BURSTWICK COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY

"BURSTWICK: Small School. Big Hearts. Where Learning Comes Alive."

At Burstwick Community Primary School, our children thrive, develop and master their independence and confidence in a busy and enthusiastic learning environment.

Within our school, our children have a strong voice, feel cared for, supported and are part of the Burstwick family.

At Burstwick Community Primary School, we live by our core values. These values support the development of the whole child as a reflective learner within an enthusiastic and focused atmosphere.

***CORE VALUES: B**elievers, **U**nique, **R**esilient, **S**afe, **T**olerant, **W**orthy, **I**ndependent, **C**reative, **K**ind-hearted.*

*We are **BURSTWICK!***

Introduction

At Burstwick Community Primary School, 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. 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 school and beyond.

In cases where child-on-child abuse is clearly identified by the school, we will follow our safeguarding and child protection procedures accordingly, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation. The school will also use 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2026' for additional guidance and support.

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

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

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school such as:

- Behaviour Policy,
- Anti-Bullying Policy,
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and
- e-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 2026) and should be read in conjunction with the East Riding Safeguarding

Children's Partnership (ERSCP) 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 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 on children 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.

Following a review activity and very high numbers of recorded Child-on-Child Abuse, it has been recommended that the one category is now separated in to two categories:

- ***Child-on-Child Abuse***
- ***Peer Conflict***

The distinction between Child-on-Child Abuse and Peer Conflict assists the school in recording an accurate reflection across both.

Child-on-Child Abuse is characterised by Power Imbalance, Intent and Repetition or a significant one-off incident.

Peer Conflict is characterised by disagreements or disputes that arise between individuals of similar status or age, often in social settings like schools or among friends. These conflicts are a normal part of social interaction and can be a valuable opportunity for developing communication and problem-solving skills. However, unresolved or poorly managed peer conflict can negatively impact relationships and well-being.

This information is shared with Governors at the termly full Governing Body meetings. The information shared is based on numbers only and no identifiable information is provided. This is in line with GDPR and safeguarding principles of the school.

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 sexual behaviour, commonly known as '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 the Brook Traffic Lights system, a recognised tool that identifies both appropriate and inappropriate sexualised behaviours.

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.

Whist 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 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

All reports of peer on peer abuse will be made on a case-by-case basis with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Deputy DSL 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 is as follows:

- The school 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 recording the facts as presented by the child. This will be completed using CPOMS, the schools preferred method of recording all incidents.
- These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later. Staff will not view or forward images presented as part of the report.
- Advice from the DSL must be sought immediately if an element of child-on-child abuse is evident.

The DSL will be informed immediately, so that the appropriate action can be taken to minimise further risk. Advice from the Local Authority will also be sought and the DSL and LA will work together to support all those affected.

Risk Assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL, will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs' 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 or college, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them;

Risk assessments will be recorded electronically and added to the child's individual file on CPOMS. These will be kept under review.

The DSL or Deputy DSL will ensure they are engaging with East Riding Safeguarding Partnership.

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

Following an incident, the school will consider the following:

- 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, e.g. 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;
- and 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 or college establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police:

- The perpetrator could be removed from any classes they share with the victim.
- We will consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school or college premises and on transport to and from the school or college.

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

Manage internally

1. In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, the school and external agencies 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.

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.

The decisions will be made by the DSL, external agencies and documented on CPOMS.

2. In line with No1 above, the school and external agencies 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, the school will make a referral to the East Riding Safeguarding Partnership and follow the advice and guidance given.

Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the DSL/Deputy DSL 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

Any report to the police will generally be made through the East Riding Safeguarding Partnership as above. The DSL/Deputy DSL will follow local processes for referrals. More often than not, both the DSL and Deputy DSL will do this together.

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. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.

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 (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 or college 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, the school will update its risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all children. The school will consider any suitable action following our behaviour policy. If the perpetrator remains in school, the school will be very clear as to the expectations regarding the perpetrator following their subsequent conviction or caution. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions the school feels 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 or students in the school. The school will remain impartial at all times and will not share any aspect of the case, subsequent conviction or caution with any other child or parent. This includes the victim and their family. External agencies will deliver any information or updates accordingly. The school is not able to and will not share information about other children.

We will ensure all children involved are protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online).

Where cases are classified as 'No Further Action' (NFA) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, the school will continue to offer 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 the case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. The school 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. The school will support the victim of sexual assault to remain in school, but if they are unable to do so, the school will enable them to continue their education elsewhere. This decision will be made only at the written request of the child and their family and after consultation with all external agencies involved. Should the child be moved, the school will ensure that the receiving 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 could be removed from classes with the victim and the school will also consider how best to keep them a reasonable distance apart on the school premises or on school transport. 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, the school may take suitable action, if 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 or college 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, the school may, if not already done so, consider any suitable sanctions using our behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion.

Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school or college, the overarching principle would be to continue keeping the victim and perpetrator separated wherever possible and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school and college premises and transport. 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 fabricated the event. 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 the process (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 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 external agencies 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. The school has appropriate policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour, which can be found in the Anti-Bullying Policy, e-safety Policy, and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

Prevention

Our 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, pupils, 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.
- 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.

- They are regularly informed 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;

- Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the school's Designated Safeguarding Governor (DSG) during the termly meeting. Anonymity is maintained at all times.
- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom);
- Working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, pupils 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 pupils 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

The School actively engages with its local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse, and works closely with, East Riding Safeguarding Children Partnership (ERSCP), children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies, and other schools. 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 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 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 the East Riding Safeguarding Partnership, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies.

Children resident out of county but attending an East Riding school will still be reported to the ERSCP and/or Social Worker. 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.

<u>Safeguarding</u>

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and staff. We expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Through the construction and writing of policies, we share our commitment; and through our curriculum provision, safeguarding is taught both explicitly (directly) and implicitly (indirectly).

We believe that all children have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment, which includes the right to protection from all types of abuse. Staff are vigilant for signs of any child in distress and we are confident about applying our safeguarding procedures to avert and alleviate any problems.

Monitoring and Review

Burstwick Community Primary School's Child-on-child Abuse Policy is monitored regularly by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), who report to the governors about its implementation and effectiveness. This is to be done through regular work scrutiny and will be monitored for whole school consistency and evaluated for impact on children's learning and outcomes. Governors are kept informed via the termly Headteacher's Report.

This Policy will be reviewed at least once a year through discussion with all staff and Governors.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Review date: September 2026

Headteacher: Mr. Ian Cutts	Chair of Governors: Mr. Andy Johnson
Signed:	Signed:
Date:	Date: