



George Stephenson
High School

CHILD ON CHILD ABUSE POLICY

Governance	Governing Body
Policy Officer	Deputy Headteacher
Review Date	September 2023
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Purpose:

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as child-on-child abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child-on-child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

George Stephenson High School belief statement:

We aim to create a safe environment for children and a culture which takes a zero tolerance approach towards and opposes the normalisation of harmful sexual behaviours so that students at GSHS feel comfortable in reporting it and confidently understand the process should they need to do so.

Abuse is abuse and will not be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up' at GSHS. As set out in Part one of Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE 2023), all staff working with children at GSHS are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' It is important that all victims are taken seriously and that both victims and alleged perpetrators are offered appropriate support.

Introduction:

This policy has been developed in response to the statutory guidance set out in **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023** outlines that:

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child on child abuse). This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-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 and 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 standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without 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 nudes and semi nudes 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 their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; and
- 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).

At George Stephenson High School, we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

Anti-Bullying Policy
Child Protection Policy
Online Safety Policy
Children Missing from Education Policy
Relationships and Sex Policy
Mental Health Policy
LGBT Policy
Mobile Phone Policy

Definition:

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as Child-on-Child abuse). And that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of Child-on-Child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

Particularly vulnerable children

- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in SEND children. Any reports of abuse involving children with SEND will therefore require close liaison with the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) and the special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs).
- Children who are lesbian, gay, bi, or trans (LGBT) can be targeted by their peers. In some cases, a child who is perceived by their peers to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT.

When considering Child on Child Abuse, ages and the stages of development of the children are critical factors. However, it may be appropriate to regard a young person's behaviour as abusive if:

- There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned). 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.
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged perpetrator.

Examples of safeguarding issues between peers could include the following:

Harmful Sexual Behaviours:

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" (HSB). HSB can occur online and/or face to face and can also occur simultaneously between the two.

a) Sexual Violence

When referring to sexual violence we refer to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

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. (Schools should be aware that sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent, can still constitute sexual assault.)

Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an activity, the activity is sexual, B does not consent to engaging in the activity, and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (This could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.)

- a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity;
- the age of consent is 16; 17
- sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

b) Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is defined in KCSIE 2023 as 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualized names;
- sexual “jokes” or taunting;
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone’s clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence - it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature; and
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of
- sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include: consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and videos. GSHS will consult the advice ***in UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people*** which sets out that taking and sharing nude photographs of U18s is a criminal offence;
- sharing of unwanted explicit content;
- upskirting (is a criminal offence²⁰);
- sexualised online bullying;
- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media;
- sexual exploitation; coercion and threats.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into colleges. It can occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment wherever it happens, will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school or college. GSHS are aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school or college, including intimate personal relationships.

Whilst any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should be taken seriously, staff should be aware it is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys.

The following sanctions and consequences for harmful sexual behaviours have been informed by, statutory guidance, student voice:

Harmful Sexual Behaviour		
<p>Making sexual comments such as telling sexual stories, making 'jokes' about someone's sexuality, spreading rumours about sexual activity, making lewd comments, sexualised name calling. Either in person or online.</p> <p>Sharing unwanted explicit material without the receiver's consent.</p>	<p>Repeated instances of sexual comments such as telling sexual stories, making 'jokes' about someone's sexuality, spreading rumours about sexual activity, making lewd comments, sexualised name calling. Either in person or online</p> <p>Sharing nudes or semi nudes of themselves without the receiver's consent.</p> <p>Sharing nudes or semi nudes of other students without consent.</p> <p>Creating sexual images of other students without consent.</p> <p>Pressuring others to send sexual images of themselves.</p>	<p>Sexual threats either in person or online.</p> <p>Emotional abuse and intimidation.</p> <p>Pressuring others to take part in sexual activity.</p> <p>Sexual assault such as unwanted, deliberate sexual touching without consent, rape, assault by penetration or causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent.</p>
Possible Sanctions and Consequences		
<p>Parental involvement</p> <p>Loss of social time</p> <p>One day internal exclusion</p> <p>Detention.</p>	<p>Parental involvement</p> <p>Loss of social time</p> <p>2/3 days fixed term suspension</p> <p>Permanent exclusion</p> <p>Police involvement</p> <p>Children's services and Police involvement if images or video depict violence, under 13s engaging in sexual activity, an adult is involved, we suspect coercion or if we consider the child to be at immediate risk of harm.</p>	<p>Parental involvement</p> <p>Police involvement</p> <p>Moorbridge placement</p> <p>Fixed term suspension</p> <p>Permanent exclusion.</p>

Physical Abuse

- violence, particularly pre-planned
- forcing others to use drugs or alcohol
- gender based violence

Emotional Abuse

- blackmail or extortion
- threats and intimidation

Bullying

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.
- Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Cyber bullying

- Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.
- It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 under section 1 which states that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim would be deemed to be criminal.
- This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour. If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Initiation/Hazing

- Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies.
- The idea behind this practice is that it welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

Prejudiced Behaviour

- The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular, prejudices to do with disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

Radicalisation

- Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem or be victims of bullying or discrimination. Extremists might target them and tell them they can be part of something special, later brainwashing them into cutting themselves off from their friends and family.

Safeguarding Allegations

It is important to note that children may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report. For example, a friend may make a report or a member of school or college staff may overhear a conversation that suggests a child has been harmed, or a child's own behaviour might indicate that something is wrong. As per Part one of Keeping children safe in education, if staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.

It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward and that they will be supported and kept safe. Abuse that occurs online or outside of the school or college should not be downplayed and should be treated equally seriously. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report or their experience minimised.

As with all safeguarding concerns, it is important that in such instances staff take appropriate action in accordance with the GSHS Child Protection policy. They should not assume that someone else is responding to any incident or concern. If in any doubt, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy). In such cases, the basic safeguarding principles remain the same, but it is important for the school to understand why the victim has chosen not to make a report themselves. This discussion should be handled sensitively and with the support of children's social care if required.

There may be reports where the alleged sexual violence or sexual harassment involves pupils or students from the same school or college but is alleged to have taken place away from the school or college premises, or online. There may also be reports where the children concerned attend two or more different schools or colleges. The safeguarding principles, and GSHS's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils and students, remain the same. In such circumstances, appropriate information sharing and effective multi-agency working will be especially important.

At all times:

- As per Part one of Keeping children safe in education 2023, if staff have any concerns
- about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.
- As per Part one of Keeping children safe in education 2023, all staff will be trained to manage a report.

Clear System for Reporting Allegations

It is recognised in ***Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges Advice for governing bodies, proprietors, headteachers, principals, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding leads***, (September 2021) that ultimately, "any decisions are for the school to make on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking a leading role, using their professional judgement, and being supported by other agencies, such as children's social care and the police as required".

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as bullying etc. This is a matter of professional judgement

When an allegation is made by a student against another student, normal safeguarding procedures should apply as per our Child Protection Policy RECEIVE, REASSURE, REACT and the member of staff should report the incident immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL who will then follow the process outlined in Annex A of this policy. The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and will keep a copy in the central file (all students involved in the allegation). At this stage, the DSL may contact North Tyneside Children's Services (Front Door) to discuss the case or decide to manage the allegation internally (see below).

Managing allegations internally:

If after internal investigation and reference to the Brook Traffic Light Tool/NSPCC Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, the allegation is deemed to be a one-off incident where the school believes that the child (ren) are not in need of Early Help or Statutory Intervention, the school may choose to deal with the incident in line with our Anti-Bullying Policy or Behaviour Policy. Sanctions exist on a continuum of detentions, Time Out, Internal Exclusion, Fixed Term Suspension etc. Regardless of the sanction, parents of both families will most likely be informed of the allegations and the actions taken by the school and made aware that if they wish to contact Children's Services or the Police then this is at their own discretion. Contacting parents might not be necessary or proportional in the case of sexual harassment and should be considered on a case-by-case basis). The exception to this rule is if there is a reason to believe informing a parent or carer will put a child at additional risk.

Liaison with external services

- The DSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and will make a Children's Services referral where appropriate.
- If the allegation indicates a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police should be contacted at the earliest opportunity and parents informed (of both the student being complained about and the alleged victim/victims).
- It may be appropriate to exclude the student/perpetrator, internally or externally, for a period of time according to the school's Behaviour Policy and Procedures or whilst a police investigation remains live.
- In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, 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.

The guiding principles for dealing with these situations are:

- i. The needs of the victim and the needs of the alleged perpetrator must be considered separately and in line with the school's ethos.
- ii. In addition to safeguarding the identified victim, agencies must consider whether the alleged perpetrator seems to pose a risk to any other children.
- iii. Children and young people who abuse others are responsible for their abusive behaviour, and safeguarding action must include addressing their behaviour and its causes.
- iv. There should be a co-ordinated approach by Children's Services, education and health agencies. No agency should start a course of action that has implications for any other agency without appropriate consultation.

Emotional Support for the victim and alleged perpetrator

Support for the victim should be tailored on a case-by-case basis. The support required regarding a one-off incident of sexualised name-calling is likely to be vastly different from that for a report of rape.

Support for the victim may include:

- Internal pastoral support at school e.g. counselling from Someone Cares, referral to a Family Liaison Worker, Short Term Support Timetable, Referral to North Tyneside School Support Team etc.
- Early help and children social care support as set out in Part 1 of Keeping children safe in education.
- Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors
- (ChISVAs) provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence. They are based within the specialist sexual violence sector and will help the victim understand what their options are and how the criminal justice process works. Referrals can be made directly to the ChISVA service by the young person or school

details for ChISVAs can be found at Rape Crisis (England & Wales) and The Survivors Trust.

- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). The specialist sexual violence sector can provide therapeutic support for children who have experienced sexual violence. Contact Rape Crisis (England & Wales) or The Survivors Trust for details of local specialist organisations. The Male Survivors Partnership can provide details of services which specialise in supporting men and boys.
- NHS - Help after rape and sexual assault - NHS (www.nhs.uk)
- Rape and sexual assault referral centres. Sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) offer medical, practical and emotional support. They have specially trained doctors, nurses and support workers. If children, young people, or their families are unsure which service to access, they should contact their GP or call the NHS on 111.
- Childline provide free and confidential advice for children and young people.
- The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has created the world's first tool to help children and young people get naked images of themselves removed from the internet.

The Report Remove Tool can be accessed through the Childline website. IWF analysts will then review the content and create a unique digital fingerprint known as a hash, before sharing it with tech companies to help prevent it from being uploaded and shared.

For more information and to access the Report Remove Tool, go to:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/remove-nude-image-shared-online/>

Support for the alleged perpetrator

With regard to the alleged perpetrator(s), advice on behaviour and discipline in schools is clear that teachers can discipline pupils whose conduct falls below the standard which could be reasonably expected of them. Disciplinary action can be taken whilst other investigations by the police and/or children's social care are ongoing. The fact that another body is investigating or has investigated an incident does not in itself prevent a school from coming to its own conclusion, on the balance of probabilities, about what happened, and imposing a penalty accordingly. This is a matter for the school and should be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis.

The school should consider if, by taking any action, it would prejudice an investigation and/or any subsequent prosecution. Careful liaison with the police and/or children's social care should help the school make a determination. It will also be important to consider whether there are circumstances that make it unreasonable or irrational for the school to reach its own view about what happened while an independent investigation is considering the same facts.

A child abusing another child may be a sign they have been abused themselves or a sign of wider issues that require addressing within the culture of the school or college. Schools should work with professionals as required to understand why a child may have abused a peer. It is important to remember that, as a child, any alleged perpetrator(s) is entitled to, deserving of, and should be provided with, a high level of support to help them understand and overcome the reasons for their behaviour and help protect other children by limiting the likelihood of them abusing again. Internally this level of support could be:

- Internal pastoral support at school e.g. counselling from Someone Cares, referral to a Family Liaison Worker, Short Term Support Timetable, Referral to North Tyneside School Support Team or a period of time at the First Day Response Centre via NTSSS.
- Early help and children social care support as set out in Part 1 of Keeping children safe in education.

When deciding on the correct level of support, GSHS, will consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator(s) and nature and frequency of the allegations. Any child will likely experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.

- Consider the proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case-by-case basis. An alleged perpetrator(s) may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. HSB in young children may be (and often are) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and or materials. Advice should be taken, as appropriate, from children's social care, specialist sexual violence services and the police. However, the NSPCC also provides free and independent advice about HSB: NSPCC – Harmful sexual behaviour framework

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation has also developed a HSB toolkit, which amongst other things, provides support, advice and information on how to prevent it, links to organisations and helplines, resources about HSB by children, internet safety, sexual development and preventing child sexual abuse.

GSHS recognises that school can be a significant protective factor for children who have displayed HSB, and continued access to school, with a comprehensive safeguarding management plan in place, is an important factor to consider before final decisions are made it is important that if an alleged perpetrator(s) does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children, adult students and staff. The designated safeguarding lead should take responsibility to ensure this happens as well as transferring the child protection file.

Stop it now - professionals looking for advice provides support for professionals in child sexual abuse prevention, so that they are well equipped to keep children safe.

Safeguarding and support for other children

Consideration will be given to supporting children (and adult students) who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape and assault by penetration. Witnessing such an event is likely to be traumatic and support may be required.

Following any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, it is likely that some children will take “sides”. GSHS will do all they can to ensure both the victim and alleged perpetrator(s), and any witnesses, are not being bullied or harassed.

Social media is very likely to play a central role in the fall out from any incident or alleged incident. There is the potential for contact between victim and alleged perpetrator(s) and a very high likelihood that friends from either side could harass the victim or alleged perpetrator(s) online and/or become victims of harassment themselves.

School transport is a potentially vulnerable place for a victim or alleged perpetrator(s) following any incident or alleged incident. GSHS will, as part of its risk assessment, should consider any additional potential support needs to keep all of its children safe.

Preventative strategies to minimise the risk of Child-on-Child Abuse

Through our core values “Ready, Respectful and Safe”, GSHS fosters a whole school or college approach to safeguarding, a culture that makes clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment and that it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated, and have planned a strong preventative education programme to help create an environment in which all children at the school or college are supportive and respectful of their peers when reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment are made.

Firstly, GSHS invests heavily in Pastoral Support which includes a Deputy Headteacher, 2 Assistant Headteachers with responsibility for behaviour, care, guidance and support and each year group having their own non-teaching Guidance Manager. We also employ our own Education Welfare Office, student support workers and procure counselling services from Safer Futures (Someone Cares) as well as our referrals to the Mental Health Support Team. Several support groups run in school e.g. Celebrating Student Individuality (CSI), Sixth Form Buddy System etc to support more vulnerable students who sometimes self-identify and are sometimes identified by key staff in school. All of this enables GSHS to promote an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. Students can talk to any member of staff about their concerns but our pastoral team are especially skilled and trained in dealing with these types of issues. Students are signposted to these key members of staff and external services in assemblies and in displays around the school. We also review our CCTV positioning regularly in order to cover as many “blind spots” as reasonable possible in a school of our size.

We also place a high level of importance on our strong and positive Relationships and Sex curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. Both RSE leads have attended external CPL on Child-on-Child Abuse led by the PSCHE Foundation and cascade this training to our specialist Health Department. Our RSE

curriculum and policy have undergone parental consultation and student voice is also routinely carried out. The curriculum tackles issues such as:

- healthy and respectful relationships;
- what respectful behaviour looks like;
- consent;
- stereotyping, equality;
- body confidence and self-esteem;
- prejudiced behaviour;
- that sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong; and
- addressing cultures of sexual harassment.

To enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure the whole workforce feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, George Stephenson High School delivers whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to young people in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice.

It is incredibly important that staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a young person seeking no further help or advice.

We also believe that young people are part of changing their circumstances and that of the procedures within schools. George Stephenson High School therefore elects a school council which encourages our young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour'. We strongly believe that this will go far in helping to create a positive ethos in school and one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

Finally, we have introduced a zero-tolerance approach to mobile phone use in schools from September 2021 in order to minimise the number of incidents falling under the umbrella of Harmful Sexual Behaviours in school. See Mobile Phone policy for further details.