



CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE

SANDON PRIMARY ACADEMY

Mrs R Beckett & Mrs L Kiddle (Co-Principals)

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Introduction

Sandon Primary Academy is committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment where all children are protected from harm. This policy reflects the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2025.

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse). Such abuse can occur both on and off site, and online and offline, including through the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital technologies.

Child-on-child abuse will never be tolerated or dismissed as banter, horseplay, or a normal part of growing up. All concerns will be taken seriously, responded to promptly, and managed in a manner that prioritises the safety, welfare and voice of the child.

The school takes a contextual safeguarding approach, recognising that children may be vulnerable to harm within peer groups, families, communities, and online environments.

Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Explore the forms of child on child abuse
- Provide a clear framework for preventing, identifying and responding to child-on-child abuse.
- Ensure staff understand their responsibilities and the procedures to follow.
- Promote a whole-school culture of respect, equality and safety.
- Ensure effective support for both children who have been harmed and those who have displayed harmful behaviour.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- RSHE Policy

Definition of Child-on-Child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse refers to any form of physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or financial abuse, coercive control, exploitation or harmful behaviour between children.

It can include, but is not limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying and prejudice-based bullying)
- Physical abuse
- Emotional Abuse including persistent, belittling, criticising and name calling
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB)
- Abuse within peer or intimate relationships
- Consensual and non-consensual self-generated intimate images or videos, including those created using AI (e.g. deepfakes)
- Initiation or hazing rituals
- Upskirting or other forms of voyeurism
- Serious violence, including threats or use of weapons

Abuse may be a single incident or a pattern of behaviour, and may escalate if not addressed early.

Key Principles

- Abuse is abuse and will always be taken seriously
- Every child has the right to feel safe
- Children who display harmful behaviour may also be vulnerable and in need of support
- Responses will be proportionate, child centred and trauma-informed
- The school will work in partnership with parents, carers and external agencies
- School will adopt a contextual safeguarding approach ensuring that responses to incidents take into account the full context of a child's experiences.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Children with SEND may face additional safeguarding challenges, including communication barriers and increased vulnerability to bullying or exploitation.

The school will:

- Avoid assumptions about behaviour being solely linked to disability
- Provide additional pastoral support where needed
- Ensure reasonable adjustments in investigations and support

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.

Physical abuse e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling etc.)

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, 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 accidentally before considering the action or sanction to be undertaken.

Sexually harmful behaviour e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault etc.)

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 well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour should be viewed on a continuum and may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another, sexual assault, rape or abuse.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment

Sexual violence refers to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

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.

Sexual harassment means 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. In referencing sexual harassment, it is 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 (KCSIE).

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.

Serious violence

All staff should be aware of indicators, which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

Bullying (inclusive of all types)

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully 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.

Cyber bullying

The school acknowledges the increasing risk of technology-based abuse. Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. It can include image manipulation or deepfakes, online coercion or blackmail, grooming and non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

AI generated Child Sexual abuse imagery

This refers to images, videos, or other visual material created using artificial intelligence that depict children in sexually abusive or exploitative ways, even where no real child was directly involved in producing the image.

Sexting (Youth Produced Imagery)

Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can occur in any relationship, to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference.

However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies.

The idea behind this practice is that it 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.

Up Skirting

The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019 which criminalise the act of 'up skirting'. The [Criminal Prosecution Service](#)

[\(CPS\)](#) defines 'up skirting' as a colloquial term referring to the action of placing equipment such as a camera or mobile phone beneath a person's clothing to take a voyeuristic photograph without their permission. This which 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; sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)

Misogynistic Behaviours

Misogynistic behaviours are actions, language, attitudes, or beliefs that express prejudice, hostility, or disrespect towards girls or women, based on their sex or gender. These behaviours reflect exposure to harmful adult attitudes, online content, or abuse. They cause emotional harm to others and interfere with healthy social development. Children should not be labelled as misogynistic. The focus must remain on the behaviour, itself.

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 – in particular, prejudices to do with 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 (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff

- Create a safe and respectful environment

- Foster a culture where children feel safe to speak up.
- Promote respectful relationships and challenge harmful behaviours
- Recognise and Respond:
 - Be trained to identify signs of child-on-child abuse (e.g., bullying, sexual harassment, physical violence)
 - Respond appropriately and sensitively to disclosures or concerns
- Follow Procedures:
 - Adhere to the school's safeguarding and child protection policies.
 - Record and report incidents accurately and promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Support Victims and Perpetrators:
 - Provide pastoral support to affected children.
 - Work with external agencies when necessary.
- Engage in Training:
 - Participate in regular safeguarding training, including updates on Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Oversee safeguarding responses and risk assessments
- Liaise with external agencies
- Ensure accurate recording and monitoring
- Provide guidance to staff
- Ensure training and policies are reviewed and updated

Trustees

- Monitor safeguarding effectiveness
- Ensure the school has a robust child-on-child abuse policy aligned with statutory guidance (e.g., KCSIE, Working Together to Safeguard Children)
- Monitor safeguarding performance annually and at trustee meetings and ensure concerns are addressed-appoint a lead trustee to safeguarding who is trained and competent in the role.
- Promote a safeguarding culture across the organisation.
- Ensure trustees, staff, and volunteers understand their responsibilities and are held accountable
- Ensure all trustees received safeguarding training and updates.
- Oversee responses to serious safeguarding concerns.

Responding to Incidents-see flow chart in appendix

When responding to child-on-child abuse, staff will:

- Be alert to the wellbeing of the children and signs of abuse
- Be mindful children may disclose or present with behaviours
- Deal with situation immediately and sensitively to gain accurate accounts so nothing is forgotten-You can make notes during conversation if needed but remain engaged with the child.
- Think about language used e.g. not use the word perpetrator or suggest blame; not use the word victim as not all children see themselves as a victim – use open questions
- Reassure the child in a calm manner and take them seriously
- Record the disclosure accurately using facts. Also record decisions and reasons

- Avoid judgemental or leading language. Only asking what happened and interrupting only for clarity.
- Do not promise confidentiality-ensure they understand the next steps and who it will be passed to. Staff can lawfully share safeguarding information without consent but ONLY TELL STAFF/AGENCIES THAT NEED TO KNOW.
- Involve the DSL immediately – especially in cases of sexual violence and harassment where 2 members of staff should be present
- Speak to all young children involved separately
- Be aware of the wider safeguarding concerns for the child and peer pressure.

Parents will be informed unless doing so places a child at further risk – this is best face to face. The DSL will begin a risk assessment and decide on the next course of action e.g. manage internally, early help/family help, referral to social care and / or police.

Points to consider:

What are the Victims wishes?

Victims should be given as much control as reasonably possible about decisions and how the investigation will proceed.

What is the age of the children involved?

How old are the young people involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? (In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following). Consider developmental stage and power imbalance)

Where did the incident or incidents take place?

Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?

What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?

Can each of the young people give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one young person different from another and why?

What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?

Do the young people know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the young person's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the young person have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If you are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, please seek advice from Children's Services Social Care.

Repetition

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

Outcomes

The outcome of the investigation will follow our local threshold guidance and DSL will be guided by [Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool](#) . Therefore, either a referral has been made to either the police/social care for a full investigation due to harm or risk of harm (tier 4). It may have resulted in Children's Services undertaking a further assessment (Tier 3) or for non violent harmful sexual behaviour as a school we may have identified additional services/intervention that are non-statutory and in which case completed an early help/family help assessment (Tier 2). It may be that on investigation, a decision has been made to handle the incident (s) internally as it is a one of incident of sexual harassment.

Whatever the outcome the response will be underpinned by the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable or tolerated.

In any of the above outcomes the school has a duty of care to manage the education needs of both children in which case a risk assessment plan may be needed irrespective of the outcome.

Next Steps:

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

For the young person who has been harmed (alleged victim)

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends. In which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required. Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of RSHE that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently. If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

Victims should be given the necessary support to remain in school but if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this alternative provision/ a school move should be considered and supported.

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour (alleged perpetrator)

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary.

Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an early help/family help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

The school should ensure that the perpetrator is not bullied after the event including online.

Where possible, the perpetrator should be given the necessary support to remain in school but if this is not possible alternative provision/ a school move should be considered and supported.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been

committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi- agency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

The school may also choose a sanction as a consequence such as suspension or internal suspension a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

Disciplinary Action

Our school will need to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including (a) to ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour; (b) to demonstrate to the child/children and others that child on child abuse can never be tolerated; and (c) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children. However, these considerations must be balanced against the child's/children's own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action our School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the child on child abuse and the causes of it.

Our school will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognising that even if this is ultimately deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this policy may still be required. Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the School.

Other Children (Witnesses)

Consideration should also be given to other children in the case who may have witnessed sexual violence. This is likely to be traumatic and support may be required.

Preventative Strategies for Schools and Settings

It is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of child on child abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way.

Firstly, and most importantly we recognise that child on child abuse can and will occur. Therefore, it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff.

Our school has a clear set of values with the school ethos being respect for self and respect for others. This is broken down into pieces of Sandon Rock which include concepts such as nice to be nice and don't walk by report it. These key values will be upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life. This will be underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support system.

Our school will have an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them through different channels (including mood trackers). This will be strengthened through our strong and positive spiraling RSHE and Computing curriculum that start in EYFS. They tackle such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another.

At Sandon Primary Academy, our RSHE and Computing Curriculum incorporates:

- Healthy and respectful relationships-online and offline
- What respectful behaviour looks like
- Consent-online and offline
- Gender roles, stereotyping and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- Harasment behaviour
- Bullying behaviour-online and offline
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment

See RSHE curriculum maps: <https://www.sandonprimaryacademy.com/rshe-curriculum-maps>

See Computing curriculum maps: [COMPUTING CURRICULUM MAPS | Sandon](#)

Staff are also familiar with NSPCC talking PANTS- talking to children about staying safe from sexual abuse and setting out simple rules.

It is important that signposting is available to young people in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. It is useful to have a resource board with support services on a wide range of issues so young people can seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of child on child abuse-

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGnOD3OIto/0KGGmYBKVA-JDx0ImHLR4g/view?utm_content=DAGnOD3OIto&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=uniqueLinks&utm_id=h71eefedb99

Review and Monitoring

The school will regularly review incidents, patterns and responses to ensure continuous improvement in safeguarding practice.

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if changes in legislation or guidance require it.

Appendix One: **Key Definitions**

1. Child-on-Child Abuse

Any form of physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse where the perpetrator and victim are both children. This includes behaviour that causes harm, distress, or exploitation.

2. Bullying

Repeated behaviour intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally. It can be verbal, physical, or online (cyberbullying), and includes name-calling, exclusion, or threats.

3. Physical Abuse

Deliberate physical harm such as hitting, kicking, biting, or pushing. It may also include forcing another child to engage in harmful physical acts.

4. Sexual Abuse

Any sexual activity where one child uses power, coercion, or manipulation over another. This includes inappropriate touching, sharing explicit images, or sexual harassment.

5. Sexual Harassment

Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that causes distress or discomfort. Examples include sexual comments, gestures, or sharing sexual content.

6. Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for a child's age or development and may be abusive or exploitative. It can be verbal, physical, or online.

7. Emotional Abuse

Behaviour that harms a child's emotional wellbeing, such as humiliation, threats, intimidation, persistent criticism, belittling and name calling or persistent exclusion.

8. Online Abuse

Abuse that occurs via digital platforms, including social media, messaging apps, or gaming. It can involve cyberbullying, grooming, or sharing harmful content.

9. Peer Pressure

Influence from other children that may lead a child to behave in ways they wouldn't normally, including engaging in risky or harmful behaviour.

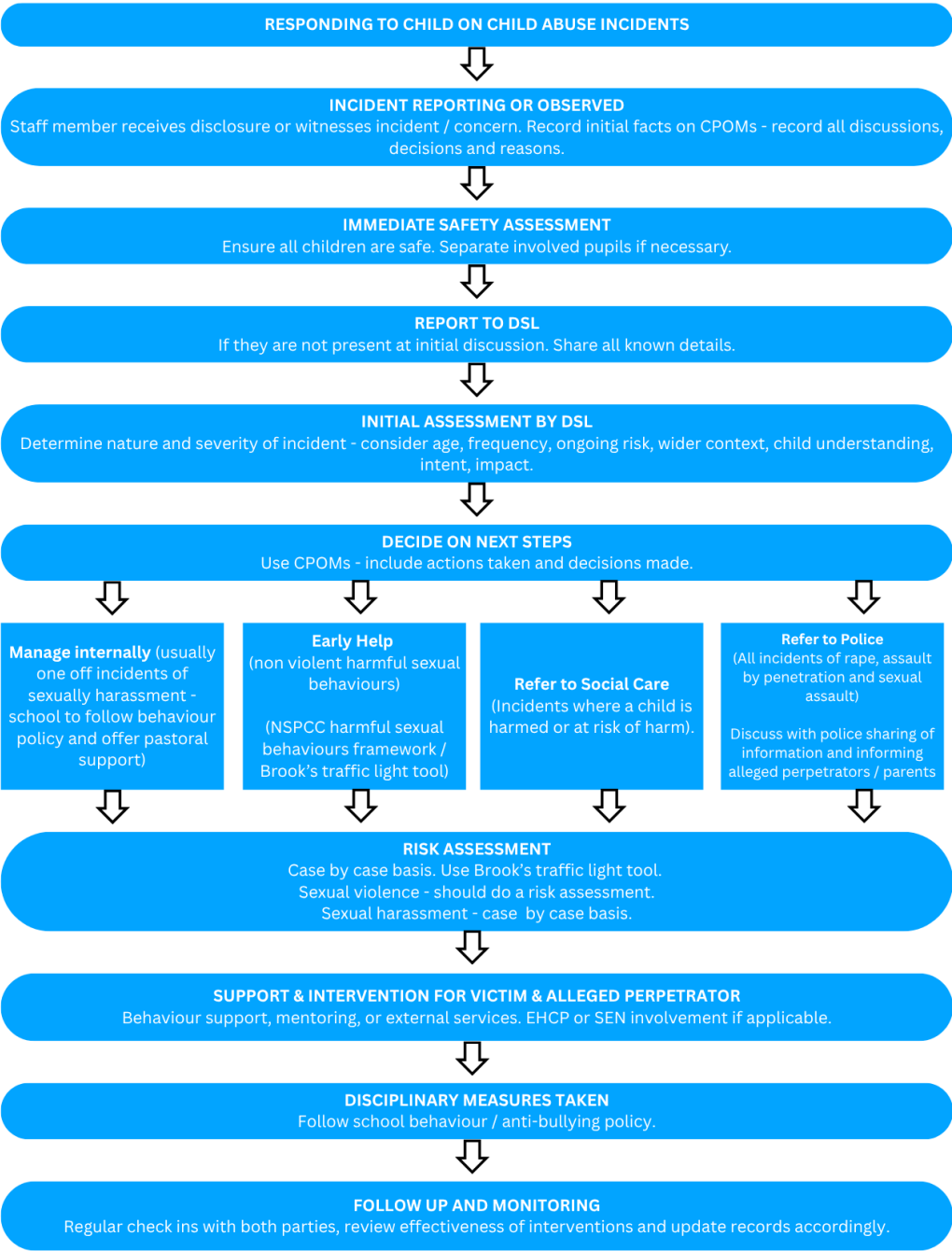
10. Consent

A clear, voluntary, and informed agreement to participate in an activity. Children may not fully understand or be able to give consent due to age or maturity.

11. Safeguarding Concern

Any situation where a child's safety or wellbeing is at risk. This includes suspected abuse, neglect, or exposure to harmful environments.

Appendix Two: **Responding to incidents**



Appendix Three: **Referral Contact details and helplines**

Referrals should be made to the Integrated Front Door Team via the portal:

<https://adultsocialcareportal.stoke.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/profsafe#h1>

If you are not successful in using the portal to log a referral you can use the contact numbers below:

During office hours: 01782 235100.

Out-of-hours emergencies: 01782 234234.

If you think that a crime has been committed contact the police 999.

NSPCC professional helpline 08088005000

Specialist support for Sexual Violence- Rape Crisis or the Survivors Trust

Guidance for school about responding to sexual bullying- Anti-bullying Alliance

Online safety helpline for professionals- The UK Safer Internet Centre 0344 381 4772

Internet Watch Foundation- support the removal of unsafe images