Essa Academy Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

Date of Issue: 1st June 2021
Next Review Date: 1st June 2022

Policy Cover Note

Title of the Policy	Essa Academy Peer on Peer Abuse Policy
Summary/Reason for bringing to Bord for Approval	Just adapted the format
Statutory Requirement	No – Some information under this policy is however
Decisions to be made / recommendation on options	
Name of the author	Stacey O'Connor
Date written	June 2021
Date for Review	June 2022
Policy/Procedure to be published on the trust website	Yes
Policy/procedure to be published on the Academy/Primary website	Yes
Amendments/Updates	Written from scratch

Peer on Peer Abuse (POPA)

Guidance and Model policy

Please Note: This policy template remains current and in line with the statutory guidance contained within Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 and update from KCSIE 2021. From the latest KCSIE guidance peer on peer abuse (POPA) is now statutory

1. Context and Definition

Peer abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others. All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. All staff should be aware of safeguarding issues from peer abuse including:

What is Peer on Peer Abuse?

All children are capable of abusing their peers. This can manifest itself in a whole spectrum of behaviours including:

- Bullying including cyberbullying
- Sexual violence and harassment
- Physical abuse
- Sexting
- Upskirting (now a criminal offence and has reporting requirements)
- Initiation /hazing type violence and rituals

All schools need to include peer on peer abuse in their schools' policies and procedures and all staff need to be aware of these and ensure they are part of their everyday practice. Children also need to know how to report concerns and know that they will be listened to and supported. This abuse can:

- Be motivated by race or perceived differences e.g. on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other differences
- Result in significant, long lasting and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to the victim; vulnerable students are at particular risk of harm

Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs eg:

- Significant disruption in their own lives
- Exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering abuse
- Educational under-achievement
- Involved in crime
- Or other safeguarding concerns around them or the household they are currently living in

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the first priority of any education setting, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical. School staff, alongside their Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy, have to make their own judgements about each specific case based on the information they have been presented with from investigating situations and should use this policy guidance to help.

2. Responsibility

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) states that -

'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer-on-peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer-on-peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with'. It also emphasises that the voice of the child must be heard 'Governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, all systems and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.'

Peer on Peer abuse is referenced in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer necessitate separate policy guidance. At Essa Academy we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to the impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

All staff have had CPD training on POPA so they are aware how to spot, challenge and deal with this effectively. Any incidents that are a cause for concern will be reported to a safeguarding officer who will use their professional judgment to deal with these based on training they have been given and the information presented to them. All students have been made aware of POPA understanding the seriousness of this topic and that sanctions will be put into place if this occurs.

3. Purpose of Policy
The purpose of this policy is to explore forms of peer-on-peer abuse. At Essa Academy we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Managing Allegations / Whistleblowing Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Online Safety Policy

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount.

4. Abuse and Harmful Behaviour
It is necessary to consider

- What abuse is and what it looks like
- How it can be managed
- What appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual
- What preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'a joke' or 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

- Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken seriously as abuse by staff and should be subject to the same safeguarding procedures.
- Children can abuse other children. This can include (but is not limited to): abuse within intimate partner relationships; bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals. (KCSIE 2020)
- Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as low level between young people.
- Staff should be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.
- Staff should be aware of the added vulnerability of children and young people who have been the victims of violent crime, including the risk that they may respond to this by abusing younger or weaker children.

The alleged perpetrator is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. Evidence suggests that such children may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, may have witnessed or been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, may have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and be in need of protection. Any long-term plan to reduce the risk posed by the alleged perpetrator must address their needs.

5. Types of Abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

5.1. Physical Abuse

This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidently before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

5.2. Sexual violence and Sexual Harassment (SVSH)

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead The DSL will follow the DfE Guidance: [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](www.gov.uk)

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. Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may include

- Inappropriate sexual language or role play
- Sexual touching
- Sexual assault/abuse

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- Making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- Not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment even in a verbal content – this will be challenged in a way that this behaviour is 'perceived' as SVSH
- Challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, walking past and touching someone's bottom or another body part, incidents such as flicking a bra strap and lifting up skirts will be taken very seriously.
- Upskirting: where someone takes a picture under a person's clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual.

5.3 Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include: An Imbalance of Power: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

5.4 Online Bullying

Online Bullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, email, Teams, chat rooms etc.) to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. Online bullying can take many forms:

- Abusive or threatening texts, emails or messages
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites

- Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- Stealing someone's online identity
- Spreading rumours online
- Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms or games
- Developing hate sites about another person
- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Encouraging a young person to self-harm
- Pressuring children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

Students who are not necessarily the perpetrator but associated with an incident will be sanctioned as well as we do not promote or accept this behaviour at Essa Academy. Also if a student is not involved in an incident but aware and fails to report this incident they may also face sanctions as they could have potentially prevented a situation from occurring and potentially prevented harm towards another child.

5.5 Sexting / Sharing any form of indecent imagery

The term 'sexting' relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content; these are created and sent electronically. This includes images that are not of that person eg. Googling an image or gaining an image from anywhere else and sending them on. They are often 'shared' via social networking sites and instant messaging services. Upskirting: typically 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. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim. See the link below for government guidance:

[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](www.gov.uk)

5.6 Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation, group or sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies. The ceremony welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

5.7. Prejudiced Behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – for example disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity.

5.8. Teenage Relationship Abuse

Teenage relationship abuse is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner. This abuse may be child sexual exploitation.

6. Recognising Peer Abuse

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:

- Chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved
- Difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability
- All alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident
- Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
- What was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery
- The effect on the victim
- Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret
- The child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred Recognising peer abuse an assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:
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- Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
- What was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery
- The effect on the victim
- Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret
- The child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred
- Whether this was a one-off incident, or longer in duration

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts to prevent the incident from escalating further. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and a child labelled. Staff will talk to the children in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

When dealing with POPA staff should consider the following:

- Always take complaints or POP reported seriously
- Gain a statement of facts from the pupil(s) – keeping students separated were possible
- Assess needs of victim and alleged perpetrator
- Consider referral to Police or Social Care
- Contribute to multi-agency assessments
- Consider any possible risk assessments or plans in place depending on the severity of the incident
- Complete repair and rebuild with students involved
- Record all incidents on CPOMS and all actions taken
- Ensure all parents / carers are contacted and aware unless this overrides a safeguarding
- Be clear, explicit, factual and avoid vague statements or euphemisms
- Record as soon as possible stating how the child engaged
- Follow the prompts on your safeguarding training
- Use the child's exact words in quotation marks.
- Note where and when the incident happened and whether anyone else was around.
- consider the intent - Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?
- Referrals – all students involved in POPA incidents should be referred for internal or external support so that there is a clear understanding of why this behaviour is not acceptable and the potential dangers / risks that can occur
- After care - It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure

that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). For this reason, reviews with the young people following the incident(s) may be needed to take place.

7. Covid19

There are no key changes to this policy during this time. Most of the providers we work alongside will still provide services and offer support for both staff and students virtually. We will be continuously keep up to date with key changes following Government guidelines.