Child on Child Abuse Policy and Managing Allegations Policy

The Vyne Community School

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Linked Policies/Documents:

Behaviour Management
Child Protection Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Online Safety Policy
Anti-Bullying
Anti-Drug
Sex and Relationship Education

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1. Introduction & Principles

At The Vyne Community School, we believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe, supportive environment. Children must be free from harm by adults and their peers. We recognise that student behaviour can negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others; minor or everyday behavioral concerns will be managed under the school's Behaviour Management Policy.

However, allegations of peer-directed harm may be of such a serious nature that they raise critical safeguarding concerns. Under *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)*, such instances are defined and managed as Child-on-Child Abuse. This encompasses physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), and prejudice-based abuse.

2. Policy Scope & Context

2.1 Misogyny, Sexism, and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

KCSIE 2026 emphasises that sexual violence and sexual harassment do not occur in isolation. Casual sexism, misogyny, homophobic or transphobic language, and prejudice-based harassment exist on a continuum that can normalise or escalate into Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB). The Vyne Community School maintains a zero-tolerance approach to sexualised or prejudicial harassment, ensuring early interventions are made before behaviour escalates.

2.2 Online Harms & Digital Content

Child-on-child abuse frequently extends into online environments. This policy covers all digital manifestations of peer abuse, including cyberbullying, coercion, the non-consensual sharing of nude/semi-nude images, and the creation or distribution of digitally altered or AI-generated deepfake imagery.

Where a report involves an online or digital element, staff will manage the searching, screening, and confiscation of electronic devices strictly in accordance with DfE guidance (*Searching, Screening and Confiscation: advice for schools*). In line with Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) protocols, staff must not view, download, or copy any suspected illegal image or deepfake beyond what is strictly necessary to confirm a safeguarding risk, and must refer to Children's Social Care or the Police immediately.

3. Prevention & Curriculum Strategy

As a school, we proactively minimize the risk of child-on-child abuse through the following measures:

- **Addressing Sexism & Misogyny:** Explicitly teaching students through the Personal Development Curriculum to identify, challenge, and reject sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and prejudice-based microaggressions. Staff intervene early to treat everyday derogatory language as potential indicators of escalatory HSB and is informed by the HAmpshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Child-on-Child Abuse Toolkit and Child Sexual Abuse Toolkit.

- **Digital Literacy & AI Safety:** Educating students on digital consent, online harassment, and the legal/safeguarding consequences surrounding nude imagery and AI-generated abusive content.
- **Empowering Safe Student Voice:** Maintaining confidential and accessible systems for any student to report concerns, ensuring reports are listened to, validated, and investigated without fear of retaliation.
- **Targeted Interventions:** Implementing tailored assertiveness and self-protection plans for identified vulnerable pupils, alongside structured risk management plans for pupils identified as potential risks to others.
- **Culture & Mentoring:** Delivering robust tutoring, assembly, and mentoring programmes focused on inclusion, healthy relationship boundaries, active bystander actions, and an open safeguarding culture.
- **Clear Reporting Timeframes:** Ensuring all staff are trained to understand that any concern or report of child-on-child abuse, HSB, or sexual harassment must be reported to the DSL or Deputy DSL as soon as practicably possible and at least within 24 hours of the initial disclosure or observation.

4. Indicators & Typologies of Child-on-Child Abuse

Staff must be vigilant to allegations or behaviors involving any of the following categories:

Abuse Type	Key Indicators & Examples
Physical Abuse	Pre-planned violence, gang-related assaults, physical coercion, forcing drug or alcohol use.
Emotional Abuse	Extortion, blackmail, severe intimidation, organised exclusion, cyberbullying.
Sexual Harassment & HSB	Unwanted sexual comments, sexualised jokes/taunts, upskirting, indecent exposure, forcing participation in sexting or viewing pornography.
Sexual Violence	Rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, forced non-consensual physical sexual acts.
Exploitation & Online Abuse	Coercing peers into sexually explicit behavior, non-consensual sharing of nude/semi-nude imagery (including AI deepfakes), CCE/CSE recruitment.

5. Standard Operating Procedure

5.1 Reporting & Initial Recording

When an allegation or concern regarding child-on-child abuse is raised:

- Members of staff must immediately record a factual, objective account on CPOMS and alert the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL as soon as practicably possible, and at least within 24 hours of the disclosure or concern.
- Staff taking a report must never promise confidentiality to a pupil, but will reassure them that they are being taken seriously, kept safe, and supported.
- Staff must not attempt to carry out an independent investigation, interview involved pupils, or ask leading questions at this initial stage.

5.2 Safeguarding Triage & Child-Centred Terminology

- The DSL will assess the report against local multi-agency threshold guidance.
- While formal policy and statutory documentation utilise terms such as "alleged victim" and "alleged perpetrator", staff will adopt trauma-informed, non-stigmatising language (e.g., *"child who experienced harm"* and *"child displaying harmful behavior"*) during direct support and operational management.

5.3 Multi-Agency Referrals

- **Children's Social Care:** If a child is at risk of harm, in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral will be made immediately to Children's Social Care / Children's Reception Team (CRT) on 01329 225379 (or the local out-of-hours service).
- **Police Contact:** If an allegation involves potential criminal activity (e.g., sexual violence, serious physical assault, or distribution of illegal imagery), a referral will be made to the Police / Safer Schools Team (generally in parallel with a referral to Children's Social Care).
- **Nude / Semi-Nude / AI Imagery:** Any report involving the sharing or creation of nude/semi-nude images (including AI deepfakes) will automatically trigger a safeguarding assessment, strictly adhering to DfE *Searching, Screening and Confiscation* guidance.

5.4 Dual Safeguarding Response, Risk Assessments & Classroom Separation

Following a report of sexual violence, the DSL will perform an immediate, written risk and needs assessment considering: victim safety, alleged perpetrator support and discipline, impact on other pupils, physical/timetabled locations, and shared spaces. For reports of HSB or sexual harassment, the DSL will assess the need for a risk assessment on a case-by-case basis and keep all assessments under continuous review.

The school recognises that all children involved require dedicated safeguarding support:

- **Support for the Child Who Experienced Harm:** An immediate safety plan will be formulated, outlining named in-school support staff, safe spaces, and learning adjustments. Where ongoing support is required, the victim will be supported in choosing a **designated trusted adult** to speak with regarding their ongoing needs.
- **Support & Risk Management for the Child Displaying Harmful Behaviour:** A parallel risk assessment and supervision plan will be enacted to manage behavior and address underlying drivers.
- **Classroom Separation Rules:** Where there is an ongoing criminal investigation into a

serious sexual offence (such as rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault), the alleged perpetrator **will be removed from any shared classes** with the victim. The DSL will actively manage and minimise contact between the pupils across school premises, common areas, and school transport.

5.5 Disciplinary Actions, Police Outcomes & Exclusions

- Where disciplinary sanctions or suspensions are considered under the school's Behaviour Management Policy, they must be implemented in conjunction with—and not as a replacement for—a comprehensive safeguarding response.
- **Criminal Outcomes (Rape / Assault by Penetration):** Where a criminal investigation into rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, this will constitute a serious breach of discipline. In all but the most exceptional circumstances, allowing the perpetrator to remain at the school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim or wider community, leading to consideration of permanent exclusion.
- **Criminal Outcomes (Sexual Assault):** Where an investigation leads to a conviction or caution for sexual assault, the school will review sanctions up to and including permanent exclusion. If the perpetrator remains at the school, the requirement to keep victim and perpetrator in separate classes and environments will be strictly maintained, taking into account the victim's wishes.

5.6 Parental Communication & Records

Parents/carers of both the child who experienced harm and the child displaying harmful behavior will be informed promptly and updated on multi-agency referrals, unless doing so would place any child at increased risk of harm. All discussions, rationale, multi-agency feedback, and risk assessments will be securely recorded in each pupil's safeguarding file.