London South East Academies Trust

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools Policy

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Introduction

London South East Academies Trust (LSEAT) are committed to promoting a safe and supportive learning environment for each and every member of our community. We work continuously to improve prevention, response, support and investigation of sexual harassment, sexual assault and other forms of sexual abuse and violence.

Peer on Peer abuse is referenced in the Trust Safeguarding Policy, which should be read in conjunction with this policy, but due to the sensitive, specific and sometime complex nature of this area of safeguarding the Trust has implemented this separate policy and guidance.

Principles

- In line with KCSIE (2021), it is important LSEAT considers how to reflect on sexual violence and sexual harassment in our whole school approach to safeguarding and our own safeguarding policy
- This policy refers to a child as anyone under the age of 18.
- This policy provides definitions on what sexual violence and sexual harassment is, how LSEAT will minimise the risk of it occurring and what we do when incidents occur or are alleged to have occurred.
- The policy is developed in line with legal obligations, including the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010, especially the Public Sector Equality Duty

For the purposes of this policy, we use the term 'victim'. It is a widely recognised and understood term. It is important that we recognise that not everyone who has been subjected to sexual violence and/or sexual harassment considers themselves a victim or would want to be described in this way. We should be conscious of this when managing any incident and be prepared to use any term with which the individual child is most comfortable.

For the purpose of this policy, we use the term 'alleged perpetrator' and where appropriate 'perpetrator'. These are widely used and recognised terms and the most appropriate to aid effective drafting of policy. However, we should think very carefully about terminology, especially when speaking in front of children; the term perpetrator applies blame and labels the child negatively. As above, the use of appropriate terminology will be for staff to decide when talking to children and parents/carers.

We understand that it is important that LSEAT's staff and Trustees recognise that sexual harassment creates an atmosphere that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

Aim

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

LSEAT have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

Context

Following the Women and Equalities Committee (2016) report into sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools, the Department for Education was committed to reviewing existing departmental guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Subsequently a website, Everyone's Invited, provided a space for people to share their current and historic experiences of sexual abuse and harassment in education which had an overwhelming response of testimonies received. Ofsted conducted a review of peer-on-peer abuse within education (2021) and found the following key findings:

- Sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are prevalent for children and young people.
- For some children it is so commonplace that they see no point in reporting.
- 90% of girls and nearly 50% of boys reported being sent explicit content that they did not want to see.
- 92% of girls and 74% of boys said that sexist name-calling happens a lot and that some children and young people consider it to be normal.
- Sexual violence is most likely to occur in unsupervised spaces outside of school although some girls reported unwanted touching in school corridors.
- Barriers to reporting identified as fear of being ostracised, getting peers into trouble, they will not be believed or blamed and once they talk to an adult they will be out of control of what happens next.
- RSHE curriculum does not adequately equip children and young people and they turn to social media or their peers for support.
- Some teachers and leaders underestimated the scale of the problem.

Introduction to abuse and harmful behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and what it looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

- Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age, sex or gender. They can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.
- Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing.
- This will, likely, adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and

offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support.

It is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and more likely that sexual harassment will be perpetrated by boys. LSEAT schools should be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up;

- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys";

- challenging behaviours (which are potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them;

- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can be especially vulnerable. Disabled and deaf children are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in SEND children. These can include:
  - assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
  - the potential for children with SEND being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying and harassment, without outwardly showing any signs; and communication barriers and difficulties overcoming these barriers.
  - 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

(Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges, May 2018 (updated July 2021))

Terminology

Sexual violence

In this policy, when referring to sexual violence we do so in the context of child on child sexual violence. For the purpose of this policy, when referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

<u>Rape</u>

Rape is when a person intentionally penetrates another's vagina, anus or mouth with a penis, without the other person's consent (Metropolitan Police 2021).

Assault by Penetration

Assault by penetration is when a person penetrates another person's vagina or anus with any part of the body other than a penis, or by using an object, without the person's consent (Metropolitan Police 2021).

Sexual or Indecent Assault

The overall definition of sexual or indecent assault is an act of physical, psychological and emotional violation in the form of a sexual act, inflicted on someone without their consent. It can involve forcing or manipulating someone to witness or participate in any sexual acts.

Not all cases of sexual assault involve violence, cause physical injury or leave visible marks. Sexual assault can cause severe distress, emotional harm and injuries which can't be seen – all of which can take a long time to recover from. This is why we use the term 'assault', and treat reports just as seriously as those of violent, physical attacks (Metropolitan Police 2021).

Consent

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g.to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

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

(Visit ConsentisEverything for more information).

Sexual harassment

For the purpose of this policy, when referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. 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 sexualised 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, which might include:
    - non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos (both often referred to as sexting);
    - sexualised online bullying
    - unwanted/inappropriate sexual comments and messages, including on social media
    - sexual exploitation, coercion and threats.
- Online sexual harassment may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

(Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges, May 2018) (updated July 2021))

Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidently before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, 'upskirting' to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must include:

- 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.

Cyber bullying

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram to harass, threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

Cyber bullying can 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 may have to involve the police to investigate these situations (see below 'sexting').

'**Sexting**' - Youth Produced Sexual Imagery

'Sexting' is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference.

However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport guidance 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people' (2020) states:

Children and young people should not be unnecessarily criminalised. Children and young people with a criminal record face stigma and discrimination in accessing education, training, employment, travel and housing and these obstacles can follow them into adulthood.

Whilst children and young people creating and sharing images can be risky, it is often the result of their natural curiosity about sex and their exploration of relationships. Therefore, engaging in the taking or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes may not always be 'harmful' to all

children and young people. Situations should be considered on a case-by-case context, considering what is known about the children and young people involved and if there is an immediate risk of harm. Often, children and young people need education and support for example, on identifying healthy and unhealthy behaviours within relationships and understanding consent and how to give it. Safeguarding action will also be required in cases where there is risk of harm.

Investigation by police of an incident of sharing nudes and semi-nudes does not automatically mean that the child/young person involved will have a criminal record, as explained in the next section.

Upskirting or Voyeurism

'Upskirting' is typically when a photograph is taken under a person's clothing without them knowing, for sexual gratification or to cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm'.

As of 12 April 2019 'upskirting' offenders can be arrested and sent to prison as a new law banning the invasive practice came into force across England and Wales. The criminal offence of 'upskirting' was created under the Voyeurism Act when it received Royal Assent in February 2019. Police and prosecutors have now updated their guidance to ensure the law is properly enforced – with offenders facing up to 2 years in jail and being placed on the sex offenders register. Anyone can be a victim.

The practice typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks. The Voyeurism Act outlaws 'upskirting' where the purpose is to obtain sexual gratification, or to cause humiliation, distress or alarm. This includes instances where culprits say images were just taken 'for a laugh' or when paparazzi are caught taking intrusive images.

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 many 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 by 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). Prejudiced behaviour can often be considered either a Hate Incident or a Hate Crime depending on the severity.

Teenage relationship abuse

Teenage relationship abuse is defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner.

Expected action taken from all staff

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and perpetrator of the harm, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm.

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred as soon after, as the child(ren) may have forgotten. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved.

In all cases of peer on peer abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental or dismissive in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Managing the disclosure

LSEAT's staff initial response to a disclosure from a child is important. It is essential that victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.

The guidance outlines effective safeguarding practice including:

- not promising confidentiality at this initial stage as it is very likely a concern will have to be shared further
- listening carefully to the child, being non-judgmental, being clear about boundaries and how the disclosure will be progressed
- only recording the facts as the child presents them.
- informing the designated safeguarding lead, or deputy safeguarding lead, as soon as practically possible.

Confidentiality

LSEAT staff involved in taking a disclosure should never promise confidentiality. The victim may ask the school not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment. The designated safeguarding lead, or a deputy, will consider the following:

- parents or carers should normally be informed unless this would put the victim at greater risk
- the basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger or has been harmed then a referral should be made to children's social care
- rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes. The starting point is that reports should be passed to the police.

Ultimately, the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy safeguarding lead will have to balance the child or young person's wishes against their duty to protect them and other children.

Anonymity

Where an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system, LSEAT's staff should be aware of anonymity, witness support and the criminal process in general so they can offer support and act appropriately. Information is available from CPS: Safeguarding children as victims and witnesses.

Risk Assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy should 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
- alleged perpetrator
- other children and, if appropriate, staff at the school.

Risk assessments should be recorded, either written or electronically, and should be kept under review. The designated safeguarding lead or a deputy safeguarding lead should ensure they are engaging with children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required.

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

The designated safeguarding lead or deputy is likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to decide on the school's initial response. In all cases, LSEAT staff should follow general safeguarding principles outlined in KCSIE (2021). Important considerations will include:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. Victims should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered
- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including might a crime 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, for example if the alleged perpetrator is significantly older
- if the alleged incident is an isolated incident or a sustained pattern of abuse.

The starting point regarding any report should always be that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable and will never be tolerated.

Informing parents

Once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care and the designated safeguarding lead or deputy safeguarding lead have an agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then the parents/carers need to be informed as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents/carers. If a young person is deemed to be 'Gillick Competent' following the 'Fraser' guidelines and does not wish to share the information with parents/carers, then the LSEAT's staff must consider this especially for example if the young person is pregnant and this is why they are being bullied (unless this has occurred through significant harm in which case a criminal/social care case is likely or the young person is under the age of 13).

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then LSEAT's staff will encourage the young person to share the information with their parent/carer or even with them (they may be scared to tell parents that they are being harmed in any way). Where school can evidence they are acting in the best interests of the young person they would not be criticised, however this would be the case if they actively breached the rights and choices of the young person.

The best way to inform parents/carers is face to face. Although, this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents/carers whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

Following a report of sexual violence or harassment

Following reports of rape and assault by penetration, while the LSEAT's staff will establish the facts of the case and start the process of liaising with children's social care and the police, the guidance states that:

- The alleged perpetrator should be removed from any classes they share with the victim, the school should also consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on LSEAT's school premises and on transport to and from the school.
- For other reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator and considerations regarding shared classes, sharing school premises and school transport, should be considered immediately.

- **Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution** 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 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** LSEAT staff should, if it has not already, consider any suitable sanctions in light of their behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion. Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school, the principle would be to continue keeping the victim and perpetrator in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school premises and transport.

In all cases, LSEAT's staff will record and be able to justify their decision making. All of the above should 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.

Next Steps

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

For the young person who has been harmed

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends. In which case, it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of RSE that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have

been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through a CAF/strengthening families/early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that the young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

The school may also choose a sanction as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

After care

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). In which case, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

Safeguarding and supporting the victim

Victims may not disclose the whole picture immediately. They may be more comfortable providing information on a piecemeal basis. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged. When ongoing support will be required, schools and colleges should ask the victim if they would find it helpful to have a designated trusted adult, for example their form tutor or designated safeguarding lead, to talk to about their needs.

A victim of sexual violence is likely to be traumatised and, in some cases, may struggle in a normal classroom environment. There may be times when the victim finds it difficult to maintain a full-time timetable and may express a wish to withdraw from lessons and activities.

If the trauma results in the victim being unable to remain in school, alternative provision or a move to another school should be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This should only be at the request of the victim and following discussion with their parents or carers.

Therapeutic support will also be provided by the school therapist and specialist intervention will also be sort by the school to support the child where required.

Safeguarding other children

Consideration should be given to supporting children 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. The school should be doing all they can to ensure both the victim and alleged perpetrator, and any witnesses, are not being bullied or harassed, including online or by social media.

LSEAT's school approach to safeguarding, a culture that makes clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is always unacceptable, and a strong preventative education programme will help create an environment in which all children at the school are supportive and respectful of their peers when reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment are made.

All policies, processes and curriculum will be kept under constant review to protect all their children. Reports of sexual violence and/or harassment, especially where there is evidence of patterns of behaviour, may point to environmental and or systemic problems that could and should be addressed by updating relevant policies, processes or relevant parts of the curriculum.

Preventative Strategies for Schools

For all LSEAT's schools, it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of peer on peer abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way.

Firstly, and most importantly for LSEAT's schools is recognition that peer on peer abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff.

This can be supported by ensuring that each school has an open environment where children and young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This is strengthened through a strong and positive RSE 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.

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 children and young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is necessary for whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to children and 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 everyone in their own right before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a child/young person seeking no further help or advice.

It is important that signposting is available to children and young people in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. It is useful to have a resource board with support services on a wide range of issues so children and young people can seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to children and young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of peer on peer abuse such as IMPACT Day and Womens Aid presentations.

It is useful to ensure children and young people are part of changing their circumstances and that of the procedures within schools. Our school councils and pupil voice will encourage children and young people to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour' that will go far in helping to create a positive ethos in school and one where all children and young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

Appendix 1 - Further information and support Specialist Organisations

Barnardo's

https://www.barnardos.org.uk

Lucy Faithfull Foundation

https://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk

NSPCC

https://www.nspcc.org.uk

Rape Crisis

https://rapecrisis.org.uk

University of Bedfordshire: Contextual Safeguarding

https://www.beds.ac.uk/ic/current-projects/contextual-safeguarding-programme

UK Safer Internet Centre
https://www.saferinternet.org.uk

Support for Victims

Anti-Bullying Alliance

https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

Victim Support

https://www.victimsupport.org.uk

Rape Crisis

https://rapecrisis.org.uk

The Survivors Trust

http://thesurvivorstrust.org

Toolkits

Brook
https://www.brook.org.uk

NSPCC

https://www.nspcc.org.uk

Safeguarding Unit, Farrer and Co. and Carlene Firmin, MBE, University of Bedfordshire
https://www.farrer.co.uk/News/Briefings/PEER-ON-PEER-ABUSE-TOOLKIT

Further information on confidentiality and information sharing
Gillick competency Fraser guidelines

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines

Government information sharing advice

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice

Information Commissioner's Office: Education

https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/education

NSPCC: Things to know and consider
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/information-service/information-sharing-confidentiality-practitioners.pdf

Further information on sexting
UKCCIS: sexting advice
https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis

London Grid for Learning- collection of advice
https://www.lgfl.net/online-safety/resource-centre

Support for parents
Parentzone

https://www.parentzone.me

Parentsafe- London Grid for Learning

https://www.lgfl.net/online-safety/resource-centre?s=16

CEOP Thinkuknow advice for parents
https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents

Challenging harmful sexual attitudes and their impact
https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/Challenging-harmful-sexual-attitudes

Supporting positive sexual behaviour
https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/Supporting-positive-sexual-behaviour