



WESTFIELD SCHOOL POLICY AND PROCEDURE

PEER ON PEER ABUSE

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BY: N. Gilbert

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WESTFIELD SCHOOL

PEER ON PEER ABUSE

POLICY DOCUMENT

Rationale

Westfield School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is, looks like, how it can be managed, the support and intervention necessary to meet the needs of the individual, and preventative strategies to reduce further risk of harm.

Abuse of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If peer on peer abuse does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a TELLING school. This means that anyone who knows, or suspects that peer on peer abuse is happening is expected to tell someone who is able to respond. Appropriate methods of communication and advocates are available for all students to feel fully supported.

Aims of This Policy

- All governors, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents understand what constitutes peer on peer abuse.
- All governors, teaching and non-teaching staff are familiar with the school policy on peer on peer abuse, and follow it when peer on peer abuse is reported.
- All pupils and parents are familiar with the school policy on peer on peer abuse, and what they should do if peer on peer abuse is reported or suspected.

Why we respond to peer on peer abuse

Abuse is abuse and will never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter', 'having a laugh', 'part of growing up' or 'boys being boys'/'girls being girls'. We will not dismiss abusive behaviour between young people as 'normal' and our thresholds for investigating claims and allegations are the same as for any other type of abuse. We recognise that abuse often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, which could involve perpetrators of abuse having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for the victim to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical,

psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

We acknowledge that low level disruption and the use of offensive language can have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as 'banter' or 'horseplay', it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour.

Examples of peer on peer abuse can be:

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Faith taunts, gestures, derogatory terms based on faith or values
- Sexual (violence or harassment) unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments (see appendix for additional content)
- Homophobic because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber all areas of Internet, such as e-mail & Internet chat room misuse, social media misuse, threats by text messaging and calls, upskirting*, sexting, and so-called initiation ceremonies
Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities.

Traditional signs of the existence of peer on peer abuse, such as becoming withdrawn, or absenteeism, can be hard to discern in young people with learning difficulties, which is why the curriculum at Westfield contains embedded pastoral and peer support opportunities, as well as social skills groups and emotions groups, staffed by appropriately trained professionals. Any evidence or suggestion of the existence of this type of behavior must be immediately reported to the DSL, and plans are put in place to explore the reasons, and provide solutions.

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied or abused. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and they should investigate if a child:

- Is frightened of travelling to or from school, or doesn't want to go on the school/public bus
- Begs to be driven to school
- Changes their usual routine
- Is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- Begins to truant
- Becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Attempts or threatens self-harm, suicide or runs away
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Regularly feels ill in the morning
- Comes home with clothes torn or books damaged

- Has possessions which are damaged or “go missing”
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Stops eating
- Is reluctant to say what’s wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous and jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but peer on peer abuse should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Procedures

1. Report peer on peer abuse incident to staff
2. The incidents will be recorded by staff using an agreed format via the MyConcern safeguarding system. The victim will be heard and supported through the process by a named staff member, with a second adult present.
3. The alleged perpetrator will be asked to give their version of events separately, which will be heard and recorded as above.
4. In cases that cannot be solved internally, parents will be informed and asked to come in to discuss the situation.
5. The abusive behaviour or threats must be investigated and stopped quickly
6. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted
7. Strategies will be put in place to help the abuser/s change their behaviour

Outcomes

1. The abuser/s may be asked to genuinely apologise. Other consequences may take place.
2. In serious cases, suspension or even exclusion will be considered
3. If possible, the pupils will be reconciled
4. After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated incidents do not take place.
5. A termly return is made to the Governors to report all cases of peer on peer abuse, regardless of outcome.

Prevention

The following strategies for helping to prevent peer on peer abuse are implemented at Westfield, as and when appropriate:

- Compiling a school/class code of conduct
- Emphasis on the school’s Values Curriculum
- Signing a behaviour contract where appropriate
- Implementing social stories or drawing pictures about peer on peer abuse
- Identify focus stimulus activities or peer on peer abuse weeks

- Role play
- Visits from outside agencies and professionals
- Having discussions about peer on peer abuse and why it matters
- PSHE/ Citizenship lesson focus, and anti-bullying weeks.

This policy is one of a group of policies aimed at providing maximum support for our students, and should be read in conjunction with our safeguarding policy, e-safety policy and behaviour policy

This policy was recommended for approval by the identified safeguarding governor and approved by the Full Governing Body. To be reviewed annually.

Signed *Andrew James* Date 16.1.2020

Documents referenced in this policy :

DfE Statutory Guidance for schools and colleges:

Keeping Children Safe in Education. September 2019

HM Government Statutory Guidance:

Working Together to Safeguard Children. July 2018

*'upskirting' involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm

Appendix:

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges

Context

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It 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, in all likelihood, 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. Staff should be aware that some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows girls, children with SEND and LGBT children are at greater risk.

USEFUL WEBSITES

<https://www.antibullyingpro.com>

BBC

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents/bullying/

Bullying.co.uk

www.bullying.co.uk/advice-for-parents

UK Government

www.gov.uk/bullying-at-school/the-law

NHS

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Bullying/Pages/Bullyingadviceforparents.aspx

Stop Bullying

www.stopbullying.gov

Kid Health

www.kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/bullies.html

Netmums

www.netmums.com

T-Mobile

www.t-mobile.co.uk/help-and-advice/advice-for-parents/bullying/

Think UK Now

www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents

Safer Internet

www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/parents

Ofcom

www.ofcom.org.uk

Child Net

www.childnet-int.org

Digizen

www.digizen.org

Woogi World

www.woogiworld.com

Peer on peer abuse Alliance

www.peeronpeerabusealliance.org.uk

Connect Safely

www.connectsafely.org

Family Lives

www.familylives.org.uk

Autism.org

www.autism.org.uk/bullying

Help Organisation:

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

Children's Legal Centre

KIDSCAPE Parents Helpline

Parentline Plus

Youth Access

Bullying Online

www.bullying.co.uk

The Kidscape website for further support, links and advice

www.kidscape.org.uk