

CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY

BRAMHALL HIGH SCHOOL

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1. INTRODUCTION

At Bramhall High School we believe all pupils have the right to be taught in a safe environment that enables them to optimise their learning and achievement.

We expect all pupils to have respect for themselves and others and work to ensure everyone in our community feels safe, valued, included and supported.

Bramhall High School's values of Respect, Resilience and Excellence are set within a context of inclusion, restorative practice, positive relationships and nurture.

2. RELATED POLICIES

This policy must be read in conjunction with related school policies, including:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding (incorporating Appropriate Filtering and Monitoring workflows)
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) Policy
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policy
- Behaviour Policy (including the Mobile Phone Policy)
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) & PSHE Policies

3. UNDERSTANDING CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE (PUPILS WHO HARM EACH OTHER)

All staff at Bramhall High School understand and recognise that children are capable of physically, verbally, emotionally, and sexually abusing their peers.

Child-on-child abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical and sexual abuse
- Sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Technology-assisted abuse, including the creation, possession, or distribution of AI-generated consensual/non-consensual sexual imagery (deepfakes)
- Financial sextortion and online grooming for criminal or sexual exploitation
- On and offline bullying, cyberbullying, and targeted harassment
- Coercion, control, and teenage relationship abuse

All forms of child-on-child abuse are strictly unacceptable at Bramhall High School. It will never be tolerated, minimised, or dismissed as a 'joke', 'banter', or an expected part of growing up.

Staff concerned a child might have been, or is being, abused by another child will follow the school's Child Protection & Safeguarding policy and procedures and report their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy.

4. HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS (HSB)

The school takes a proactive approach to Harmful Sexual Behaviours (including sexual harassment, sexual violence, unwanted sexual touching and language, and sexual abuse.

We appreciate that whilst adults in the school are working hard to keep children safe, pupils also have a responsibility to keep themselves and their peers safe from abuse and all forms of harm. Safeguarding is, therefore, taught as part of our Personal Development curriculum and within the assemblies and Form Tutor programmes throughout the year.

Learning is age-appropriate and equips pupils with the knowledge and skills to understand child-on-child abuse and how to protect themselves and others. Learning includes what respectful behaviour looks like, what consent means, what problematic behaviours are, how to report concerns and what will happen when a report is made.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour encompasses a range of behaviours that can occur online, offline or a mixture of both. The model outlined in the appendix of this policy is used to explain the continuum of sexual behaviours, ranging from normal to violent. This model will be used in the process of assessment to help the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy to decide on appropriate action to tackle these behaviours.

5. RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE)

RSE is delivered through Personal Development and other subjects such as biology, Beliefs & Values and English. Lesson content is age appropriate across the Key Stages in line with the DFE's Statutory Guidance on RSE.

Pupils are taught to understand the meaning of consent in all areas of relationships (including friendships, families and intimate relationships) as an integral part of the PD curriculum. Pupils will be made aware of what constitutes unreasonable pressure from peers to engage in risk-taking, inappropriate or illegal behaviour (for example, but limited to, 'sexting'), and are made aware of how to create safe environments for all in school, outside of school and online.

6. RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE

Robust systems are established at Bramhall High School for dealing with safeguarding concerns. Allegations of abuse by a child will be treated with the same legal gravity as allegations of abuse by an adult.

IMMEDIATE DUAL-PATHWAY ACTIONS:

When an allegation is made, the school will immediately implement a dual-pathway approach:

1. **Victim Support:** A bespoke, trauma-informed safety and support plan will be enacted immediately to ensure the victim feels safe, protected, and heard within the school environment.

2. **Alleged Perpetrator Assessment:** The school will conduct a safeguarding assessment on the alleged perpetrator to identify any underlying vulnerabilities, grooming, exploitation, or unmet Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Discipline and pastoral support will run parallel; the school will never automatically use exclusion or sanctions without a concurrent safeguarding review.

7. RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

We will respond and manage any reports of sexually harmful behaviour in line with guidance contained in Keeping Children Safe in Education and within the Greater Manchester Safeguarding Children Procedures Manual. When incidents of sexual harm occur, our response is ultimately decided on a case-by-case basis, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) taking the lead role, using their professional judgement.

There are four likely responses/actions we may take when managing any reports of sexually harmful behaviour.

1. MANAGE THE INCIDENT INTERNALLY

In some cases, it would be appropriate to manage the incident internally, through utilising our behaviour policy and by providing pastoral support.

2. MAKE A REFERRAL FOR EARLY HELP

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. With parent/carer consent, multi-agency early help would be utilised alongside the school's policies and procedures, preventative education and engagement with parents/carers.

3. REFERRALS TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to local children's social care via Stockport MASSH (Multi Agency Safeguarding and Support Hub).

Parents/carers will be informed a referral is being made unless there are compelling reasons not to inform them such as an additional risk to a child if their parent/carer was informed. This decision would be made with the support of children's social care. If a referral is made, children's social care will make enquiries to determine whether any of the children involved need protection or other services.

Where statutory assessments are appropriate, The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy would work alongside the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for all children involved and any other children that require support.

In some cases, children's social care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. The school (led by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a deputy) is prepared to refer again if they believe the child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm. If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support and pastoral support.

4. REPORTING TO POLICE

School will report an incident to the police where a crime is likely to have been committed; this will generally be in conjunction with a referral to children's social care. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the police will be informed immediately. Parents/carers will then be informed unless there are compelling reasons not to do so. As a school, we will support the child in any decision they take with the support of children's social care and any appropriate specialist agencies.

Where a report has been made to the police, we will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator and their parents/carers. The best way to protect the victim and their anonymity will be discussed and agreed. In such circumstances that the police do not take the report further, we will continue to engage with specialist support for the victim as required.

All responses taken in response to Harmful Sexual Behaviours will be underpinned by the principle that Harmful Sexual Behaviour is never acceptable. All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions will be recorded electronically.

Police Escalation Thresholds:

- **Immediate Danger:** If an incident involves an ongoing, serious physical or sexual assault, or if a child is in immediate physical danger, the Police will be contacted immediately via 999.

- **Technology and Sexting Incidents:** For incidents involving youth-produced sexual imagery (sexting), the DSL will consult with Stockport MASSH *prior* to contacting the police, unless an immediate risk exists. This ensures compliance with national frameworks designed to prevent the unnecessary criminalisation of children while addressing harmful behaviours through education and early intervention.

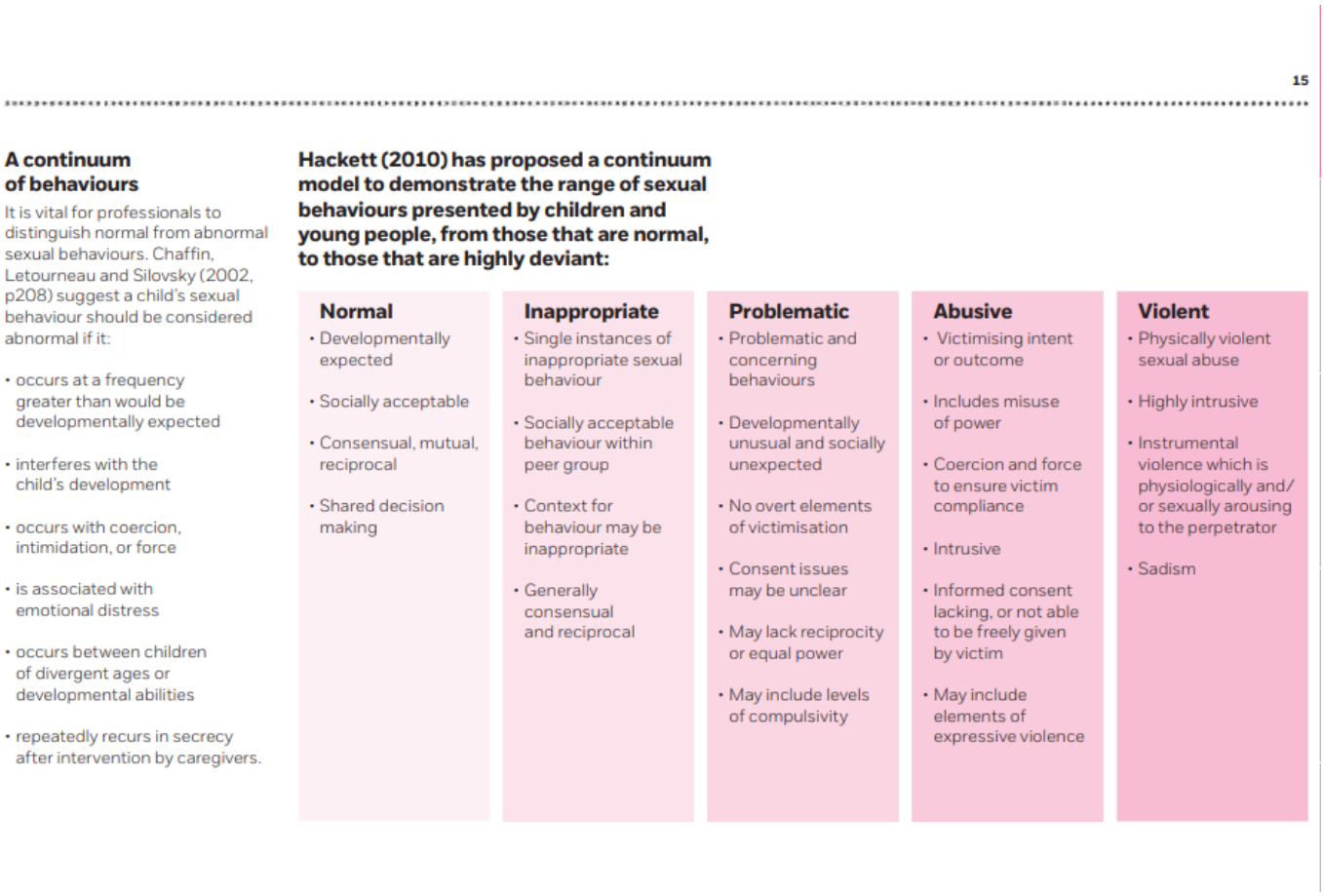
8. APPENDIX

The following framework utilises the nationally recognised **Brook Traffic Light Tool** and the **Hackett Continuum**. It provides the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and operational staff with a structured matrix to categorize sexual behaviours and determine the mandatory local escalation pathways.

Hackett's model demonstrating sexual behaviours presented by children.

Excerpted from Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, 2nd Ed. 2019, NSPCC, UK.

https://www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework.pdf



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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.

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 BEHAVIOURS (HSB) CLASSIFICATION AND ESCALATION MATRIX

When an incident involving sexualised language, touching, or behaviour is reported, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL will use this matrix to assess severity, identify risk, and deploy the appropriate statutory intervention.

GREEN

Developmentally Typical ——> Internal Education & Monitoring

AMBER

Problematic / Fragmented ——> Early Help Referral (Stockport Family Team)

RED

Harmful / Abusive / Criminal ——> Mandatory Stockport MASSH & Police Referral

GREEN: Developmentally Typical Behaviours

- **Characteristics:** Behaviours that are age-appropriate, consensual, exploratory, and occur between children of a similar age, developmental stage, and power dynamic.
- **Examples:**
    - Age-appropriate curiosity about bodies or relationships.
    - Consensual, mutual use of non-aggressive, age-appropriate romantic or sexual language.
    - Occasional use of popular culture slang terms without targeted malice or intimidation.

AMBER: Problematic or Fragmented Behaviours

- **Characteristics:** Behaviours that cause distress, breach social boundaries, demonstrate a clear power imbalance, or involve pressure, coercion, or digital boundary violations.
- **Examples:**
    - Targeted, repeated sexualised harassment, comments, or "banter" directed at a peer.
    - Non-consensual touching over clothing (e.g., pulling skirts, snapping bra straps, or grabbing).
    - Creating, downloading, or sharing youth-produced sexual imagery ("sexting") where there is no evidence of widespread exploitation or adult coercion.
    - Accessing adult pornography on personal devices while on school grounds.

RED: Harmful, Abusive, or Criminal Behaviours

- **Characteristics:** Behaviours that are explicitly abusive, physically or emotionally violent, highly coercive, exploitative, or illegal. These involve severe power imbalances, significant age gaps, or systemic technology-assisted victimisation.
- **Examples:**
    - Sexual violence, including rape, attempted rape, or assault by penetration.
    - Sexual harassment or touching involving physical restraint, threats, or severe intimidation.
    - Creating, sharing, or possessing AI-generated non-consensual sexual imagery (deepfakes) targeting a peer or staff member.
    - Up-skirting, down-skirting, or capturing/sharing non-consensual nude images of peers.
    - Involvement in organized online exploitation, financial sextortion, or grooming rings.