

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy: Guidance & Resource

(including Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children) 2026-27

I The College's Responsibilities - Introduction

Malvern College Board members, Senior Leadership Team, and all staff and volunteers at Malvern College are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the School. In particular, we:

- believe that in order to protect our pupils, we need to be aware a) of the level and nature of risk to which they are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context; and (b) take a whole-school approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse;
- regard the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure, and do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to child-on-child abuse in response to alleged incidents of it;
- recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to ensure that our pupils are safe; and
- encourage parents to contact and communicate with us if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers. We ask them to inform the College so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

This policy:

- sets out our strategy for preventing, identifying and appropriately managing child-on-child abuse;
- applies to all Malvern College Board members, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, will be reviewed annually, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which pupils are or may be exposed.
- is the College's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute child-on-child abuse;

Date of Policy: 01/09/2026

Next review: 01/09/2027

Owner: EB

Policy ratified by the Chair of the Malvern College Board and College Council on 07/11/25

- relates to, and should be read alongside, the College's Safeguarding (including Child Protection) Policy and any other relevant policies including, but not limited to, the Anti-Bullying policy, Policy on the Acceptable Use of ICT and Online Safety, Children Missing in Education policy, Promoting Good Behaviour and Discipline policy, and Exclusion for Misconduct policy.

Terminology:

- Although this policy uses the term 'victim' and/or 'perpetrator' to maintain consistency with the Safeguarding Policy, the College takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in allegations of or concerns about child-on-child abuse, including those who are alleged perpetrators, in addition to any sanctioning that may also be required. We also recognise that not all "victims" want to be described in this way and will be sensitive to the individual's wishes in this regard. We also recognise that many children who present with harmful behaviours towards others, in the context of child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimized by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers;
- The policy uses the terms 'child' and 'children', which is generally defined as a person aged under 18. We have nonetheless chosen not to restrict our approach to child-on-child abuse under this policy to children but instead to adopt a wider interpretation of our safeguarding responsibilities so that they apply to all pupils, regardless of age. Although the starting point is that the College's response to child-on-child abuse should be the same for all pupils, regardless of age, there may be some additional considerations in relation to a pupil aged 18 or over in terms of how local agencies and/or partners respond. This, for example, is likely to be different on the part of local authorities, given that their safeguarding duties are limited, in the case of children's social care services - save for a number of specific exceptions - to children under the age of 18. Similarly, the College's response to incidents involving the exchange of nudes and semi-nudes will need to differ depending on the age of the pupils involved. (See the College's Policy on the Acceptable Use of ICT and Online Safety.) There is also likely to be a more significant criminal justice response in relation to any pupil responsible for abuse who is aged 18 or over;
- This policy is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026) and is supported by the key principle of the Children's Act 1989, that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document is Working Together, 2026, highlighting a child-centred approach in which "children's wishes and feelings are sought, heard and responded to" (*Working Together 2026:11*).

- This policy should be read in conjunction with the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership's (WSCP) safeguarding policies and procedures, and any relevant practice guidance issued by it.

Purpose of Policy

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as child-on-child abuse.

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.

II Understanding child-on-child abuse

What is child-on-child abuse?

For these purposes, child-on-child abuse is defined as “physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships and wider peer associations”. (Firmin, C. 2017. Abuse Between Young People: A Contextual Account. Oxon: Routledge).

Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including but not limited to: serious bullying (including cyber-bullying, prejudice based and discriminatory bullying), hate incidents and hate crimes (including online), abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (including online), physical abuse (including online threats), racism, initiation/hazing type rituals and harmful sexual behavior (HSB). HSB may include sexual violence, sexual harassment, online sexual harassment, misogyny and misandry. (Misandry is defined as dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against boys and men.)

Examples of **online** child-on-child abuse could include child-on-child grooming, the distribution of youth involved or produced sexualised content (including images generated by AI), the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, and harassment.

Sexual violence/sexual harassment

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will follow the KCSiE 2026 guidance with consideration of:

- Managing internally

- Family Help
- Referrals to Children's Social Care
- Reporting to the police

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 may not be intended 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
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual violence and sexual harassment.

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 as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts, or upskirting. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

Abuse rarely takes place in isolation and often indicates wider safeguarding concerns. For example, a teenage girl may be in a sexually exploitative relationship with a teenage boy who is himself being physically abused by a family member or by older peers. Equally, sexual bullying in schools and other settings can result in the sexual exploitation of children by their peers. For 16 and 17 year olds who are in abusive relationships, what may appear to be a case of domestic violence may also involve sexual exploitation. Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives and spaces in which they spend their time. Any response to child-on-child abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's experiences. (See Contextual Safeguarding below.)

III Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Practice

The Malvern College Board members, senior leadership team and all staff are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse within and beyond the College. Staff are trained in awareness of the nature and level of risk to which our pupils are exposed and take a whole-school approach to preventing and responding to Child-on-Child abuse, including online abuse.

Staff understand the importance of information sharing, including with local agencies, in identifying and tackling abuse. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) clarifies that if there are legitimate safeguarding concerns about a child, then data protection law allows schools/colleges and professionals to record, share and retain sensitive personal data as necessary to support safeguarding policies (even if it is not possible to obtain consent).

The DSLs and deputy DSLs are aware of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and understand the local criteria for action and the local protocol for assessment with respect to child-on-child abuse.

Malvern College promotes a **contextual approach to safeguarding** and in its response to child-on-child abuse. This means: being aware of and seeking to understand the impact of wider social contexts on students; creating and embedding a safe culture in the College in which extra-familial harms (including child-on-child abuse) are identified and responded to; implementing procedures that address child-on-child abuse and harmful attitudes; promoting positive and healthy relationships and attitudes to difference; “hotspot” mapping to identify risky areas in the college; and training on potential bias and stereotyped assumptions.

The College’s whole school approach to safeguarding includes ensuring that governors, SLT, staff, pupils and parents:

- understand the importance of taking all forms of child-on-child abuse seriously and ensuring that child-on-child abuse is never dismissed as “horseplay”, banter or teasing;
- understand the importance of social media and online safety, including encouraging children to use it positively and responsibly and enabling them to identify, manage and report abusive online behavior.

IV Identifying and Assessing Behaviour

All staff should be vigilant in respect of the peer group dynamics in the College, and be alert to the well-being of the pupils and to signs of abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ.

Signs that a child may be a victim of child-on-child abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse (please see Appendix 1 of the College’s Safeguarding [including Child Protection] Policy for indicators of abuse) and can include:

1. failing to attend school, disengaging from classes or struggling to carry out school related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected;
2. physical injuries (perhaps unexplained);
3. experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional well-being.
4. becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much;
5. broader changes in behaviour including alcohol or substance misuse;
6. changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age (eg knowing about 'adult issues' inappropriate for their age);
7. abusive behaviour towards others, including HSB;
8. being afraid of particular places and/or situations and/or making excuses to avoid particular people;
9. Self-harming and suicidal thoughts, and eating disorders.

Abuse affects children very differently. The above list is by no means exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse. The behaviour that children present with will depend on their particular circumstances. Rather than checking behaviour against a list, staff are trained to be alert to behaviour that might cause concerns, to think about what the behaviour might signify, to encourage children to share with them any underlying reasons for their behaviour, and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents/carers so that the cause(s) of their behaviour can be investigated. **Staff should always share their concerns with the DSL or deputies.** Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for his/her age, staff should always consider whether an underlying concern is contributing to their behaviour (for example, whether the child is being harmed or abused by their peers) and, if so, what the concern is and how the child can be supported going forwards.

The power dynamic that can exist between children is also very important when identifying and responding to their behaviour: in all cases of child-on-child abuse, a power imbalance will exist within the relationship. This inequality will not necessarily be the result of an age gap between the perpetrator and the victim. It may, for example, be the result of their relative social or economic status. Equally, while children who abuse may have power over those who they are abusing, they may be simultaneously powerless to others.

Are some children particularly vulnerable to abusing or being abused by their peers?

Any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to the strength of peer influence during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their

peers. For example, an image of a child could be shared, following which they could become more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to how others now perceive them, regardless of any characteristics which may be inherent in them and/or their family. Peer group dynamics can also play an important role in determining a child's vulnerability to such abuse. For example, children who are more likely to follow others and/or who are socially isolated from their peers may be more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse. Children who are lesbian, gay or bisexual or questioning or exploring their sexuality or who are gender questioning may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their peers, as may children with SEND.

Harmful Sexual Behaviours

As the NSPCC explains “children's sexual behaviours exist on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to highly abnormal and abusive. Staff should recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour... As both problematic and abusive sexual behaviours are developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage, a useful umbrella term is **harmful sexual behaviours** or HSB.” This term has been adopted widely in the field and is used throughout the NSPCC’s guidance and resources.

The Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool (<https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/category/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool>) can be very helpful in identifying sexual behaviours by children. Staff should always use their professional judgment and discuss any concerns with the DSL. Where an (alleged) incident involves a report of sexually harmful behaviour, relevant staff should also consult the DfE's Advice “Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges” in Part 5 of KCSiE 2026. The NSPCC also provides advice on understanding sexualised behaviours in children and references the Hackett Continuum: [Understanding sexualised behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#).

Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes

It is a criminal offence to make, share or possess indecent images (including photos, videos and livestreams involving nudity or of a sexual nature) of persons under the age of 18. Making an indecent image can include downloading from the internet or from an email attachment, It is unlawful regardless of whether the subject of the image consents to the making, sharing or possessing of the image.

Where a person discloses private sexual images or videos without consent and with intent to cause the subject distress, this could constitute the criminal offence of “revenge porn”. Forwarding or re-posting private material can amount to a criminal offence in these circumstances.

The (non-statutory) “Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people”, produced by the UK Council for internet Safety (UKCIS,) outlines how to respond to such incidents, and distinguishes between **Aggravated incidents** (involving additional or abusive elements such as the involvement of an adult, intent to harm or reckless misuse) and **Experimental**

incidents (where there is no intent to harm and no adults involved, and which might include romantic incidents or sexual attention seeking).

Consideration of these factors will inform the Safeguarding and Online Safety Teams' response to the incident, which will always include an element of education and support.

Headstart Kernow offers helpful resources on digital resilience for young people: [Digital Resilience Resources Professionals : Headstart Kernow](#)

Other Behaviour

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, the College DSL, Deputy DSLs and pastoral staff need to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, whether it:

- is socially acceptable;
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time;
- is socially acceptable within the peer group;
- is problematic and concerning
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability;
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning;
- involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power;
- involves a misuse of power.

It should also be recognised that the same behaviour presented by different children may be understood at different points on a spectrum, depending on the particular context. For example, an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery may be inappropriate in one context, for example, when exchanged between two children in a consenting relationship, and abusive in another, for example, when it is (a) shared without the consent of the child in the image; (b) produced as a result of coercion; or (c) used to pressure the victim into engaging in other sexual behaviours.

Behaviour which is not abusive at first may potentially become abusive quickly or over time. Intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour which may be displayed by a child is vital, and could potentially prevent their behaviour from progressing on a continuum to become problematic, abusive and/or violent - and ultimately requiring (greater/more formal) engagement with specialist external and/or statutory agencies. For example, a physical fight between two children may not constitute child-on-child abuse where the fight is a one-off incident between children of the same age, but may be abusive where the child's/children's behaviour subsequently deteriorates into a pattern of bullying behaviour and requires a

safeguarding response from a multi-agency partnership – including a statutory assessment of whether this has led, for example, to a risk of significant harm to a child.

The importance of intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour does not just apply on an individual pupil basis but could also apply across the pupil body.

Behaviour generally considered inappropriate may in fact indicate emerging concerning behaviour to which the College will need to take a whole-school approach in order to prevent escalation. For example, where multiple boys are making inappropriate comments about girls, one-off sanctions are unlikely to be effective and wider actions may be considered, such as arranging for an external person to deliver a year group intervention exercise and/or revising the College's Life Skills programme.

It will also be important to consider the wider context in which the alleged behaviour is reported to have occurred, and which may trigger the need for a referral. For example, some behaviour that is considered inappropriate may be capable of being dealt with internally. However, if there are wider safeguarding concerns relating to the child/children in question, a referral to statutory agencies may be necessary. Where the behaviour which is the subject of the concern(s)/allegation(s) is considered or suspected by the DSL to constitute child-on-child abuse, the School will follow the procedures set out below.

V A whole school approach: How can the College raise awareness of and prevent child-on-child abuse?

School Environment

The College actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

- 1) Educating all College Board, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, pupils and parents about this issue. This includes:
 - - training all Council Board, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes (a) contextual safeguarding; (b) the identification and classification of specific behaviours; and (c) the importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how low level they may appear);
 - - educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse via Life Skills and the wider curriculum, for example, by addressing gender inequality in a statistics class, or by reviewing in an English class literature which addresses bullying and its effect on mental health. Pupils are told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse. They are informed about the College's approach to such issues, including its zero tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse.

- - engaging parents on this issue by:
 - (a) talking about it with parents, both in groups and one to one;
 - (b) asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the College address those risks;
2. Ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the DSL and Deputy DSLs and the College's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify pupils who may be in need of additional support. This is done through a weekly pastoral meeting at which all concerns about pupils (including child-on-child abuse issues) are discussed in a multi-disciplinary group (including the Deputy Head, Director of Pastoral Welfare, Head of Pupil Guidance, College counsellor, SENDCo and nurse manager, and through the CPOMS recording system;
 3. Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom);
 4. Working with Council Board members, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, pupils and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the College community;
 5. Responding to cases of child-on child abuse promptly and appropriately.

Multi-Agency Working

The College actively engages with its local partners in relation to child-on-child abuse, and works closely with, for example, Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership and children's social care, the police and/or other relevant agencies (in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Partnership's procedures) and other schools. We will actively refer concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse to children's social care or other relevant agencies, where necessary.

VI Handling Incidents: Responding to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse

General Principles

It is essential that all concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse are handled sensitively, proportionately, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on the school environment and, of course, on the children involved.

Any response will be co-ordinated by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and should:

- include a thorough investigation of the concerns/allegations and the wider context in which they may have occurred (as appropriate);
- treat all children involved as being at potential risk - while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves.

We will aim to ensure a safeguarding response for both the victim and the perpetrator, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter;

Any response could also take into account:

- that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved, and consider and address the effect of wider socio-cultural contexts - such as the child's/children's peer group (both within and outside the School); family; the School environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence;
- what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child's/children's needs and to mitigate risk; and the potential complexity of child-on-child abuse and of children's experiences and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent. While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited they are not consenting;
- the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/children and their parents and obtain consent to any referral before it is made. The School should manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so.

What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse from another child, or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing other children?

If a pupil is in immediate danger, or at risk of significant harm, a referral to children's social care (if the pupil is aged under 18) and/or the police should be made immediately. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made (see Sections 2, 4 and 5 of the Safeguarding [including Child Protection] policy).

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by another child or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay (in accordance with Part 1 of the Safeguarding [including Child Protection] policy) so that a course of action can be agreed.

If a child speaks to a member of staff about child-on-child abuse that they have witnessed or are a part of, the member of staff should listen to the child and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement. For further details please see the procedure set out in Part 1 of the Safeguarding (including Child Protection) policy.

How will the College respond to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse?

The DSL will discuss the concerns or allegations with the member of staff who has reported them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected.

DSLs should always use their professional judgement to determine whether it is appropriate for alleged behaviour to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any specialist support is also required. In borderline cases the DSL may wish to consult with children's social care and/or any other external agencies on a no-names basis to determine the most appropriate response. Where the DSL considers or suspects that the behaviour in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum (as opposed to inappropriate or problematic), and posing a threat to the safety of other children, the DSL may contact Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Partners (or as otherwise in accordance with the WSCP's procedures) immediately, and in any event within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of it. The DSL will discuss the allegations/concerns with the Community Social Worker (or as otherwise in accordance with the WSCP's procedures)] and agree on a course of action, which may include:

A - Manage internally with help from external specialists where appropriate and possible. The College will engage and seek advice from relevant specialists (either in the private and/or voluntary sector), as necessary. These might include psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors etc.

B – Undertake/contribute to an inter-agency family help assessment, with targeted early help services provided to address the assessed needs of a child/children and their family. These services may, for example, include CAMHS, a specialist harmful sexual behaviour team, and/or youth offending services.

C – Refer child/children to children's social care for a section 17 and/or 47 statutory assessment. The referral will be made to children's social care in the area where each child involved lives. As a matter of best practice, if an incident of child-on-child abuse requires referral to and action by children's social care and a strategy meeting is convened, then the College will hold every professional involved in the case accountable for their safeguarding response, and escalate concerns if necessary.

D – Report alleged criminal behaviour to the Police. Alleged criminal behaviour will ordinarily be reported to the Police. However, there are some circumstances where it may not be appropriate to report such behaviour to the Police, for example, where the exchange of youth produced sexual imagery does not involve any aggravating factors. All concerns/allegations will be assessed on a case by case basis, and in light of the wider context.

Individual risk and needs assessment:

Where there is an incident of child-on-child abuse, the College will carry out a risk and needs assessment in respect of each child affected by the abuse. These risk assessments will:

- i. assess and address the nature and level of risks that are posed and/or faced by the child;

- ii. engage, where appropriate, the child's parents and where appropriate, draw upon local services and agencies to ensure that the child's needs are met in the long-term. Consider whether any targeted interventions are needed to address the underlying attitudes or behaviour of any child; and
- iii. be reviewed at regular intervals in light of the child's on-going needs to ensure that real progress is being made which benefits the child.

If at any stage the child's needs escalate, the DSL should contact Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Partners and act in accordance with the local safeguarding and child protection procedures, to determine the appropriate course of action.

Disciplinary Action

The College will 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 well-being 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, the College 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 perpetrator as well as the victim; the risk that the perpetrator may pose to other children; and the severity of the child-on-child abuse and the causes of it.

The DSL will consider the appropriate response in discussion with the wider pastoral team, including the DSL team, the Director of Pastoral Welfare and the Head of Pupil Guidance. The College Counsellor, Housemasters/mistresses, tutors and the Deputy Head (Mr Faulkner) will be involved as appropriate.

The College will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed rustication or 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.

Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of child-on-child abuse, and the College will always consider the wider actions that may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards, as set out above and below.

While parents of those children involved will wish to be assured of resolution and reassured of the safety of their child, it is not appropriate to share personal details or circumstances of the victim(s) and perpetrator(s) with the other child's/children's parents/caregivers. Similarly, the College does not share with parents/caregivers details of any interventions or sanctions given other than with the parents/caregivers of the child to whom the interventions or sanctions are applied.

On-going proactive work to a whole-school approach

The College's response to concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse will form part of on-going proactive work by the College to embed best practice and take a contextual whole-school approach to such abuse. As such the College's response is part of its wider prevention work. This response may include the College asking questions about the context in which an incident of child-on-child abuse occurred in the school, the local community and the wider physical and online environment - such as:

1. what protective factors and influences exist within the College (such as positive peer influences, examples where child-on-child abuse has been challenged etc.) and how can the College bolster these;
2. how (if at all) did the College's physical environment contribute to the abuse, and how can the College address this going forwards (for example by improving the College's safety, security and supervision);
3. did wider gender norms, equality issues and/or societal attitudes contribute to the abuse;
4. what was the relationship between the abuse and the cultural norms between staff and pupils, and how can these be addressed going forwards;
5. does the abuse indicate a need for staff training on, for example, underlying attitudes, a particular issue or the handling of particular types of abuse;
6. how have similar cases been managed in the past and what effect has this had;
7. does the case or any identified trends highlight areas for development in the way in which the College works with children to raise their awareness of and/or prevent child-on-child abuse, including by way of the Life Skills curriculum and lessons that address underlying attitudes or behaviour such as gender and equalities work;
8. are there any lessons to be learnt about the way in which the College engages with parents to address child-on-child abuse issues;
9. does this case highlight a need to work with certain children to build their confidence and teach them how to identify and manage abusive behaviour; and
10. were there opportunities to intervene earlier or differently and/or to address common themes amongst the behaviour of other pupils in the College.

The College recognises the importance of reviewing all scenarios, decisions and actions, both to improve and inform future responses and to identify patterns of behaviour.