Saint Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Allegations against pupils

Consulted with staff	Sep 2021
Agreed by governor committee	Not applicable
Ratified by full governing body	Sep 2021
Date for review	Sep 2023
Signature of Chair of Governors	
Signature of Headteacher	

1. **Intent**

Jesus Christ said 'Let the children come to me, do not hinder them' (Matthew 19:14). As a Catholic school it is our mission to educate pupils in such a way that no matter what their abilities or background they may reach their full potential as human beings. We thus seek to overcome any hindrance that might prevent any pupil accessing the fullness of the curriculum, opportunities and activities we offer.

2. **Safeguarding Statement**

'Saint Thomas More 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.'

3. **Policy**

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 (para 84) says that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure there are appropriate policies and procedures in place in order for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare.' This includes the requirement for a policy for dealing with allegations against pupils including peer-on-peer abuse.

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

We have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

Anti-Bullying Policy
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Online Safety Policy
Behaviour Management Policy

4. **What is Peer-On-Peer Abuse?**

Peer-on-peer abuse is detailed in paragraphs 46 to 50 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021.

It occurs when children abuse other children. It can take the form of, but is not limited to:

- Bullying (including cyber bullying, prejudiced-based and discriminatory bullying);
- Abuse in intimate, personal relationships between peers
- 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 or 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 stand alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without their 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 and 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 the person's 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)

5. **Child sexual violence and sexual harassment**

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

The [Ofsted Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges](#) (June 2021) reported that 'sexual harassment and online sexual abuse… are much more prevalent than adults realise,' and that sexual harassment [including sexist name-calling] occurs so frequently that it has become 'commonplace." The report also states that children reported that sexual violence typically occurs in 'unsupervised spaces outside of school' but pupils also reported 'experience of unwanted touching in school corridors'. The report goes on to say that 'even where their school encourages them to' young people are reluctant to report sexual abuse if the 'risk of being ostracised by peers or getting peers into trouble is not considered to be worth it for something perceived… to be commonplace' and children 'worry about how adults will react, because they think they will not be believed, or that they will be blamed,' or that 'once they talk to an adult the process will be out of their control.'

6. Identifying abuse

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt in another way, such as with sexual experimentation etc. This is a matter of professional judgement and reference to the most up-to-date Keeping Children Safe in Education should be made in identifying whether a behaviour is abusive. All reports and incidences of potential peer-on-peer abuse must taken seriously and investigated fully before deciding whether the incident constitutes per-on-peer abuse and whether to follow procedure laid out in this policy, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Behaviour Management Policy or procedures from a combination of these policies.

7. Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Peer on Peer Abuse

Paragraph 47 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 states: It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers... that are actually abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example, dismissing sexual harassment as 'just banter', 'just having a laugh', 'part of growing up' or 'boys being boys' can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Allegations may be made against children by other children in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. When an allegation is made by a child against another child, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern.

If the complaint is considered a one-off concern or a behavioural issue and does not present a safeguarding concern, the Behaviour Management Policy will be referred and adhered to. The incident will be recorded on the CPOMs system and any further incidents will be monitored to identify patterns of behaviour or arising safeguarding concerns.

If the complaint raises a safeguarding concern, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be adhered to and all safeguarding protocols will be followed. The member of staff will alert the DSL and record the concerns on CPOMs.

Parents, of both the child/ren being complained about and the alleged victim/s, should be informed and kept updated.

In situations where the school considers an ongoing safeguarding risk is presented by the perpetrating child, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan. The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.

It is important to consider the wishes and feelings of the alleged victim, but these should not override any actions in relation to potential safeguarding risks to other children. The potential for ongoing risk of harm towards children and staff should be considered. Sensitivity however is key.

Consideration about how best to support and protect the alleged perpetrator will also be considered. Referrals where appropriate will be made to Early Help or Children's Social Care usually through the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If it is considered necessary to involve the police, this will be done in parallel with a referral to children's social care.

In some cases, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will make the decision that the incident will be dealt with internally. The Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies may be referred to in these incidents and details of the incident and response will be recorded on CPOMs.

Prevention

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School we will minimise the risk of allegations against other children by:-

- Providing a developmentally appropriate RSE and PSHE syllabus which develops children's understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe, including the Ten:Ten Programme.
- Delivering an Online safety programme which develops children's 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 children are safe and act appropriately when using information technology in school.
- Having systems in place for any child to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued. Children will be regularly reminded of how to raise concerns.
- Delivering targeted work on assertiveness and keeping safe to those children identified as being at risk
- Developing robust risk assessments & providing targeted work for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other children
- We will ensure that there are clear and consistent boundaries to what is considered to be acceptable behaviour and children will understand the consequences of unacceptable behaviour or language.
- The school will ensure that parents have a clear understanding of behaviours and language that are not acceptable within school.
- The DSL will monitor incidents of peer-on-peer abuse recorded on the CPOMs system to identify patterns and trends which can then be addressed through targeted actions.
- Reporting instances of sexual harassment and per-on-peer abuse to governors as part of annual and more interim safeguarding reports.