St John Henry Newman Catholic Primary School

Peer on Peer Abuse

Approved: September 2026

Next Review Date: September 2027

1. Introduction

At St John Henry Newman Catholic Primary School, we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful environment in which every child is valued, listened to and protected from harm.

As a Catholic school, our approach is rooted in the dignity of every human person and in our Gospel values of love, respect, kindness, forgiveness and service. We expect all members of our school community to treat one another with dignity and respect.

Child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will never be dismissed as simply "children being children". Children can experience harm from other children in a range of settings, including within school, online and outside school.

This policy sets out how St John Henry Newman Catholic Primary School prevents, recognises and responds to child-on-child abuse.

The policy should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Relationships and Sex Education Policy and Online Safety Policy.

This policy reflects the expectations of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE) and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

2. Definition of Child-on-Child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse is harmful behaviour by one child or group of children towards another child or group of children. It can take place between children of the same or different ages and may occur in person or online.

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

- bullying, including cyberbullying;
- prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying;
- physical violence or assault;
- threats, intimidation or coercion;
- sexual violence;
- sexual harassment;
- inappropriate sexualised behaviour;
- sharing or requesting inappropriate images or videos;
- online abuse and harmful digital communications;
- abuse within children's intimate or close personal relationships;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- domestic or teenage relationship abuse;
- initiation ceremonies, hazing or humiliating rituals;
- upskirting and other forms of image-based abuse;
- the use or threat of weapons;
- harmful behaviour linked to gangs or group-based exploitation;
- discriminatory or identity-based abuse;
- racist, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic abuse;
- harassment relating to disability, religion, ethnicity, sex or other protected characteristics.

Child-on-child abuse can involve a single incident or a pattern of behaviour.

It may also form part of a wider safeguarding concern. The school will therefore consider the wider context and any vulnerabilities affecting the children involved rather than considering incidents in isolation.

3. Our Safeguarding Principles

St John Henry Newman Catholic Primary School will:

1. Put the safety and welfare of children at the centre of all decisions.
2. Take all concerns about child-on-child abuse seriously.
3. Listen to children and provide appropriate opportunities for them to share their experiences.
4. Avoid language or approaches that blame children for experiencing abuse.
5. Recognise that children who cause harm may themselves have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma or other safeguarding concerns.
6. Ensure that safeguarding responses are proportionate, child-centred and informed by the individual circumstances.
7. Never normalise harmful behaviour because the children involved are young.

8. Consider the impact of incidents on both the child who has experienced harm and the child who has caused harm.
9. Consider whether incidents indicate a wider pattern or culture within a class, year group, friendship group or online community.
10. Work with parents/carers and external agencies where appropriate.
11. Record, monitor and review concerns to identify patterns and emerging risks.

4. Preventing Child-on-Child Abuse

Prevention is a whole-school responsibility.

The school promotes positive relationships and respectful behaviour through:

- our Catholic ethos and Gospel values;
- clear behaviour expectations;
- our school values and expectations for kindness and respect;
- Relationships and Sex Education;
- PSHE education;
- safeguarding education;
- online safety education;
- assemblies, worship and prayer;
- anti-bullying work;
- work around equality, diversity and inclusion;
- pastoral support;
- pupil leadership and voice;
- appropriate supervision and staff vigilance;
- staff safeguarding training;
- effective behaviour management;
- clear reporting systems.

Children are taught that they should speak to a trusted adult if something makes them feel unsafe, uncomfortable or worried.

The school will ensure that safeguarding education is age-appropriate and recognises that children may encounter harmful behaviour both within school and online.

5. Creating a Culture Where Children Feel Safe to Report

Children must feel confident that they will be listened to and taken seriously.

Children can raise concerns with:

- their class teacher;
- any trusted member of staff;
- the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL);
- a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL);
- another trusted adult within school.

Staff will ensure that children know how and where they can seek help.

The school will pay particular attention to children who may find it more difficult to communicate concerns, including children with SEND, communication difficulties or other additional vulnerabilities.

Anonymous reporting mechanisms may be used where appropriate, but children should always be encouraged to speak directly to a trusted adult where possible.

6. Recognising the Signs

Staff should remain alert to changes in a child's behaviour, presentation or emotional wellbeing.

Possible indicators include:

- sudden changes in behaviour or mood;
- anxiety or distress;
- reluctance to attend school;
- withdrawal from friendship groups;
- avoiding particular children or areas of school;

- unexplained injuries;
- changes in eating or sleeping patterns;
- deterioration in school performance;
- increased use of or distress following use of technology;
- secrecy around phones, devices or online activity;
- sexualised language or behaviour that is not age appropriate;
- fear or reluctance to participate in particular activities;
- repeated conflict with another child;
- changes in friendship groups;
- possession of inappropriate images or material;
- threats, intimidation or coercive behaviour;
- increased aggression or challenging behaviour.

These indicators do not necessarily mean that child-on-child abuse has occurred. Staff must use professional curiosity and follow safeguarding procedures where concerns arise.

7. Responding to a Disclosure or Concern

Any member of staff who receives a disclosure or has a concern about child-on-child abuse must follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

Staff should:

- listen carefully;
- remain calm;
- take the child seriously;
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking to an adult;
- avoid leading questions;
- avoid promising confidentiality;
- establish only enough information to understand the immediate safeguarding concern;
- record the concern accurately;
- report it immediately to the DSL or DDSL.

Staff must not investigate the incident themselves.

The DSL will determine the appropriate safeguarding response.

Where there is immediate danger or a serious risk of harm, appropriate emergency action will be taken.

8. The Role of the DSL

The DSL will ensure that concerns are:

- assessed promptly;
- recorded securely;
- considered in the wider safeguarding context;
- followed up appropriately;
- shared with relevant staff on a need-to-know basis;
- referred to external agencies where required;
- monitored over time.

The DSL will consider:

- the nature and seriousness of the behaviour;
- the age and developmental stage of the children;
- whether there is a power imbalance;
- whether there is a pattern of behaviour;
- whether there are previous concerns involving either child;
- whether the behaviour involved coercion, threats or intimidation;
- whether there is a sexual element;
- whether weapons or other dangerous items were involved;
- whether the behaviour occurred online;
- whether there are wider safeguarding concerns;
- whether either child has particular vulnerabilities;

- whether other children may also be at risk.

The school will consider whether information should be shared with children's social care, the police, health services or other agencies.
KCSIE 2026 requires leaders to have effective systems for safeguarding concerns and specifically addresses child-on-child violence, including bullying, physical abuse, sexual violence and harassment, and abuse within children's relationships.

9. Supporting the Child Who Has Experienced Harm
The school will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child who has experienced harm.
Support may include:

- a named trusted adult;
- increased pastoral support;
- changes to supervision arrangements;
- changes to seating, grouping or routines where necessary;
- safe spaces;
- additional check-ins;
- support with friendships;
- support with emotional wellbeing;
- work with parents/carers;
- referral to external services where appropriate.

The school will take reasonable steps to prevent further harm or unwanted contact.
The child will not be expected to manage the situation themselves.

10. Supporting the Child Who Has Caused Harm
The school recognises that children who cause harm may themselves have safeguarding needs.
The school will therefore seek to understand the behaviour and any underlying factors while maintaining clear boundaries around what is acceptable.
Support may include:

- pastoral intervention;
- behaviour support;
- restorative approaches where appropriate;
- work on empathy, relationships and emotional regulation;
- targeted support;
- involvement of parents/carers;
- referral to external agencies;
- additional safeguarding assessment.

Support does not remove accountability.
Where behaviour breaches the school's Behaviour Policy, appropriate consequences will be applied.
Restorative approaches will only be used where they are safe, appropriate and in the interests of the children involved.
A child who has experienced abuse will never be required to participate in restorative work.

11. Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment
The school has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment.
This includes:

- unwanted sexual comments;
- sexualised name-calling;
- sexual jokes or remarks;
- unwanted touching;
- sexual intimidation;
- sharing sexualised images;
- requesting or pressuring another child to provide images;
- sexual assault;
- online sexual harassment.

Such behaviour will always be treated as a safeguarding matter.

The school will follow KCSIE 2026 and relevant local safeguarding procedures when responding to sexual violence or sexual harassment.
The school will consider the needs of all children involved and whether wider safeguarding concerns are present.

12. Online Child-on-Child Abuse
Child-on-child abuse may take place through:

- social media;
- messaging applications;
- gaming platforms;
- group chats;
- video-sharing platforms;
- mobile phones;
- school-managed digital systems;
- other online environments.

The fact that an incident occurs outside school does not mean that it is irrelevant to the school.
Where online behaviour affects the safety, wellbeing or education of pupils, the school may need to respond.
The school will work with parents/carers and, where necessary, external agencies to address online safeguarding concerns.
Children will receive age-appropriate education about:

- online relationships;
- respectful communication;
- privacy;
- image sharing;
- reporting harmful content;
- blocking and reporting users;
- seeking adult help;
- digital footprints;
- online coercion and manipulation.

13. Bullying and Child-on-Child Abuse
Bullying is a form of harmful child-on-child behaviour.
The school will distinguish between:

- isolated incidents of conflict;
- unkind behaviour;
- repeated bullying;
- discriminatory abuse;
- serious child-on-child violence or abuse.

All concerns will be considered in context.
Repeated incidents will be monitored to identify patterns, including where individual incidents might appear relatively minor when considered separately.
The school's Anti-Bullying Policy and Behaviour Policy provide further detail on the school's response.

14. Equality, Inclusion and Discrimination
Child-on-child abuse can involve discrimination relating to:

- race;
- ethnicity;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- disability;
- sexual orientation;
- gender reassignment;
- age or other protected characteristics.

The school will challenge discriminatory language and behaviour.

The school will also consider whether discriminatory behaviour reflects wider attitudes or a culture within a group or cohort.
Our Catholic ethos requires every child to be treated with dignity and respect.
The school will ensure that children with SEND and other vulnerabilities receive appropriate safeguarding support and that reasonable adjustments are made where required.

15. Working with Parents and Carers
The school will work openly and appropriately with parents/carers.
Parents/carers may be contacted where:

- a safeguarding concern has been substantiated or requires further action;
- their child requires additional support;
- their child has caused harm;
- a behaviour or safeguarding intervention is required;
- information needs to be shared to protect a child.

There may be circumstances where information cannot be shared immediately because doing so could increase the risk of harm or compromise a safeguarding process.
Where appropriate, the school will work with parents/carers to establish a consistent approach between home and school.

16. Multi-Agency Working
Where necessary, the school will work with:

- Peterborough children's social care;
- the police;
- health professionals;
- the local safeguarding partnership;
- educational psychology and specialist services;
- other relevant agencies.

The school will follow local safeguarding procedures when making referrals.
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 places renewed emphasis on child-centred practice, multi-agency working, information sharing and responding to children experiencing multiple forms of harm.
The school will share information lawfully and proportionately where this is necessary to safeguard children.

17. Recording and Information Sharing
All concerns relating to child-on-child abuse will be recorded in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.
Records will:

- be factual and objective;
- distinguish fact from opinion;
- record the child's own words where appropriate;
- identify actions taken;
- identify who was informed;
- record referrals and professional discussions;
- be stored securely.

St John Henry Newman Catholic Primary School uses CPOMS for safeguarding recording.
Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with safeguarding requirements.
The school will follow current statutory guidance on safeguarding information sharing. The Department for Education's statutory information-sharing guidance came into force in September 2026.

18. Monitoring Patterns and Wider Risks
The DSL and school leaders will monitor child-on-child incidents to identify:

- repeated incidents involving the same children;
- particular locations where incidents occur;
- particular times of day;
- online patterns;

- friendship-group issues;
- repeated discriminatory behaviour;
- emerging risks within particular year groups;
- concerns involving multiple children.

This information will inform:

- supervision arrangements;
- curriculum planning;
- pastoral provision;
- behaviour interventions;
- staff training;
- safeguarding actions;
- risk assessments.

Where appropriate, governors will receive anonymised information about patterns and safeguarding developments.

19. Staff Training

All staff receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role.

Training will include awareness of:

- child-on-child abuse;
- bullying;
- sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- online abuse;
- discriminatory behaviour;
- safeguarding disclosures;
- professional curiosity;
- recording and reporting concerns;
- the school's safeguarding procedures.

The DSL and DDSLs will maintain up-to-date knowledge of national and local safeguarding expectations.

20. Curriculum and Pupil Education

The school uses the curriculum to help children understand:

- respectful relationships;
- kindness and dignity;
- consent and personal boundaries, where age appropriate;
- appropriate and inappropriate behaviour;
- friendships;
- emotional regulation;
- online safety;
- how to seek help;
- how to report concerns;
- how to respect differences.

This is supported through RSE, PSHE, Computing, safeguarding education, assemblies, worship and the wider Catholic life of the school.

21. Confidentiality

Children should understand that staff cannot promise absolute confidentiality where there is a safeguarding concern.
Where a child shares information indicating that they or another child may be at risk of harm, the information will be shared with the DSL or another appropriate safeguarding professional.
Staff will explain this sensitively to children.

22. Allegations Involving Criminal Behaviour

Where behaviour may constitute a criminal offence, the school will consider whether a referral to the police is required.
This may include serious physical violence, sexual offences, possession or use of weapons, or other serious criminal behaviour.

The school will not attempt to determine criminal responsibility itself.
The DSL will liaise with appropriate agencies and follow local safeguarding procedures.

23. Malicious or Unfounded Allegations
The school will take all safeguarding concerns seriously.
Where an allegation is subsequently found to be unfounded, the school will consider the support required by all children involved.
Where there is evidence that a child has deliberately made a false allegation, this will be addressed through the Behaviour Policy and appropriate pastoral support.
Children will not be discouraged from reporting concerns because a previous concern was not substantiated.

24. Roles and Responsibilities
Governing Body
The Governing Body will:

- ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective;
- ensure this policy is reviewed appropriately;
- provide appropriate challenge and oversight;
- receive information about safeguarding trends;
- ensure the school meets its statutory safeguarding responsibilities.

Headteacher
The Headteacher will:

- ensure this policy is implemented;
- ensure staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities;
- support the DSL;
- ensure appropriate resources and training are available;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are acted upon.

Designated Safeguarding Lead
The DSL will:

- lead the school's response to child-on-child abuse;
- advise staff;
- assess concerns;
- make referrals where appropriate;
- maintain safeguarding records;
- monitor patterns and trends;
- liaise with parents and external agencies;
- ensure appropriate support is provided.

All Staff
All staff are responsible for:

- maintaining professional vigilance;
- promoting respectful behaviour;
- listening to children;
- recognising safeguarding concerns;
- reporting concerns immediately;
- following the school's safeguarding procedures.

25. Links to Other Policies
This policy should be read alongside:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy;
- Online Safety Policy;
- Equality Policy;

- SEND Policy;
- Attendance Policy;
- Whistleblowing Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct.