



Harmful Sexualised Behaviour Policy

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Lead in school: Mrs Sarah Soley

Safeguarding Leads: Mrs Emma Johnson, Mrs Sophie Keightley, Mrs Suzy Burton-Sanders, Miss Alex Sutcliffe and Mrs Sarah Soley

Our School Vision

Our school vision is based on the theme of '*Taking Care*'. We strive to encourage our children, staff and wider community to 'take care' of one another through the core Christian Values of:

Kindness, Hope, Courage and *Respect*.

Our vision is inspired by the words in Corinthians:

"Let love and kindness be the motivation behind all that you do."

(1 Corinthians 16.14)

Ravenshead C of E Primary School is committed to valuing diversity and to equality of opportunity. In biblical tradition, children in particular are seen to hold a special place in the priorities of God. Furthermore, we hold to the foundational belief that all people are created in God's image and are intrinsically valuable. Everyone should be treated as fundamentally precious, irrespective of behaviour, achievements or potential.

Therefore, we aim to create and promote an environment in which pupils, parents/carers and staff are treated fairly and with respect and feel able to contribute to the best of their abilities. The school's biblical foundation provides a model of Christian community described as the 'body of Christ', in which everyone has a part to play, and everyone without exception has God-given gifts which are to be used for the benefit of others.

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1) Introduction

It is normal for some children and young people to display sexualised behaviour towards their peers as they develop. However, sexualised behaviour between peers that has become harmful or abusive is unacceptable and must be addressed.

Our school recognises that young people are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers sexually. We consider any allegation of child-on-child sexual abuse seriously and do not tolerate or pass off harmful sexual behaviour as 'banter', 'just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up'. These allegations are managed in the same way as any other child protection concern and follow the same ~~process~~ ^{processes} including seeking advice and support from other agencies as appropriate.

This policy is in line with the safeguarding requirements in Keeping Children Safe in Education (Department for Education ('DfE'), 2022), which we must work to; Part 5 of the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance sets out how schools should manage reports of child-on-child sexual violence and harassment. This policy also links to the guidance issued by the DfE in 2018: Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges.

2) Definition of sexual abuse

Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a ~~high~~ level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non- penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.

The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education. (Keeping children safe in education, DfE, 2020)

3) What is Harmful sexual behaviour?

Harmful sexual behaviour can include young people using sexually explicit words or phrases, inappropriate touching, using sexual violence or threats, penetrative sex with other children/young people. Children and young people can be exposed to harmful sexual behaviour both in person and online.

Harmful sexual behaviour is not defined by the age of children or young people. A younger child could sexually harm an older child if they have power over them, such as if the older child has a disability. Power is a key factor in the reasons why young people display harmful sexual behaviours towards peers. Both girls and boys can display harmful sexual behaviours. There are four different stages to childhood sexual development. Some children may develop later than others depending on their understanding and their own global development.

The stages of development are;

Infancy from 0-4 years old.

Sexual exploratory behaviours start to emerge such as by kissing, cuddling, showing curiosity about their genitals and talking about them. Children may not show inhibitions such as by wandering round naked. They imitate and copy behaviours of life around them including 'mummies and daddies' and 'doctors and nurses'. Random masturbation can occur as this is a sensual stage in development. The distinction between toileting behaviours and comforting behaviours begins to emerge. Parents and carers are most influential, and children learn the social rules and what is permissible from them.

Young children from 5-7 years old.

As they become older, children start recognising the need for greater privacy. At the same time there are more exploratory behaviour with peers, as well as them comparing their bodies with their peers and asking more questions. Masturbation is less random but more likely among boys due to gender socialisation. They may use words associated with body parts or sex that they may have heard, and they may try to shock adults around them by using these words although they don't fully understand the meaning. The influence of peers begins to emerge.

Pre-adolescents from 8-12 years old.

Children become more curious about sex and sexual behaviour, such as through kissing, hugging and 'dating' other children. They may become more interested in other people's body parts and the changes that happen in puberty. At this age children become more aware about sex and bodies and so they may start to ask more questions about relationships and sexual behaviour. They might try to find out information about sex from the internet. Children may start to masturbate in private as they develop a greater awareness of the need for privacy.

Adolescents from 13-16 years old.

As puberty starts, sexual behaviour becomes more private with young people kissing, hugging, dating and forming longer-lasting relationships with peers. They may be interested in and asking questions about body parts, relationships and sexuality. Young people may use sexual language and talk about sex with friends. They may look for sexual pictures or pornography on the internet. Young people may masturbate in private and experiment sexually with the same age group

Healthy sexual behaviours are;

- Mutual.
- Consensual.
- Exploratory and age appropriate.
- No intent to cause harm.
- Fun, humorous.
- No power differential between participants.

Problematic sexual behaviours are;

- Displaying behaviours not age appropriate, such as invasion of personal space, sexual swear words in very young children.
- Some 'one off' incidents of low-key behaviours such as touching over clothing.
- Incidents where there is peer pressure to engage in the behaviour. For example, touching someone's breast, exposure of bottom.
- Behaviours are spontaneous rather than planned.

- They may be self-directed such as masturbation.
- There are other balancing factors such as lack of intent to cause harm, or level of understanding in the young person about the behaviours, or some remorse.
- The child or young person targeted may be irritated or uncomfortable but not scared and feel free to tell someone.
- Parents display concern and are interested in supporting the child to change.

Harmful sexual behaviours are;

- Not age appropriate.
- Elements of planning secrecy or force.
- Power differentials between young people involved such as size status and strength.
- Targeted children feel fear/anxiety/discomfort.
- Negative feelings are expressed by the young person when carrying out the behaviour, such as anger aggression.
- The young person does not take responsibility for the behaviour and blames others or feels a strong sense of grievance.
- Incidents are increasing in frequency and the young person's interest in them is disproportionate to other aspects of their life.
- They are not easily distracted from the behaviour; it appears compulsive and is persistent despite intervention.

4) How we seek to minimise the risk of harmful sexual behaviour

The principle aim of our approach is to foster the conditions in which our pupils can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships at school and as they continue in life. We work to a culture in which the voice of our young people is central, where pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, knowing that they will be listened to, and that they will not be judged.

Children and young people

We use relationships, sex and health education (RSE and Health Education curriculum) to help our pupils understand, in an age-appropriate way, what harmful sexual behaviour is, including by peers. We teach them the knowledge they need to recognise and report abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. We also teach them about the importance of making sensible decisions to stay safe (including online), whilst being clear that if a child or young person is abused, it is never their fault.

We help our pupils to develop the skills to understand:

- What constitutes harmful sexual behaviour.
- That such behaviour is not acceptable.
- The possible reasons for such behaviour, and vulnerability of perpetrators.
- That they must tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable – and must tell a trusted adult if they witness such behaviour towards others.

We understand our pupils may not always feel able to talk to adults about child-on-child sexual abuse. To help them, we will encourage them to share their thoughts and opinions, respond to their concerns, and respect and listen to them. We want our pupils to feel confident that any concerns they raise will be responded to appropriately.

In addition to this, we hold a “Keeping Safe” week where, as a whole school, we look at protective behaviours, including body awareness, consent and personal safety. In addition,

a series of class assemblies are delivered which incorporates the NSPCC 'Speak Out, Stay Safe' program and the 'My Body is My Body' program.

Parents and carers

It is important that parents and carers understand what is meant by harmful sexual behaviour and reinforce key messages from school at home. We work in partnership with parents/carers to support our pupils and want to help them keep their child/ren safe. Parents and carers should understand:

- The nature of harmful sexual behaviour.
- The effects of harmful sexual behaviour on young people.
- The likely indicators that such behaviour may be taking place.
- What to do if it is suspected that peer on peer sexual abuse has occurred.

Staff

Our staff undertake annual safeguarding training where the different types of abuse and neglect are discussed. This includes information about harmful sexual behaviour and our expectations for staff vigilance about this and other potential types of abuse. Staff also receive weekly updates on safeguarding issues through a whole school briefing, which ensures safeguarding is kept on the forefront of everyone's mind as well as ensure all staff are up to date with current legislation.

5) Our response to an incident / allegation

Within school, any sexualised behaviour, whether harmful or not, will be logged on our safeguarding system CPOMs. The reason for this is to allow staff to monitor and support a child who displays sexualised behaviour. The behaviour will be categorised into:

- **Green** - developmentally typical behaviours.
- **Amber** - problematic behaviours. These cannot be ignored and signal the need to take notice and gather information. Wider picture must be explored.
- **Red** - harmful behaviours indicate a need for action.

(context must be considered for all incidents)

The wellbeing of our pupils is always central to our response to an allegation or incident of harmful sexual behaviour. Any young person reporting a concern will be treated respectfully. We will reassure them that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe; no young person will be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse or made to feel ashamed.

Our staff will never promise confidentiality to the young persons as the concern will need to be shared further. The school's Sexualised Behaviour Lead (Mrs Sarah Soley) will need to be informed as soon as possible of any incident and if the incident is deemed to be a harmful sexualised behaviour. The details may also need to be shared with Children's Social Care / the police and other specialist agencies. We have in place effective working relationships with our safeguarding partners, which are essential to ensuring that concerns are appropriately managed. We will explain next steps to the young person so they understand what will happen, including who will be informed.

Where the young person already has Social Care involvement, such as a Looked After Child, a

Child In Need or a child with a Child Protection Plan, we will inform the child's Social Worker and work in partnership with them as appropriate.

Whilst we establish the facts of the case and start the process of liaising with other agencies as appropriate, we will consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises, and where applicable, on transport to and from the school.

Where an incident includes an online element, we will always work in accordance with appropriate guidance, taking advice from other partners as necessary. Our staff will not view an indecent image of a young person unless absolutely necessary, nor forward it for any reason.

Recording

It is essential that information relating to allegations about harmful sexual behaviour are recorded on CPOMs, as with any other safeguarding concern – and in line with our whole school policy. The record may form part of a statutory assessment by Children's Social Care or by another agency.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of harmful sexual behaviour or noticing signs or indicators of this, will record it as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record and correct terminology for human body parts), giving the date, time and location. The facts will be recorded as the young person and/or witness to such incident, presents them.

The record will then be presented to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Mrs Sarah Soley- Lead DSL for Sexualised Behaviours), who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

If a young person is at immediate risk of harm, staff will speak with a Designated Safeguarding Lead first, and deal with recording as soon as possible afterwards. All related concerns, discussions, decisions, and reasons for decisions will be dated and signed and will include the action taken.

Investigation

The Sexualised Behaviour Lead (Mrs Sarah Soley) will be responsible for leading investigations, and for liaising with other agencies as appropriate, for example Children's Social Care and the police. They will also be the main point of contact for parents and carers. The Lead will ensure there are accurate records of each stage of the investigation and that any supporting information is included in the Child Protection files.

Risk Assessment

We will complete a risk assessment following a report of harmful sexual behaviour, considering all young people involved in an incident. We will also consider all other pupils at our school and any actions that may be appropriate to protect them. Risk assessments will be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and fit for purpose. Where appropriate, the affected young people and their parents and carers will be invited to contribute to the completion and review of the risk assessment.

6) Investigation outcomes

Our investigation of an allegation or incident, as set out in this policy, will enable us to determine the outcome, working with our safeguarding partners as appropriate. We will always seek to ensure that the outcome of an investigation is appropriate and proportionate to the circumstances in relation to the report. Various options are open to us, as set out below:

Manage internally

In some cases, for example, one-off incidents, we may take the view that the young person concerned is not in need of early help or statutory intervention. In these cases, we will follow our other school policies in addressing matters, for example our Restorative and Relationship Based Behaviour Policy/Anti-bullying Policy.

We will also consider what support the young person involved may need going forward - for example, nurture support, counselling services, and ensuring that there is a trusted adult for those affected to speak with if they wish to.

Early Help

Where statutory intervention is not required or agreed, we may use early help instead. This means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a young person's life. We will work with parents and carers and other relevant partners when following this approach, which can be particularly useful in addressing non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation.

Requests for support to Children's Social Care

Where a young person has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a request for support to Children's Social Care. We will generally inform parents and carers of this unless to do so may put a young person at additional risk. We will seek advice from other partners on such matters.

If we make a request for support, Children's Social Care will consider whether the child or young person involved is in need of protection or other services. Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the school will work with Children's Social Care and other agencies as appropriate. Partnership working helps to ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other young person that require support. In some cases, Children's Social Care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. If a statutory assessment is not considered appropriate by Children's Social Care, we will consider what other support may be required. We will make further requests for support to Children's Social Care if we consider that a young person remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm.

Reporting to the police

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, we will report it to the police. We will generally inform parents or carers about reports of sexual abuse, unless to do so may put a young person at additional risk. We will seek advice from other partners in individual cases.

In circumstances where parents or carers have not been informed, we will ensure that we support the young person in any decision we take. This is likely to be with the support of Children's Social Care and any appropriate specialist agencies.

Where we have made a report to the police, we will consult with them and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. We will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the police and other agencies as appropriate to support all young people involved (including potential witnesses). This will help to ensure that any actions we take do not jeopardise a police investigation. Sometimes the police will decide that further action is not required. In these circumstances we will continue to engage with other agencies to support the young people involved.

7) Review

All child protection concerns are reviewed regularly, to ensure that everything has been fully addressed, that actions are completed, and to consider whether the young people involved need any further support. We will continue to work with parents and carers and other agencies as appropriate, and risk assessments will be reviewed and updated as required.