

## St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

### Peer on Peer Abuse

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, our Peer on Peer Abuse Policy reflects our strong belief that all children have entitlement to a broad and varied education and experiences in a caring and safe environment, which reflects the values and beliefs of our Catholic faith. We see ourselves as a loving and happy community following Christ's way, educating children and adults to develop their talents and share them for the good of others. We believe that, together with parents, we are at the foundations of our children's future.

While it is recommended that Peer on Peer Abuse is associated with safeguarding, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse this separate policy guidance has been completed in addition and should be read in conjunction with our Behaviour, Relationship & Anti-Bullying policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education. [Keeping children safe in education 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92222/keeping-children-safe-in-education-2021.pdf)

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School recognises that children are capable of abusing their peers. This referred to as peer-on-peer abuse and can take many forms. Abuse is abuse and it will never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up". All victims will be taken seriously and offered appropriate support, regardless of where the abuse takes place.

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School recognises that peer on peer abuse can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- bullying, including cyberbullying
- physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence and sexual harassment
- '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
- nude or semi-nude image sharing (also known as 'sexting' or youth produced/involved sexual imagery)
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (humiliates, degrades or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate)

Staff and leadership recognise that that some peer-on-peer abuse issues may be affected by gender, age, ability and culture of those involved, however, all peer-on-peer abuse is unacceptable and all reports will be taken seriously.

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School will not tolerate, dismiss or minimise any harmful behaviours in school and will take swift action to intervene when this occurs. All allegations of peer-on-peer abuse will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with in line with associated school/college policies, including child protection, anti-bullying and behaviour.

Alleged victims, perpetrators and any other child affected by peer-on-peer abuse may be supported by promoting our golden rules, restorative justice practice, working with parents/carers and reviewing educational approaches.

The school will take steps to ensure that appropriate curriculum time is dedicated to enable children to develop an awareness and understanding of abusive behaviour and minimise the risk of all forms of peer-on-peer abuse. We will also ensure that children recognise warning signs and supports of support both within the school and externally (such as Police, ChildLine etc.).

If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse: bullying, fighting and harassment between children are not generally seen as child protection issues. 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; or
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged young person; or
- There is inappropriate touching/actions or use of explicit words and phrases

If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

## **Prevention**

As a school we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:

- Providing developmentally appropriate PSHE/RE lessons which develop pupils understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe including assemblies and workshops delivered by NSPCC and the 'Pants Rule'
- Having robust safety lessons which develops pupil knowledge, understanding and skills to ensure personal safety and self-protection when using the internet and social networking
- Having robust monitoring and filtering systems in places to ensure pupils are safe and act appropriately when using information technology in school
- Having systems in place for any pupil to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued
- Delivering targeted work on assertiveness and keeping safe to those pupils identified as being at risk
- Developing robust pupil action plans and providing targeted work for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils
- Keeping up to date with the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education document

## **Allegations against other pupils which are safeguarding issues**

Occasionally, allegations may be made against pupils by other young people in the school, are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, teenage relationship abuse and sexual exploitation,

bullying, cyber bullying and sexting. It should be considered as a safeguarding allegation against a pupil if some of the following features are present.

The allegation:

- Is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger pupil or a more vulnerable pupil
- Is of a serious nature possibly including a criminal offence
- Raises risk factors for other pupils in the school
- Indicates that other pupils may have been affected by this pupil
- Indicates that young people outside the school may be affected by this pupil

### **Procedures for dealing with allegations of peer on peer abuse**

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another pupil, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern. If there is a safeguarding concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be informed. The DSL will follow the school's safeguarding policy. All members of staff will regularly monitor pupils' behaviour and any changes in behaviour, appearance, use of/change in language which is inappropriate and their well-being. Records will be kept and monitored by the class teacher and regularly discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Headteacher.

**Review Date:** September 2021

**Next Review Date:** September 2022