



CHILD ON CHILD ABUSE POLICY

MIDDLEWICH HIGH SCHOOL

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The following paper outlines our school's response to the OFSTED Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022.

The review recommended the following:

“School and college leaders should create a culture where sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are not tolerated, and where they identify issues and intervene early to better protect children and young people.

“In order to do this, they should assume that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening in their setting, even when there are no specific reports, and put in place a whole-school approach to address them”.

“A zero tolerance approach to all child-on-child sexual violence and harassment should be implemented in all schools and colleges”.

Middlewich High School takes the approach that we assume that child on child Abuse is happening here and that all reports should be taken seriously.

Child on Child Abuse Definitions

Sexual Harassment:

Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which can occur on or off line. 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. Sexual harassment can normalise inappropriate behaviours and create an environment which may lead to sexual violence. This includes sexual comments, sexual 'jokes' or taunting, physical behaviour such as brushing against someone/ interfering with someone's clothes, displaying pictures/ photos of a sexual nature, upskirting or online sexual harassment.

Sexual Violence:

Rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault or causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent

Harmful Sexual Behaviour:

Sexual behaviour which is problematic, abusive or violent rather than normal or developmentally expected

MHS Whole School Response

Our response is built around the following practical steps:

1. A clear reporting mechanism for both students and staff
2. Staff and students feel confident in identifying harmful sexual behaviours
3. There is a whole school approach to managing disclosures sensitively
4. A swift and consistent response to harassment or discriminatory behaviour
5. Our RSE spiral curriculum teaches gender equality and consent to all years

Staff guide to responding to a young person making a disclosure:

- It is essential that all victims are reassured and that they will be supported and kept safe
- A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem or be made to feel ashamed
- Do not promise confidentiality as it is very likely that information will have to be shared with others
- At the point of disclosure, listen carefully, pass no judgement, avoid leading questions
- It is essential that a written record is made but do not allow this to get in the way of supporting the young person and listening to the report – the writing can wait!
- Do not view or forward illegal images of a child
- Incidents should be recorded on CPOMS and highlighted as 'child-on-child abuse' – any relevant subcategories must also be highlighted.
- Incidents should also be reported **verbally** to a member of the Safeguarding Team

Incidences of Sexual Harassment should be dealt with on a case by case basis according to our behaviour policy. It may be appropriate to contact home, issue a sanction or conduct a restorative meeting between the victim and the alleged perpetrator.

The member of staff who witnesses any inappropriate use of language or behaviour towards others must address the issue and record any actions on CPOMS. Incidences of Sexual Violence and Harmful Sexual Behaviour must be reported to the Safeguarding Team directly. Social services and police will be informed as appropriate.

In the case of serious allegations, it is important that whole school support is given to both the victim and the alleged perpetrator.

Appendix

What we need to consider as a school after a report:

How the victim may wish to proceed and their ongoing support

The ages and development stages of the children or young people involved

Any power imbalance between the children or young people

If the alleged incident is a one-off or forms part of a pattern of abuse

The ongoing risks to the victim, other children/students and school/college staff

School should do all they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment.

Other related issues and the wider context - potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours.

What if they are in the same class?

Any report of sexual violence is likely to be very distressing and traumatic for the victim

If rape or assault by penetration has been reported, the alleged perpetrator should be moved from any classes they share with the victim

The school/college must also consider the best way to create distance between the victim and alleged perpetrator

These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgement on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator

For other reports this should also be considered immediately on a case-by-case basis

Options to manage a situation

1. Managing the incident internally

Incidents should be managed on a case-by-case basis and it may be more

appropriate to manage the case internally dependent on the circumstances

Whatever the school's response, it should be underpinned by the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

2. Provide formal early help support

Formal early help support in line with local policies and guidance may be required to ensure effective interventions are considered with other agencies

3. Referrals to social care

Where a child/young person has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, the school should make a referral to social care

If a referral is made, social care will undertake an assessment to determine if the children/young people involved are in need of protection

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.

4. Reporting to the police

Generally in parallel with a referral to social care

In some cases an alleged criminal offence would have taken place (especially in cases of sexual violence) so this should be reported to the police as a matter of course

On-going response:

Consider the current and future risk to the victim(s)

Consider the ongoing relationships between the victim(s), witnesses and the alleged perpetrator

The needs and wishes of the victim(s) should be paramount

Ensure that the response and ongoing support is proportionate

Create an environment which supports victims and deters offending behaviour

Support for alleged perpetrator

Consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator and nature 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. Harmful sexual behaviours 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.

It is important that if the alleged perpetrator 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 and staff.

This policy belongs to the Student Wellbeing & Safeguarding Suite of policies. Other policies in this suite are:

- Accessibility Plan - MHSSAFEGUARDING002
- Child Protection & Safeguarding - MHSSAFEGUARDING001
- Children with health needs who cannot attend school - MHSSAFEGUARDING003
- Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children - MHSSAFEGUARDING004
- SEN & Disability policy with SEND info report - MHSSAFEGUARDING005
- Local Offer - MHSSAFEGUARDING006
- Supporting students with medical conditions - MHSSAFEGUARDING007
- Anti Bullying - MHSSAFEGUARDING008
- Attendance (Students) - MHSSAFEGUARDING009
- Drugs Education - MHSSAFEGUARDING010
- e-Safety - MHSSAFEGUARDING011
- Emotional Health & Wellbeing - MHSSAFEGUARDING012
- Equal Opportunities - MHSSAFEGUARDING013
- ICT Acceptable Use - MHSSAFEGUARDING014
- Intimate Care - MHSSAFEGUARDING015
- i-Value & Life Skills (PSHCE) - MHSSAFEGUARDING016
- Young Carers - MHSSAFEGUARDING017