



Arun Court School: Policy Number

Arun Court School – PEER ON PEER ABUSE

Ratified by main EMAT meeting:

Signature (+ date) Chair of EMAT: Mr Paul Phillips

Signature (+ date) Proprietor:Mrs Beverley-Sarah White

Signature (+ date) Principal of SchoolVicki Williams

Date of next review: January 2023 (Reviewed at least Annually)

Contextual Statement

As a school that has been recognised by Surrey LEA as ‘providing for some of the county’s most vulnerable children many of whom have been difficult to place’ and recognised by Ofsted as ‘unique’ we are very aware of the importance of our context.

While we are aware that all young people can be victims of peer-on-peer abuse, Arun Court students have increased vulnerabilities which puts them at greater risk.

We ensure that students receive a thorough education on peer-on-peer abuse, the consequences for the victim, the perpetrator and those surrounding them as we believe that education is paramount.

We are committed to working with our students, families and outside agencies to achieve the best possible outcomes for our young people.

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Introduction

Arun Court School recognises that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. This includes verbal as well as physical abuse. Peer on peer abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as part of “banter” or “growing up”.

We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of peer-on-peer abuse within our school and beyond. In cases where peer on peer abuse is identified we will follow our child protection procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation.

We recognise that peer on peer abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Sexting or youth produced digital imagery
- Upskirting
- Bullying
- Radicalisation
- Abuse in intimate relationships
- Children who display sexually harmful behaviour
- Gang association and serious violence (County Lines)
- Technology can be used for bullying and other abusive behaviour

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school such as the behaviour policy, anti- bullying policy, child protection policy and online safety 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 should be read in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LSCB) Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

Aims

The policy will: -

- Set out our strategies for preventing, identifying and managing peer on peer abuse
- Take a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved. Acknowledging that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable and may have been abused by peer, parents or adults in the community.

Understanding Peer on Peer abuse

Physical and sexual violence and harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex or a group of children towards 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. Abuse may also occur online and offline.

The Context

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it. In this policy we recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive behaviour. In terms of sexual abuse, we are adopting the NSPCC definition of Harmful Sexual Behaviour 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." We will also use Simon Hackett's continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours. (Appendix 1)

Vulnerable groups

We recognise that all children can be at risk however we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable and all students at Arun Court School are classed as vulnerable. Factors increasing the risk of vulnerability include: experience of abuse within their family; living with domestic violence; young people in care; children who go missing; children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities); children with mental health diagnoses, children who identify or are perceived as LGBT and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

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.

All staff should 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.

Responding to Alleged Incidents

All reports of peer on peer abuse will be made on a case by case basis one of the designated safeguarding leads or the deputy taking a leading role, using their professional judgement and supported by other agencies such as social care or the police as required.

The immediate response to a report

- The school or college will take all reports seriously and will reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe.
- All staff will be trained to manage a report.
- Staff will not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead or social care) staff will however only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it.
- A written report will be made as soon after the interview as possible on a Cause for Concern form recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later.
- Where the report includes an online element, the school will follow advice on searching, screening and confiscation. The staff will not view or forward images unless unavoidable and only if the DSL is present as a witness
- The DSL will be informed as soon as possible.

Risk Assessment

When there has been a report of physical or sexual abuse, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) will consider an immediate risk assessment. Where there has been a report of harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The risk assessment should consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support;
- The alleged perpetrator; and
- All the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them;

Risk assessments will be recorded on the Arun Court template and be kept under review. The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) will ensure they are engaging with C-SPA for all parties if the threshold is met. This will be discussed by the safeguarding team.

Action following a report

Following an incident, we will consider

- The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including: whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;
- The ages of the children involved;

- The developmental stages of the children involved;
- Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse;
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff; and other related issues and wider context?

Follow up Actions

Children sharing a classroom: Whilst the school establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police, if appropriate,

- The perpetrator and victim will be kept as separate as possible within the limits of the school and activities.
- We will consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport to and from the school. These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator.

Options to manage the report

In some cases, for example, one-off incidents, we may decide that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, utilising the behaviour and bullying policies and by providing pastoral support from the keyworker. This decision will be made based on the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All decisions, and discussions around making these decisions will be recorded and stored by a DSL or deputy on an Incident Form. 2.

We may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.

The management of any incidence of peer-on-peer abuse will include consultation with our Termination of Placement policy on a case-by case-basis.

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to C-SPA and/or the police. Where statutory assessments are appropriate, one of the designated safeguarding leads or deputy will be working alongside, and cooperating with, the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.

Reporting to the Police

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is that this will be passed on to the police. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach. Where a report has been made to the police, the school will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity. Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the relevant agencies to support all children involved (especially potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought in order to help us.

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

The end of the criminal process

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for an offence, the school will refer to the Termination of Placement policy on a case-by-case basis to ensure the safety of all our students and staff.

A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. We will continue to support all parties in this instance.

Support for Children Affected by Sexual-Assault

Support for victims of sexual assault is available from a variety of agencies which the school can support the family with contacting. We will support the 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. This decision will be made in consultation with the child, their family and case officer. If they are moved, we will ensure the new school is aware of the ongoing support they may need. The DSL will support this move. Where there is a criminal investigation, the alleged perpetrator will be removed from any shared classes with the victim and we will also consider how best to keep them a reasonable distance apart on the school premises or on school transport and whether this is possible in such a small building. This is in the best interest of the children concerned and should not be perceived to be a judgement of guilt before any legal proceedings. We will work closely with the police.

Physical Abuse

While a clear focus of peer-on-peer abuse is around sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be abusive. These are equally not tolerated and if it is believed that a crime has been committed, will be reported to the police. The principles from the anti-bullying policy will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any police investigation will need to take priority. When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on aspects of Hackett's

continuum (Appendix 1) to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond.

This could include, for example, whether it:

- is socially acceptable
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time
- is socially acceptable within the peer group
- is problematic and concerning
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning
- involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour
- involves a misuse of power Online Behaviour Many forms of peer on peer abuse have an element of online behaviour including behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting. Policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour can be found (in anti- bullying policy, online safety policy and child protection policy)

Prevention

Arun Court School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of peer-on-peer abuse by:

- Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, students, and parents about this issue. This will include training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes (a) Contextual Safeguarding; (b) The identification and classification of specific behaviours, the importance of 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 horseplay or teasing.
- Educating children about the nature and prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse via PSHCE and the wider curriculum.
- Students are frequently educated on what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse.

Students all have a named keyworker who they can go to with any concerns. This key worker will have a close relationship with the student and their family.

- They are regularly informed about the school's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of peer-on-peer abuse.

- Engaging parents on this issue by: (a) Talking about it with parents, both in groups and one to one; (b) Asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the school address those risks (c) Involving parents in the review of School policies
- Ensuring that all peer-on-peer abuse issues are fed back to the school's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who maybe in need of additional support. (This can be done informally for minor concerns at daily briefings or formally via cause for concern forms)
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom);
- Working with Governors, The Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, students 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;
- Creating conditions in which our students can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships;
- Creating a culture in which our students feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to; and
- Responding to cases of peer-on-peer abuse promptly and appropriately.

Multi-agency working

Arun Court School actively engages with its local partners in relation to peer-on-peer abuse, and works closely with C-SPA, the police, children's social care and CAMHS. The relationships the school has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the school is able to prevent, identify early and appropriately handle cases of peer-on-peer abuse. They help the school (a) To develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in the local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist; (b) To ensure that our students can access the range of services and support they need quickly (c) To increase our awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in our local area to enable us to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by our students. Arun Court School actively refers concerns/allegations of peer-on-peer abuse where necessary to C-SPA, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies. Children resident out of county but attending Arun Court school will be reported to their home MASH or equivalent Social Care. 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 to address any incidents or concerns will be required.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Behaviour Policy and Expectations

Termination of Placement Policy

Anti- Bullying Policy

Appendix 1 Simon Hackett (2010) has proposed a continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant:

