



Statement of Intent

Highfields Primary School has a zero-tolerance approach to any harmful sexual behaviour involving children and acknowledge that it could be occurring at Highfields Primary School and in our school community. The school is proactive in its approach to assessing prevalence, responding to incidents and challenging and changing behaviour. This policy applies to all governors, staff and learners.

We have a statutory duty to safeguarding the children in our setting. Safeguarding underpins everything that we do as a school. We work together to foster an environment that creates healthy relationships for children and young people.

Our whole-school approach encourages healthy relationships and works to prevent harmful sexual behaviour. We provide high quality education within the curriculum to reduce the likelihood of the situations occurring and ensure a safe environment where children can learn and flourish.

We recognise that HSB is harmful to both the child/children affected by the behaviours and the child/children who displayed the behaviour and provide ongoing support for all involved.

Whilst there are societal factors beyond the setting that can drive such behaviours, we ensure that there are clear messages provided that it is not acceptable and will never be tolerated – such behaviour will never be normalised. Any inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour will be challenged by staff, pupils or families and pupils should feel safe to report any concerns and be confident that these will be taken seriously and responded to in a timely way.

Our approach is to treat everything as safeguarding incident in the first instance - we distinguish between behaviours that are exploratory and part of healthy age and ability appropriate development and those that may be harmful.

As a school, we provide opportunities for school staff to understand what harmful sexual behaviours might look like and what they should do in the event of a report.

As a setting, we are also alert to issues such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and gender stereotypes. We have a school culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled. We have a strong values-based education which is upheld and demonstrated through all aspects of school life.

Our procedures for reporting and recording concerns via CPOMS helps to ensure that there are mechanisms in place to review, analyse and triangulate data to inform practice.

Related policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing

- Positive Learning (Behaviour) policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Online safety
- Low Level Concerns

Understanding Harmful Sexual Behaviour

A children's sexual behaviour exists, occurs and / or progresses on a continuum, from normal and developmentally appropriate to inappropriate and / or harmful. Each child is different and may become interested in relationships, sex, and sexuality at slightly different ages. As children get older and develop, the way they express their sexual feelings changes. Many sexual behaviours displayed by children as they grow up are normal and healthy. However, sometimes children can develop sexual behaviour that is inappropriate and / or harmful to themselves or others. These may include:

- displaying sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for the age of the child
- sexual behaviour that is becoming a compulsive habit or happening frequently
- behaviour using force, aggression or pressuring other children
- engaging in behaviour that upsets other children
- sexual interest in adults or children of very different ages to their own
- sexual behaviour that starts to affect other aspects of the children's life
- use of pornography or sending explicit images online, particularly without consent
- any sexual behaviour that is harmful to themselves or others

Settings must be alert to such behaviours and appropriately address any concerns in accordance with safeguarding procedures. It is important to note that harmful sexual behaviour can occur online or offline or simultaneously between the two.

The school will refer to The NSPCC website page '[Understanding sexualised behaviour in children](#)' and The Brook Traffic Light Tool to provide support when distinguishing developmentally typical sexual behaviour from sexual behaviours that are problematic or harmful.

What Is Child on Child Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment?

Sexual violence / harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children against a single children or group. It is important to understand that certain children are more likely to be abused than their peers – for example, girls, LGBTQ pupils or children with SEND.

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are extremely complex to manage. It is essential that victims are protected, offered appropriate support and that every effort is made to ensure their education is not disrupted.

What is sexual violence?

The following are sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (NOTE- Schools and colleges should be aware that sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent, or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent, can still constitute sexual assault.)

Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an activity, the activity is sexual, B does not consent to engaging in the activity, and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (NOTE – this could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.)

(Consent – an agreement by choice to that penetration and the freedom and capacity to make that choice) Further information about consent can be found here: Rape Crisis England & Wales - Sexual consent

The DfE defines sexual harassment as 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' and something which 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'. It can occur online and offline and settings should have clear plans for preventing such behaviour and processes for responding to it where it occurs.

What is sexual harassment?

When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school/college. 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 (we will consider 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 may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos.
- Taking and sharing nude photographs of U18s is a criminal offence.
 - sharing of unwanted explicit content
 - upskirting (this is a criminal offence)
 - sexualised online bullying
 - unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media
 - sexual exploitation; coercion and threats.

Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates a culture that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

What are Online Harmful Sexual Behaviour, including sharing nudes and semi-nudes?

It is important to recognise that harmful sexual behaviour can occur online or offline (or simultaneously between the two) and that technology is a significant factor in many safeguarding concerns. Keeping children safe in education notes that online child-on-child abuse can include, “abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography to those who do not want to receive such content”. All staff in the setting, including the DSL, is aware of and alert to these factors when dealing with incidents of child-on-child abuse.

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people defines sharing nudes and semi-nudes as “the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos, or live streams by young people under the age of 18 online. This could be via social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. It could also involve sharing between devices via services like Apple's AirDrop which works offline.” Section 1 of the guidance, 'Background and context', is read and understood by the setting.

Online safety

Children live in an increasingly online world and often operate more freely within the online environment than they would offline. To help to prevent child on child abuse from occurring online, our curriculum is designed to prepare children to operate safely within the online world by supporting them to recognise abuse and behave safely online within the three main areas of online risk: content, contact and conduct. We also ensure that we have robust filtering and monitoring arrangements in place to support our policies and processes around online safety.

Education

Our school's educational approach seeks to develop knowledge and understanding of healthy, problematic and sexually harmful behaviours, and empowers young people to make healthy, informed decisions. Our school's approach is delivered predominantly

through PSHE and RHE and additional opportunities are provided through our computing curriculum, values program and collective worship.

Our approach is given the time it deserves and is authentic i.e., based on current issues nationally, locally and within our setting. It is shaped and evaluated by learners and other members of the school community to ensure that it is dynamic, evolving and based on need.

Pupil voice

The Ofsted Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges found that children rarely speak to adults about sexual harassment and sexual violence, even though it is prevalent for them. It sets out there should be an assumption that harmful sexual behaviour is happening in a setting, even when there are no specific reports of it.

As a school, we aim to provide a safe environment in which pupils can discuss challenging issues (including harmful sexual behaviour) in an open way. Pupil voice is actively sought and heard and feeds into our culture and systems. Conversations within the PSHE curriculum provide a platform for open conversations as well as ensuring the children know of other opportunities and people they can speak to within the school environment.

Training

A good understanding of HSB will form part of the annual safeguarding training that all staff undertake. The DSL and deputies will also continue to keep abreast of new developments which will aid in planning preventative education, implementing preventative measures, drafting and implementing an effective child protection policy and incorporating the approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment into the whole school approach to safeguarding.

All DSL's have an understanding of the Brook Traffic Light Tool to aid their knowledge and understanding of normalised sexual behaviours. The monthly Safeguarding Newsletter helps continue to raise the awareness and understanding of all areas of safeguarding. Including HSB.

CPD will be made available on an ongoing basis for all staff and students to raise awareness of harassment and sexual misconduct with the purpose of preventing incidents and encouraging reporting where they do occur.

Responsibilities

Leaders and DSLs

Our leaders and DSLs have ultimate responsibility in dealing with all incidents of harmful sexual behaviour, including online. It is the expectation that all incidents of harmful sexual behaviour/sexual violence and harassment are reported in line with school safeguarding and child protection procedures.

We ensure that our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and their deputies are confident in school safeguarding processes and when it is necessary to escalate. Our DSLs know what support is available to support all children involved in harmful sexual behaviour and are confident as to how to access this support when required.

The Designated safeguarding lead and their deputies have an in-depth working

knowledge of KCSIE 2024. We ensure that they receive appropriate specialist training, commensurate with their role and that ongoing training is provided for all school staff.

It is the role of school leaders and designated safeguarding leads to ensure that all staff and Governors receive training specific to harmful sexual behaviour, and that it is included as part of induction.

The DSL will take a lead role in each incident of harmful sexual behaviour and make decisions on a case-by- case basis, taking a wide range of factors into account each time.

Staff

It is the responsibility of all staff to have read and understood this policy and associated policies. All staff must report any incidents or suspected incidents of harmful sexual behaviour to DSLs in line with school policy and ensure they are informed of the outcome. All staff will challenge any harmful sexual language or inappropriate behaviour. Staff have a duty to ensure that the school environment is one which is safe and which supports learners to understand safe and healthy relationships and appropriate behaviour through delivery of our curriculum.

Staff have a duty to deliver our Jigsaw PSHE curriculum which help prepare children for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life and help them become responsible, respectful members of their community.

Governors

We ensure that our governing body have a good understanding of what harmful sexual behaviour is, when it can pose a risk to children and how to keep children safe.

As part of the headteacher's report, the governing body has the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the approach to harmful sexual behaviour to ensure it is adequate and effective. They receive regular reports about harmful sexual behaviour, including the number of incidents that have occurred/been reported. This includes evaluation of the curriculum, pupil voice activity and evaluation of parent/carer engagement. Governors ensure that risks relating to these issues are identified, that a number of reporting routes are available, and that risks are effectively mitigated.

Children

All children have the right to learn in a safe, healthy and respectful school environment. Our children benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum and are taught about healthy relationships and know how and when to report and that a range of different reporting routes is available to them. Our children are encouraged to report any harmful sexual behaviour, even if they are not directly involved. All learners will be believed if they make a disclosure and will be treated sensitively - whilst we cannot guarantee confidentiality, their thoughts and wishes will be taken into account when supporting them.

Parents/carers

We work hard to engage parents and carers by:

- regular in school sessions

- sharing newsletters
- sharing information online e.g., website, WEDUC
- providing curriculum information

Our parents and carers are made aware of how and when to report any concerns to the school, that all incidents will be handled with care and sensitivity, and that it may sometimes be necessary to involve other agencies.

Vulnerable groups

We recognise that, nationally, vulnerable learners are three times more likely to be at risk from Harmful Sexual Behaviour. These include:

- A child with additional needs and disabilities.
- A child living with domestic abuse.
- A child who is at risk of/suffering significant harm.
- A child who is at risk of/or has been exploited or at risk of exploited (CRE, CSE),
- A care experienced child.
- A child who goes missing or is missing education.
- Children who identify as, or are perceived as, LGBTQI+ and/or any of the other protected characteristics

Children displaying HSB have often experienced their own abuse and trauma. We ensure that any vulnerable learner is offered appropriate support, both within and outside school, sometimes via specialist agencies.

Reporting

As a school, we are aware of the barriers to children reporting harmful sexual behaviour concerns to adults at our setting, and the systems in place seek to alleviate these barriers as far as possible. Our systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children and young people to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously. All reports will be dealt with swiftly and sensitively and outcomes shared where appropriate. We understand that children may not find it easy to tell staff about abuse.

If children do not feel able to share their concerns with an adult at school, they may prefer to tell a friend or a family member. We therefore also respond to anonymous reports, or reports made by third parties.

It may be through behavioural or emotional changes that children communicate they have a concern, so staff are trained to notice and act on these changes. Keeping children safe in education is clear that staff should act immediately if they have any concerns about a children's welfare, rather than wait to be told by the children.

There is an assumption that harmful sexual behaviour is happening in our setting, even when there are no specific reports. Our reporting procedures are monitored and reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose and being used effectively. This also enables us as a school to understand the scale of harmful sexual behaviour within the setting and review our response to incidents, identify and emerging patterns and implement changes to positively influence practise.

Responding to an incident or disclosure

In this policy we recognise the importance of distinguishing between healthy, problematic and sexually harmful behaviour (HSB)

Our response is always based on sound safeguarding principles and follows school safeguarding processes as outlined in our Child Protection Policy. It is calm, considered and appropriate and puts the learner at the centre of all decisions made.

The school will always adopt a multi-agency approach and seek external support and guidance, in line with school policy, if deemed necessary. This may include Early Help, CAMHS, Police.

No guidance can provide definitive step-by-step advice for every case. Each case will need to be handled according to its own unique circumstances and decisions made on a case-by-case basis.

Principles To Guide the Setting Response

When responding to a report of an incident of HSB, there are some general principles which should guide the setting response:

- the needs of both the victim and alleged perpetrator should be considered immediately to ensure that both are safeguarded and protected. The safeguarding of all pupils should underpin any actions taken by the setting. Within this, children sharing a classroom must be considered carefully.
- responses to harmful sexual behaviour should be proportionate and reflect the level of risk and need presented
- all reports of harmful sexual behaviour should be responded to appropriately, whether it has occurred online or offline and including those that have happened outside of the setting
- the response should be at the least intrusive level required to effectively address the behaviour
- the wishes of the victim and how they wish to proceed must be important considerations within the setting's response to a report. They should have as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding the support provided to them and the progression of the investigation, however this must be balanced carefully with the setting's duties and their responsibility to protect children.

Handling Reports and Disclosures Sensitive

Any adult in the setting may observe an incident or receive a disclosure of harmful sexual behaviour, so it is important that all staff understand how to respond to it appropriately. It is also important that everyone in the setting understands that concerns will be taken seriously and responded to in a sensitive way. Appropriate handling of a concern will increase confidence across the setting, contributing to a positive culture and encouraging others to report in the future, should the need arise.

A victim should never be made to feel they are the problem for making a report or made to feel ashamed for making a report. They should be made to feel comfortable to disclose further information at a future date if needed, as it is recognised that they

may not feel comfortable to disclose all information at first. Keeping children safe in education recommends that, where possible, two members of staff should manage a report of harmful sexual behaviour and one should preferably be a designated or deputy designated safeguarding lead.

If an incident involves nudes or semi-nudes, the setting will refer to the guidance provided in [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#). Section 2 of the guidance, 'Handling incidents', gives detailed advice including a flowchart of actions to take when responding to an incident. It is important to note that in most cases, images or videos should not be viewed and further guidance is given within section 2.10 of the document.

Confidentiality

Staff taking a report should never promise confidentiality as it is very likely that it will be in the best interests of the victim to seek advice and guidance from others to provide support and engage appropriate agencies. Parents or carers should normally be informed unless this would put the victim at greater risk, or if the police/Children's Social Care have advised not to. The guidance within Keeping Children Safe In Education will be followed when working with parents and carers following an incident involving their children.

Initial investigation - establishing the facts

The setting's initial response will include asking questions to establish the basic facts of the incident. It is important to decide at an early stage whether the incident needs to be reported to police and/or Children's Social Care or whether it should be managed internally. If the incident needs to be reported to the police, the setting will stop any internal investigation and contact the police.

The setting will:

- fully document the initial disclosure and setting enquires as they may be required if the matter goes to court. This includes recording the questions asked to children and their replies
- make every effort to preserve any relevant evidence
- carefully consider when to inform the alleged perpetrator. If the incident requires a referral to Children's Social Care and/or the police, then, generally, the approach should be discussed with these agencies. However, this does not and should not stop the setting taking immediate action to safeguard its children where required

Assessing Whether an Incident of Sexual Behaviour is Harmful

To decide whether an incident of sexual behaviour could be harmful, and therefore guide the setting response, several factors need to be considered. It will be noted that even if both children involved claim the act was consensual, if any of the following factors apply, the behaviour may still be harmful. The factors to consider include:

- the nature of the alleged incident(s) and whether a crime may have been committed or HSB has been displayed

- the ages of the children involved (particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not)
- the stages of development of the children involved
- whether there are any SEND needs of the children involved
- whether the behaviour is secretive or has an element of manipulation
- whether the behaviour is an isolated incident or a pattern of behaviour following previous advice and interventions
- if there is any power imbalance between the children involved (e.g., related to race, gender, age, maturity, social standing, confidence, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability of the victim). Settings should note that an incident of sexual violence or harassment is likely to create a power imbalance

The NSPCC website page '[Understanding sexualised behaviour in children](#)' provides also offers support.

When To Contact Other Agencies, Including Statutory Agencies

Settings are not alone when dealing with incidents of harmful sexual behaviour and should be supported by other agencies as appropriate. Local authority Children's Social Care and the police are statutory agencies and will be vital partners where a crime may have been committed or where there are safeguarding concerns for a child. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is that this should be passed on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. Alongside a report to the police, there should also be a referral to Children's Social Care. In some cases, the police may decide that a welfare, rather than a criminal, response will be more appropriate, but it is for the police and / or Children's Social Care to decide that, not the setting. There are also health agencies available to provide specialist support for both victims and alleged perpetrators.

Sanctions, Suspension, and Exclusion

Disciplinary action, in line with the setting's Behaviour Policy, can be taken whilst other investigations by the police or social care are ongoing as long as they do not interfere with the investigation. Settings can decide on a balance of probabilities what happened in the incident and act accordingly. Support can be provided for the children alongside disciplinary action.

Settings should refer to [Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement](#) (DfE, 2024) for further information. Disciplinary action may also be taken if a report of harmful sexual behaviour is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious. The setting's Behaviour Policy will guide the response as appropriate.

Ongoing Support for Victims

Following a report of harmful sexual behaviour, ongoing support should be provided to the victim. Their voice is important and should be captured within all record keeping and safety planning. A priority should be to make the setting a safe space for the victim, minimising disruption to their education as much as possible. If the victim wishes

to move to another educational setting, this should also be supported.

A regular review of the ongoing response should be planned and undertaken. A list of principles to guide the setting's ongoing response, based on effective safeguarding practice, can be found in Keeping children safe in education.

Referrals to appropriate agencies should be considered within the ongoing support response, including referrals to health agencies for any resulting physical, mental, or sexual health needs.

Children who have experienced harmful sexual behaviour may not disclose the whole picture or may not feel ready to access support when they initially report the incident. Settings should ensure they keep an open dialogue with the victim, ideally with a designated trusted adult in place for the victim who can be available for further disclosures or to signpost to support when/if the child feels ready.

Ongoing Support for Alleged Perpetrators

children who display harmful sexual behaviour also need to be offered appropriate support. Settings should be aware that children who display harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced abuse and trauma themselves and this should be acknowledged/explored within the response. It should also be acknowledged that displaying harmful sexual behaviour is often due to the children having an unmet need themselves. They are also likely to be negatively impacted by the incident and may require support for this. It may be necessary for the setting to provide both support and sanctions at the same time.

Supporting Parents/Carers And Siblings

Parents and carers of a children who has experienced or displayed harmful sexual behaviour may require support themselves. They may also benefit from guidance on how to support their children.

The impact on the siblings of children involved in incidents of harmful sexual behaviour must be considered (if applicable). They should be considered within the risk assessment and safety plan and their ongoing support needs should be addressed and reviewed as appropriate.

Supporting Other Children

The support needs of any children who have witnessed, or have been impacted by, an incident of harmful sexual behaviour between other children will need to be considered and addressed. The possibility of other children 'taking sides', harassing, or bullying the children involved in an incident should also be considered and factored into the setting response.

Links

Child Exploitation and Online Protection command: [CEOP](#) is a law enforcement agency which aims to keep children and young people safe from sexual exploitation and abuse. Online sexual abuse can be reported on their website and a report made to one of its Child Protection Advisors

The [NSPCC](#) provides a helpline for professionals at 0808 800 5000 and help@nspcc.org.uk. The helpline provides expert advice and support for school and college staff and will be

especially useful for the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies)

Support from specialist sexual violence sector organisations such as [Rape Crisis](#) or [The Survivors Trust](#) The [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#) has developed guidance for schools about Sexual and sexist bullying.

The [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) provides an online safety helpline for professionals at 0344 381 4772 and helpline@saferinternet.org.uk. The helpline provides expert advice and support for school and college staff with regard to online safety issues

[Internet Watch Foundation](#): If the incident/report involves sexual images or videos that have been made and circulated online, the victim can be supported to get the images removed by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

[Childline/IWF Report Remove](#) is a free tool that allows children to report nude or sexual images and/or videos of themselves that they think might have been shared online

[UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes advice](#): Advice for education settings working with children and young people on responding to reports of children sharing non-consensual nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting and youth produced sexual imagery).

[Thinkuknow](#) from NCA-CEOP provides support for the children's workforce, parents and carers on staying safe online

[Lucy Faithful](#)

[Collins Foundation](#)

[NSPCC National Clinical and Assessment Service \(NCATS\)](#)

[Project deSHAME from Childnet](#) provides useful research, advice and resources regarding online sexual harassment