scenarios involve working with children's social care and/or the police, we will not wait for the outcome of an investigation before protecting the victim and other children. The DSL (or a deputy) will continue to work closely with children's social care to make sure the school's actions don't jeopardise a statutory investigation. There will be immediate consideration for safeguarding the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and all other children.

Where a report is going to be made to children's social care and/or the police, relevant staff will speak to the relevant agency to discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed. Staff may confiscate devices for evidence to hand to the police, if the report includes an online element.

4. Mobile Phones and Smart Technology

This section sets out the Trust's expectations and safeguarding approach to the use and misuse of mobile phones, smart technology, and personal devices in relation to child-on-child abuse, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE 2025) and statutory RSHE guidance.

The Trust recognises that mobile phones and smart devices can be misused by children and young people in ways that constitute or facilitate child-on-child abuse, including:

Bullying, harassment and intimidation, including through social media or messaging apps;

Non-consensual sharing of sexual or indecent images (including "sexting" and deepfake or AI-generated content);

Upskirting, voyeurism, or other forms of image-based abuse;

Sexualised harassment, threats, or coercion via digital means (including sextortion);

Filming and distribution of physical assaults or degrading treatment.

Such behaviours are treated seriously under the Trust's safeguarding framework and will be responded to in accordance with the Child-on-Child Abuse Policy, the Behaviour Policy, and the Online Safety Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities

All schools within the Trust must have a clear and consistently enforced mobile phone policy, which includes:

- Expectations for mobile use during the school day;
- Procedures for managing suspected misuse or abuse involving digital devices;
- Safeguarding protocols for reviewing or confiscating devices where abuse is suspected, in line with KCSiE and DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) must:

- Ensure that staff understand how mobile technology can contribute to abuse;
- Respond appropriately to any concerns involving digital content, including the referral, recording, and reporting of incidents.

Pupils and parents must be made aware of:

- The safeguarding risks associated with misuse of mobile phones;
- The school's stance on peer-on-peer abuse, including digital abuse;

- The consequences of violating mobile phone rules in relation to harmful behaviours.

Prevention and Education

As part of the statutory RSHE curriculum, all schools in the Trust must teach pupils about:

- The risks of digital exploitation and coercion;
- Online safety, including the law on image sharing and consent
- Respectful relationships, and how to seek help if abuse occurs;
- The importance of reporting incidents and not being a bystander.

Investigation and Sanctions Where mobile phones are involved in suspected child-on-child abuse, schools will take immediate safeguarding action, which may include:

- Confiscation and secure storage of devices;
- Involvement of police and/or children's social care;
- Disciplinary action against pupils in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

All incidents involving mobile phone misuse and child-on-child abuse will be recorded as safeguarding concerns and escalated as required under statutory obligations.

5. Online Safety (Updated for KCSiE 2025)

The Trust recognises that online safety is a core safeguarding concern and must be embedded across all areas of school life. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, we acknowledge the growing complexity of online harm, including emerging risks that exploit new technologies and platforms.

All schools within the Trust must take proactive steps to protect pupils from:

- AI-generated sexual imagery, including deepfake content and non-consensual synthetic media. Staff must be alert to signs of distress or exploitation where pupils have been subjected to or exposed to these forms of abuse, whether created or shared.
Online grooming via gaming platforms and anonymous chat services, where perpetrators may target young people using in-game messaging, voice chat, or external apps. Schools must educate pupils on how to recognise inappropriate contact and encourage prompt reporting of any concerns.
Live streaming abuse, which can occur through social media, video-sharing platforms, or covert recording. Pupils should be taught about the risks associated with live broadcasts, including the potential for grooming, coercion, and exploitation.

All schools must ensure their RSHE curriculum addresses these risks clearly and accessibly. Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) must remain up to date with the latest threats and ensure all staff are trained to respond to incidents involving digital harm. This includes knowing when to involve law enforcement, secure devices, and provide support to affected pupils.

The Trust requires each school to have robust policies on filtering and monitoring, clear reporting routes for online concerns, and a culture that encourages safe, respectful digital behaviour.

- **General MASH Number (Professionals):** 0300 500 80 90
- **General MASH Number (Public):** 0300 500 80 80
- **Emergency Duty Team (EDT):** 0300 456 4546

- **Nottinghamshire MASH Consultation Line (for professionals, with guidance available [PDF]):** 0115 977 4247
- **Emergency (if a child is in immediate danger):** 999
- **Report a Crime:** 101
- **Online Form for Reporting Concerns:** Can be found on the [Nottinghamshire County Council website](#)
- **Fax:** 01623 483295
- **Email (for professional safeguarding concerns):** mash.safeguarding@nottscc.gov.uk

This policy has been developed to reflect the most recent Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) Statutory Guidance (1 September 2025).

This policy is available:

- Online at www.aspire-mat.co.uk
- On Aspire Academy websites
- From the school office.
- Child friendly versions are on display and in welcome packs for new pupils.

This policy is reviewed and evaluated throughout the academic year. It is updated bi-annually or as deemed necessary in keeping with KCSiE updates.

Further information and support can be found through the following links:

Part 5: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/686b94eefe1a249e937cbd2d/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2025.pdf

Definitions

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/686b94eefe1a249e937cbd2d/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2025.pdf

Simon Hackett (2010) Continuum model of sexual behaviours -

- [Sexual development and behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)
- [NSPCC Learning Understanding sexualised behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)