



St John Vianney Catholic School



Love one another as I have loved you

Managing Allegations Against Other Pupils (Peer-on-Peer Abuse)

“St John Vianney School is an academic community which is characterised by the Gospel Spirit of Peace, Justice and Love. All that we do and say in our school will be dominated by Jesus’ words “Love one another as I have loved you”. Our school rules are based on this statement and carried in “our hearts and our heads” and reflected in the life and work of our school”.

St John Vianney Catholic Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the safety and welfare of all children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

At St. John Vianney Catholic Primary School, we believe that all children have a right to attend a school and learn a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the school and other pupils.

We recognise that some students will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under the school’s behaviour policy.

Introduction

Dfe guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (2016) says that ‘Governing Bodies should ensure that there are procedures in place to handle allegations against other children.’ The guidance also states the importance of minimising the risks of peer-on-peer abuse.

In most instances, the conduct of students towards each other will be covered under the school’s behaviour policy. However, some allegations might be of such a serious nature that they become safeguarding concerns. These allegations are most likely to include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation; although we are aware that the abuse may take any form.

Definition

- The definition for domestic abuse (Home Office 2013) relates to young people aged 16 and 17, who experience physical, emotional, sexual and/or financial abuse, and coercive control, in their intimate relationships.
- The definition for child sexual exploitation (DCSF – 2009) captures young people aged under -18 who are sexually abused in the context of exploitative relationships, contexts and situations by a person of any age – including another young person.
- The definition for young people who display harmful sexual behaviours refers to any young person, under the age of 18, who demonstrates behaviour outside of their normative parameters (this includes but is not exclusive to abusive behaviours) (Hackett 2011, NICE 2004).
- Serious youth violence is defined with reference to offences (as opposed to relationships/contexts) and captures all those of the most serious in nature including murder, rape and GBH between young people under 18. (London Safeguarding Children Board 2009)

The Safeguarding Implications of Sexual Activity Between Young People

'The intervention of child protection agencies in situations involving sexual activity between children can require professional judgments. Some situations are statutorily clear – for example, a child under the age 13 cannot consent to sexual activity. But it will not necessarily be appropriate to initiate safeguarding procedures where sexual activity involving children and young people below the age of legal consent (16 years) comes to notice. In our society, generally the age at which children become sexually active has steadily dropped. It is important to distinguish between children of a similar age (where at least one is below the age of consent), and sexual activity involving a power imbalance, or some form of coercion or exploitation.'

Taken from The Safeguarding Implications of Events Leading to the Closure of Stanbridge Earls School – A Serious Case Review (2015)

Prevention

At our school, we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:

- Providing PHSE as part of the curriculum, which will help students to develop their understanding of acceptable behaviours, healthy relationships and keeping themselves safe (NSPCC – My Pants are Private, Protective Behaviours);
- Having effective systems within our school for students to be able to raise concerns with staff, knowing they will be listened to, supported and valued, and that the issues they raise will be looked into and addressed;
- Liaising and working with other professionals to develop robust risk assessments for pupils that are identified as posing a potential risk to other students;
- Liaising with specialists to deliver appropriate targeted work to pupils identified as being at potential risk, e.g. Protective Behaviours work.

Allegations Against Other Pupils (Safeguarding Issues)

Allegations of abuse or allegations relating to safeguarding may be made against other students within our setting. These may include allegations of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

Safeguarding concerns or reports of abuse in any form may be made against students in our setting.

It may also be considered a safeguarding issue if the allegation:

- Is being made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger or more vulnerable pupil;
- Is of a possible criminal nature;
- Puts other pupils in the school at risk, or raises the risk factor for others;
- Indicates that other pupils may have been harmed or be at risk of harm;
- Includes bullying (under the definition of emotional abuse) or intimidation.

Specific safeguarding issues against another student may include:

- Physical Abuse:
 - Pre-planned violence;
 - Physical altercations;
 - Forcing others to carry out violence;
 - Forcing others to use drugs, alcohol or other substances.
- Emotional Abuse:
 - Bullying;
 - Threats and intimidation;
 - Blackmail/extortion.
- Sexual Abuse:
 - Sexual assault;
 - Indecent exposure;
 - Indecent touching;
 - Showing pornography to others;
 - Forcing others to create/share/download indecent images;
 - Sexting.
 - Sexual Exploitation
 - Encouraging/enticing other pupils to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour;
 - Photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts;
 - Sharing images through social media.

Procedure

- When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student which is of a safeguarding nature it should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible;
- A factual report must be kept (as normal safeguarding child protection procedures) and updated with all actions and outcomes (via CPOMs);
- The incident should not be investigated at this time;
- The DSL will contact the MASH to discuss the case, and make a formal referral where appropriate;
- If the allegation indicates that a potential crime has taken place the MASH will refer the case to the police;
- Parents of both the alleged victim and the student, accused of the complaint, should be informed, this should be discussed during the consultation with the MASH;
- A risk assessment will be considered at this time to protect all parties involved;
- It may be appropriate to exclude the alleged culprit against whom the report has been made, for a fixed time in line with the school's behaviour policy and procedures;
- Police and Social Care will lead any investigation. However, where neither police nor Social Care thresholds are met, our school will then undertake a thorough investigation following our school's policies and procedures;
- A risk assessment should be considered along with an appropriate supervision plan;
- Support should be given to all students involved; they should be included in the relevant meetings and sign to agree to the plans which are set;
- The plan should be monitored and review dates should be set.

Allegations are Made Directly to Other Agencies

In some circumstances, parents or the alleged victims will report directly to other agencies. In these cases, (if not Police or Social Care) these agencies should make referrals to Social Care or the Police.

Social Care or the Police should liaise directly with the DSL for the school to inform them of the situation or liaise with the LADO and Schools Safeguarding Team, who will contact the DSL with the information.

All professionals involved can support with the risk assessment and management of such allegations.