

Woodlands Primary School, Hedgehogs Nursery & Sunbeams Club Child-on-Child Abuse Policy & Guidance Framework



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Next Review Date: September 2026

Produced in collaboration with the Sexual violence and Sexual Harassment task and finish group: Safeguarding Children partnership, Safeguarding Children in Education team, Cheshire Police, Primary, Secondary and Special school representatives, Cheshire College South and West, CWP, The Proud Trust, Early Help and Prevention team, Youth Justice and NHS Cheshire CCG.

Please Note: This policy template is current and in line with the statutory guidance contained within Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (which comes into effect September 2025), Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and Cheshire West and Chester Safeguarding Children Partnership Policy, Practice and Guidance.

For the purposes of keeping this document in line with Keeping children Safe in Education 2025 guidance, the framework will refer to child-on-child abuse.

Introduction

Woodlands Primary School, Hedgehogs Nursery & Sunbeams Club (the school) recognises that children and young people 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. Child-on-child 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 child-on-child abuse within our setting and beyond.

Where child-on-child abuse is identified we will follow our safeguarding and child protection procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation.

The school recognises that child-on-child abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

- domestic abuse – an incident or pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, financial and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent against a current or former dating partner regardless of gender or sexuality.
- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
- child sexual exploitation – children under the age of 18 may be sexually abused in the context of exploitative relationships, contexts and situations by peers who are also under 18.
- harmful sexual behaviour – children and young people presenting with sexual behaviours that are outside of developmentally ‘normative’ parameters and harmful to themselves and others
- upskirting – which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.
- serious youth violence – any offence of most serious violence or weapon enabled crime, where the victim is aged 0-19’ i.e. murder, manslaughter, rape, wounding with intent and causing grievous bodily harm. ‘Youth violence’ is defined in the same way, but also includes assault with injury offences. All staff will receive training so that they are aware of indicators which may signal that children are at risk from or involved with serious violence and crime.
- 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); and
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi nudes’ images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery).

The term child-on-child abuse can refer to all of these definitions and a child may experience one or multiple facets of abuse at any one time. Therefore, our response will cut across these definitions and capture the complex web of a child’s experiences.

There are also different gender issues that can be prevalent when dealing with child-on-child abuse (i.e. girls being sexually touched/assaulted, or boys being subjected to initiation/hazing type violence).

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school including the behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, Safeguarding policy and online safety policy.

This policy concentrates on child-on-child abuse in the context of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024) and should be read in conjunction with the Cheshire West and Chester Safeguarding Children Partnership's (SCP) Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

Children, staff and young people in our school need to know how to report concerns and be confident that they will be listened to and supported. Our policy includes:

- Procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse
- How allegations are recorded, investigated, and dealt with
- Clear processes as to how victims, alleged perpetrators and any other students affected will be supported
- Recognition of the gendered nature of child-on-child abuse but recognising that all forms of this behaviour are unacceptable and will be taken seriously

Policy Development

The policy has been developed in consultation with Cheshire West and Chester's Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment task and finish group and the following groups:

- Senior leaders
- Governors
- Staff
- Parents
- Children

The school has a clear set of values and standards, and these will be upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life underpinned by the school behaviour policy and pastoral support system, and through a planned programme of evidence-based content delivered through the whole curriculum. Our curriculum has been developed to take into account age and stage of development for our children at Woodlands taking into account SEND children and their cognitive understanding, and the curriculum will tackle such issues as:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- What respectful behaviour looks like
- Consent
- Gender roles, stereotyping, and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong
- Addressing cultures of sexual harassment.

School aims to reduce the likelihood of child-on-child abuse through:

- the established ethos of respect, friendship, courtesy and kindness.
- high expectations of behaviour.
- clear consequences for unacceptable behaviour.

- providing a developmentally appropriate PSHE curriculum which develops pupils' understanding of healthy relationships, acceptable behaviour, consent and keeping themselves safe.
- systems for any pupil to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, valued and believed.
- robust risk assessments and providing targeted work for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils and those identified as being at risk.

Research indicates that young people rarely disclose child-on-child abuse and that if they do, it is likely to be to their friends. Therefore, the school will also educate pupils in how to support their friends if they are concerned about them, that they should talk to a trusted adult in the school and what services they can contact for further advice.

The school will deliver this through planned, high-quality, Relationships and Sex Education lessons and also through Health Education sessions, and as part of our Commando Joe's character curriculum.

Aims

The policy will:

- Set out our strategies for preventing, identifying, and managing child-on-child abuse
- Take a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved. Acknowledging that children or young people 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.

Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence and Harmful Sexual Behaviour

The boundary between what is abusive and what is part of normal childhood or youthful experimentation can be blurred. The determination of whether behaviour is developmental, inappropriate or abusive will hinge around the related concepts of true consent, power imbalance and exploitation. Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. This may include children and young people who exhibit a range of sexually problematic behaviour such as indecent exposure, obscene telephone calls, fetishism, bestiality and sexual abuse against adults, peers or children.

Staff should be vigilant to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying)
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence and sexual harassment
- sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals
- upskirting

Developmental Sexual Activity

This may encompass those actions that are to be expected from children and young people as they move from infancy through to an adult understanding of their physical, emotional and behavioural relationships with each other. Such sexual activity is essentially information gathering and experience testing. It is characterised by mutuality and of the seeking of consent.

Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour

This can be inappropriate socially, inappropriate to development, or both. In considering whether behaviour fits into this category, it is important to consider what negative effects it has on any of the parties involved and what concerns it raises about a child or young person. It should be recognised that some actions may be motivated by information seeking, but still cause significant upset, confusion, worry, physical damage, etc. It may also be that the behaviour is “acting out” which may derive from other sexual situations to which the child or young person has been exposed. If an act appears to have been inappropriate, there may still be a need for some form of behaviour management or intervention. For some children, educative inputs may be enough to address the behaviour.

Abusive sexual activity included any behaviour involving coercion, threats, aggression together with secrecy, or where one participant relies on an unequal power base. In order to more fully determine the nature of the incident the following factors should be given consideration.

The presence of exploitation in terms of:

Equality – consider differentials of physical, cognitive and emotional development, power and control and authority, passive and assertive tendencies

Consent – agreement including all the following:

- Understanding that is proposed based on age, maturity, development level, functioning and experience
- Knowledge of society’s standards for what is being proposed
- Awareness of potential consequences and alternatives
- Assumption that agreements or disagreements will be respected equally
- Voluntary decision
- Mental competence

Coercion – the young perpetrator who abuses may use techniques like bribing, manipulation and emotional threats of secondary gains and losses that is loss of love, friendship, etc. Some may use physical force, brutality or the threat of these regardless of victim resistance.

In evaluating sexual behaviour of children and young people, the above information should be used only as a guide.

Sexting

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked, or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others or sends sexually explicit messages. They can be sent using mobiles,

tablets, smartphones, laptops - any device that allows you to share media and messages. This is also known as youth produced sexual imagery.

The UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) Education Group has published Advice for Schools and Colleges on Responding to Sexting Incidents - [Guidance overview: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people)

Up-skirting

This typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm. It is now a criminal offence and may constitute sexual harassment. Cases of 'up skirting' have a mandatory requirement for being reported.

Sexual Violence

In this guidance this refers to sexual violence in the context of child-on-child sexual violence. Children can and do abuse other children. Sexual violence covers a spectrum of behaviour. It can refer to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2013. This includes:

- Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus, or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
- Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
- Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Consent

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal, or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

It is important to know that:

- A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity.
- The age of consent is 16.
- Sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

It is also important to differentiate between consensual sexual activity between children of a similar age and that which involves any power imbalance, coercion, or exploitation. Due to their additional training, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) should be involved

and leading the school or college response. If in any doubt, they should seek expert advice. It is important that schools and colleges consider sexual harassment in broad terms. Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates an atmosphere that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive, and violent. Problematic, abusive, and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is "harmful sexual behaviour". The term has been widely adopted in child protection and is used in this advice. Harmful sexual behaviour can occur online and/or offline and can also occur simultaneously between the two. Harmful sexual behaviour should be considered in a child protection context.

Useful guidance can be found in:

1. NSPCC and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework: [Harmful sexual behaviour framework | NSPCC Learning](#)
2. [Stop It Now harmful sexual behaviour prevention toolkit Oct 2020.pdf \(stopitnow.org.uk\)](#)

Hazing/Initiation

The practice of rituals, challenges, and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group.

Additional considerations

When considering harmful sexual behaviour, ages, and the stages of development of the children and young people are critical factors to consider. Sexual behaviour between children and young people can be considered harmful if one of them is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not.

However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or smaller in stature. Schools will ensure that our response to sexual violence and sexual harassment between children and young people of the same sex is equally robust as it is for sexual violence and sexual harassment between children and young people of the opposite sex.

Understanding Child-on-child abuse

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 can be very distressing and have an impact on academic achievement and emotional health and wellbeing.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence may also occur online and offline

The Context

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child or young person'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 sexual behaviour (Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)).

We are adopting the NSPCC definition of HSB 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. This can 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 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 child-on-child abuse, but they do so in gendered ways.

All staff should be aware of indicators, which may signal that children and young people 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

Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment (see additional flowchart Appendix 2)

All reports of child-on-child abuse will be made on an individual needs' basis, with the designated safeguarding lead or their 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 disclosure:

- All staff will take all reports/disclosures seriously and will reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe.
- All staff will be trained to manage a disclosure/report.
- Staff will not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead, deputy safeguarding lead or Deputy Headteacher, police and/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 disclosure as possible, recording the facts as presented by the child or young person. The written report will be uploaded to CPOMs and will be factually accurate as any report may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the incident 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.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed as soon as possible.

Risk Assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, harassment or peer to peer abuse, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will make an immediate risk and needs' assessment for both the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator. Ideally settings will not complete these in isolation but agree them with parents and other multi-agency partners. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on an individual needs basis. The risk and needs' assessment should consider:

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

Risk assessments will be recorded and stored on CPOMs and be kept under review. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) will ensure they are engaging with multi-agency partners e.g., i-Art, police.

Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment

Following an incident, staff 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 or alleged perpetrator 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, or other related issues in the wider context?

Follow up Actions

Children sharing a classroom:

Whilst the school or college establishes the facts and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police:

- Staff 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 should this be an area of concern.
- It may be necessary for the alleged perpetrator to be moved to another class within the same year group so contact between both children is reduced whilst investigations are carried out.

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.

Managing a disclosure:

A - Internally managing a disclosure/report:

1. In some instances of sexual harassment, 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, perhaps through utilising the behaviour and bullying policies and by providing pastoral support. ELSA/Learning Mentor support will be offered.

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 on CPOMs.

2. In line with 1 above, 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.

3. Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to i-Art following locally agreed protocols.

Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy will be working alongside, and cooperate 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.

B - Reporting to the Police

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is this will be passed on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains.

Where a report has been made to the police, the school or college 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 (including potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought 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 a sexual offence Woodlands Primary School will update its risk assessment, agreed with parents and other multi-agency partners, and ensure relevant protections are in place for all children. We will consider any suitable action in line with our behaviour policy. If the perpetrator remains in Woodlands Primary School, we will be very clear as to our expectations regarding the perpetrator now they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions we think are reasonable and proportionate about the perpetrator's timetable.

Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other pupils in the school. We will ensure all children involved are protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online).

In instances where no further action is taken by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, we will continue to offer pastoral 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 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 (see Appendix 3). We will support the victim of sexual assault to remain in school/college but if they are unable to do so, we will enable them to continue their education elsewhere. This decision will be made only at the request of the child and their family. If they are moved, we will ensure the new school is aware of the ongoing support they may need. The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead 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. 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.

Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, we will take suitable action, if we have not already done so. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other pupils).

Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, we may, if we have not already done so, consider any suitable sanctions in line with our behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion. Advice would be sought from the Education Access Team as appropriate.

Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school, the Headteacher would continue keeping the victim and perpetrator in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.

Reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment will, in some cases, not lead to a report to the police (for a variety of reasons). In some cases, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault or sexual harassment are reported to the police and the case is not progressed or are reported to the police and ultimately result in a not guilty verdict. None of this means the offence did not happen or that the victim lied. The process will have affected both victim and alleged perpetrator. Appropriate support will be provided to both as required and consideration given to sharing classes and potential contact as required on a case-by-case basis.

All the above will be considered with the needs and wishes of the victim at the heart of decision-making (supported by parents and carers as required). Any arrangements should be kept under review.

Physical Abuse

While a clear focus of child-on-child 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 instances, 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 child-on-child abuse have an element of online behaviour including behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting (youth produced imagery).

Policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour can be found in our anti-bullying policy, online safety policy and safeguarding policy accessible via the school website.

Prevention

The school actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

- Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff, and volunteers and parents about this issue. This will include training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence, and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes:
 - (a) Contextual Safeguarding.
 - (b) The identification and classification of specific behaviours; and
 - (c) The importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing.
- Educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum.
- Ensuring pupils are frequently told 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. Woodlands Primary School staff will regularly inform pupils about the school's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child 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) Encouraging parents to hold the school to account on this issue.
- Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to Woodlands Primary School's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify any pupils who maybe in need of additional support.
- Challenging the attitudes that underline such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom).
- Working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff, and volunteers 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 children can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships.
- Creating a culture in which our pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to; and
- Responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately.

Multi-agency working

School actively engages with its local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse, and works closely with Cheshire West and Chester's Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP), i-Art, Children's Social Care, Safeguarding Children in Education team, Early help and Prevention, and/or other relevant agencies, and other schools.

The relationships that the school has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that we are able to prevent, identify early and appropriately handle reports of child-on-child abuse. They help the school:

- a) To develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in its local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist
- b) To ensure that our [pupils/students] can access the range of services and support they need quickly
- c) To support and help inform our local community's response to child-on-child abuse
- d) 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 pupils

The school actively refers concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse where necessary to i- Art and/or other relevant agencies.

Children resident out of county but attending a Cheshire West and Chester school will be reported to Children's Social Care in the area where they live

In instances involving children who are subject to risk, harm, and abuse and who are a Child in Care, the children's social worker must be informed and a coordinated approach to address any incidents or concerns will be required.

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:

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
• Developmentally expected • Socially acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Problematic and concerning behaviours • Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected • No overt elements of victimisation • Consent issues may be unclear • May lack reciprocity or equal power • May include levels of compulsivity	• Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim • May include elements of expressive violence	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator • Sadism

[Harmful sexual behaviour framework | NSPCC Learning](#)

A continuum of behaviours

It is vital for professionals to distinguish normal from abnormal sexual behaviours. Chaffin, Letourneau and Silovsky (2002, p208) suggest a child's sexual behaviour should be considered abnormal if it:

- occurs at a frequency greater than would be developmentally expected
- interferes with the child's development
- occurs with coercion, intimidation, or force
- is associated with emotional distress
- occurs between children of divergent ages or developmental abilities
- repeatedly recurs in secrecy after intervention by caregivers.

A continuum of responses

As identified in Hackett's model, above, children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours are a varied and complex group with diverse needs that cannot be addressed by a 'one size fits all' model of service provision.

The diverse needs of these children and young people include the fact that many of them have hitherto unrecognised learning difficulties, specific educational needs, a range of psychosocial risk factors and co-occurring mental health problems (Bladon et al, 2005).

The wide range of harmful sexual behaviours shown by children and young people means their needs should be met in a variety of different placement contexts. These range from

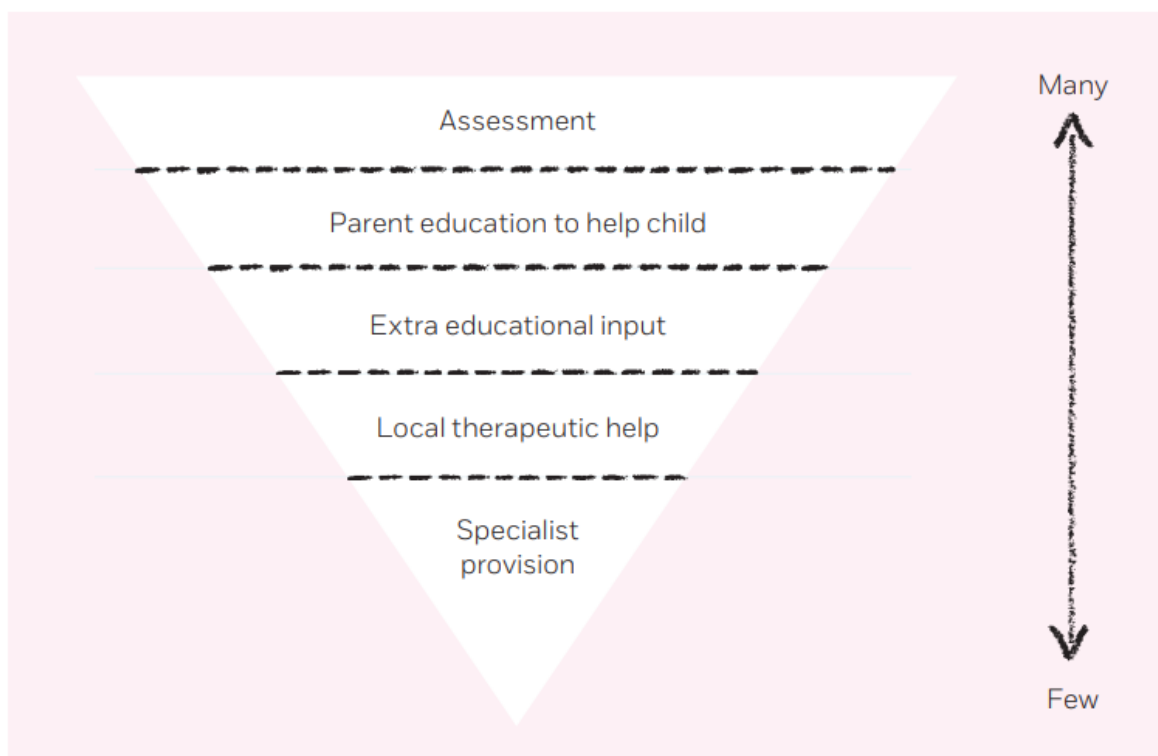
their own homes (most children and young people), general looked-after or care settings (the more disadvantaged and hard-to-manage young people with moderate risk profiles), and more specialist or secure provision (young people who pose a high risk of serious, significant harm to others).

Assessing children and young people and meeting their needs in the context of the notion of a continuum of responses is the subject of the third domain of this framework: effective assessment and referral pathways.

In addition to the initial response and support offered to low level cases in frontline settings, several levels of service response and intensity are required to address various levels of need and concern, as highlighted in the following model developed by Morrison and colleagues (2001).

Hence a small network of regional, highly specialised assessment and treatment services may be required to meet some of the more specialised needs shown by a smaller number of more complex cases.

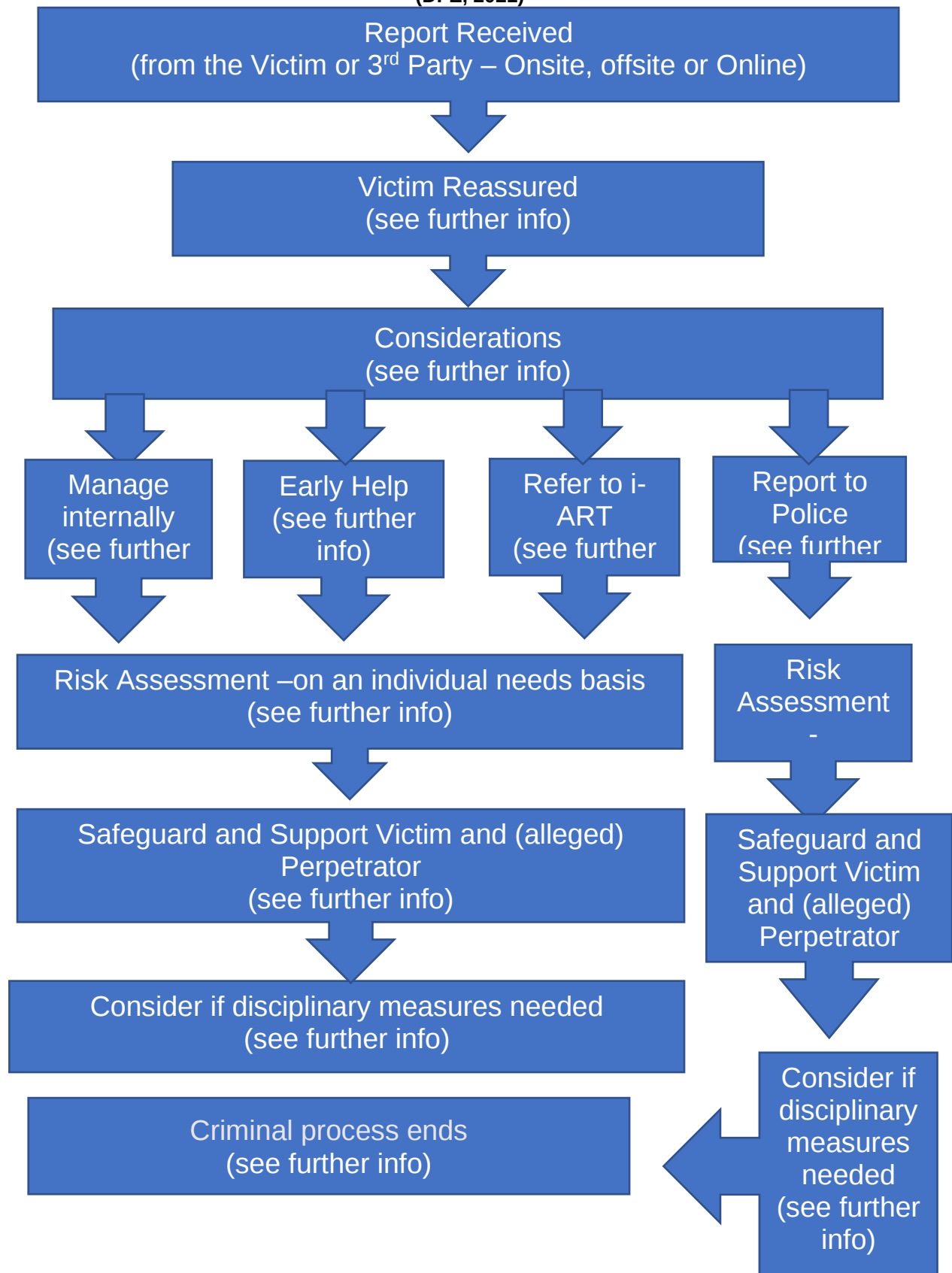
Figure 2: Continuum of service intensity, Morrison and colleagues (2001) adapted from Ryan (1999)



Appendix 2

Sexual violence and sexual harassment flow-chart

*Source – Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (DFE, 2021)



Appendix 3

Support for Young People: Local and National

- Internet Watch Foundation (to potentially remove illegal images) www.iwf.org.uk
- RASASC
- SARC
- Lucy Faithful Foundation
- Brook Tool
- [Harmful Sexual Behaviour Support Service](#), run by [SWGfL](#)
- [Marie Collins Foundation](#),
- Proud Trust

Useful Publications and Websites

Government Publications

Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools - [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Keeping Children safe in Education - [Statutory guidance overview: Keeping children safe in education](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Preventing youth violence and gang involvement - [Guidance overview: Advice to schools and colleges on gangs and youth violence](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Preventing and tackling bullying in schools [Preventing bullying](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Other useful documents

Sexting

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - [Guidance overview: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Anti-bullying alliance

There are some useful links on the section on sexual bullying

Sexual bullying: developing effective anti-bullying practice- A guide for school staff and other Professionals - [Sexual bullying - anti-bullying guidance for teachers and other professionals.pdf](#) (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

Preventing abuse among children and young people-guidance from Stop it Now - [stop booklets childs play preventing abuse among children and young people01 14.pdf](#) (stopitnow.org.uk)

What is Age appropriate? - [What is Age-Appropriate? | Stop It Now](#)

NSPCC-Harmful sexual behaviour - [Understanding Sexual Behaviour in Children | NSPCC](#)

NCB Harmful sexual behaviour - [Workforce perspectives on harmful sexual behaviour](#) (ncb.org.uk)

NSPCC –Is this sexual abuse? - [“Is this sexual abuse?” | NSPCC Learning](#)

Online sexual harassment

Project deSHAME- Digital Exploitation and Sexual Harassment Amongst Minors in Europe Understanding, Preventing, Responding - [Project deSHAME - Childnet](#)

Sexism

It's Just Everywhere- a study on sexism in schools –and how we tackle it - [Report-Its-just-everywhere.pdf \(ukfeminista.org.uk\)](https://ukfeminista.org.uk/Report-Its-just-everywhere.pdf)

RSE

Relationship Education , Relationship and Sex Education and Health education - [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education)

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

In Consultation With		
Date Agreed	Name	Position
October 2025	Victoria Carr	HT
October 2025	Sharon Liversey	DHT
October 2024	Alice Morphet	DSL
October 2024	Clare Cotton	DDSL
Date for Review: September 2026		