



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

### Document Control

Owner: **Mrs L Poulter**

Date of last review: **September 2023**

Date of Governor Approval: **11 October 2023**

Review date: **September 2024**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents and linked policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (2020)

### 1. Context and definition

We are committed to safeguarding children and young people from child-on-child abuse and bullying and we expect all members of our community to share this commitment. This policy sets out how we will deliver these responsibilities. This policy should be read in conjunction with the latest 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', which is statutory guidance to be read and followed by academies and colleges, and alongside 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (March 2018), a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- This policy is our overarching policy for any issue that could constitute child-on-child abuse. It relates to, and should be read alongside, the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and any other relevant policies.

- This policy sets out our strategy for improving prevention and identifying and appropriately managing peer on-peer abuse.

- The policy applies to all members of the school community, students, staff and volunteers.

- This policy recognises that abuse is abuse and should never be passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', or 'part of growing up'. It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education. We take a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved (in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required) in concerns or allegations



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

about child-on-child abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused and those who are alleged to have abused their peers.

It is essential that all our staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, that are actually abusive in nature. We maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff should always act in the best interests of the child.

Peer abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others.

1.1 We ensure that students are taught about child on child abuse and bullying, including online behaviours, through the explicitly taught Personal Development curriculum including RSHE and Core Studies, through the whole school delivery of 'Healthy Relationships' and active promotion of the fundamental British Values.

1.2 We will work with parents to build an understanding of the schools' responsibilities to ensure the welfare of all children, including the need for referrals to other agencies in some situations.

1.3 Child on child abuse is referenced in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The sensitive nature and specific issues involved with child on child necessitate separate policy guidance.

### 1.4 Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Bullying can be:

- a) Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures).
- b) Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
- c) Racist: racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.
- d) Sexual: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments. e) Homophobic: because of or focussing on the issue of sexuality.
- f) Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.
- g) Cyber: all areas of internet, such as email and internet chat room misuse, mobile threats by text messaging and calls, misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video facilities.

1.5 It is important to understand that bullying is not the odd occasion of falling out with friends, name calling, arguments or when the occasional 'joke' is played on someone. Children do sometimes fall out or say things because they are upset. When occasional problems of this kind arise, it is not classed as bullying. It is an important part of a child's development to learn how to deal with friendship breakdowns, the odd name calling or childish prank. We all have to learn how to deal with these situations and develop social skills to repair relationships.



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

### 1.6 Students - 'Bystanders' and 'Upstanders'

Bystanders - someone who witnesses bullying, either in person or online, is a bystander. Friends, students, peers, teachers, school staff, parents, coaches, and other youth-serving adults can be bystanders. People who are bullied often feel even more alone because there are witnesses who do nothing. When no one intervenes, the person being targeted may feel that bystanders do not care or they agree with what is happening. There are many reasons why a bystander may not interject, even if they believe that bullying is wrong. They may be afraid of retaliation or of becoming the target of bullying themselves. They might fear that getting involved could have negative social consequences.

Upstanders - An upstander is someone who sees what happens and intervenes, interrupts, or speaks up to stop the bullying.

There are many things that bystanders to bullying can do to become upstanders:

- Question the bullying behaviour e.g. changing the subject or questioning the behaviour can shift the focus.
- Inform an adult – teachers, school staff, family members.
- Reach out privately to check in with the person who was bullied to let them know you do not agree with it and that you care. It makes a difference.

## 2. Legal framework and guidance

2.1 This policy has due regard to statutory legislation and relevant guidance including, but not limited to:

- The Education Act (2002)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- What to do if you are worried about a child (2015)
- Information sharing: Advice for practitioners (2018)
- Guidance for safer working practice for adults who work with children and young people in education settings (2019)
- The Data Protection Act (2018)
- Serious Crime Act (2015)
- Teaching online safety in school (2018)
- UKCIS Education for a connected world (2018)
- Prevent Duty (2015)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

### 3. Scope of this Policy

3.1 This policy defines a 'child' as anyone under the age of 18 years or any learner of any age on roll at St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy.

3.2 This policy applies to all members of our staff, including all permanent, temporary and support staff, local governing body, volunteers, contractors and external service or activity providers. This policy must be read in conjunction with the safeguarding and child protection policy.

### 4. What is child-on-child abuse?

4.1 For these purposes, child-on-child abuse is any form of 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. We recognise that it is statistically more likely that girls will be victims of child-on-child abuse and that boys will be perpetrators and that child-on-child abuse can be perpetrated by the same gender, but that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

4.2 Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to):

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based bullying and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- Causing someone to engage in a sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and or videos (sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Up skirting
- Initiating/hazing type of violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

- Racist incidents, defined as 'Any incident that is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person'. Race can mean colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins, ethnic or national group.

4.3 Examples of online child-on-child abuse would include:

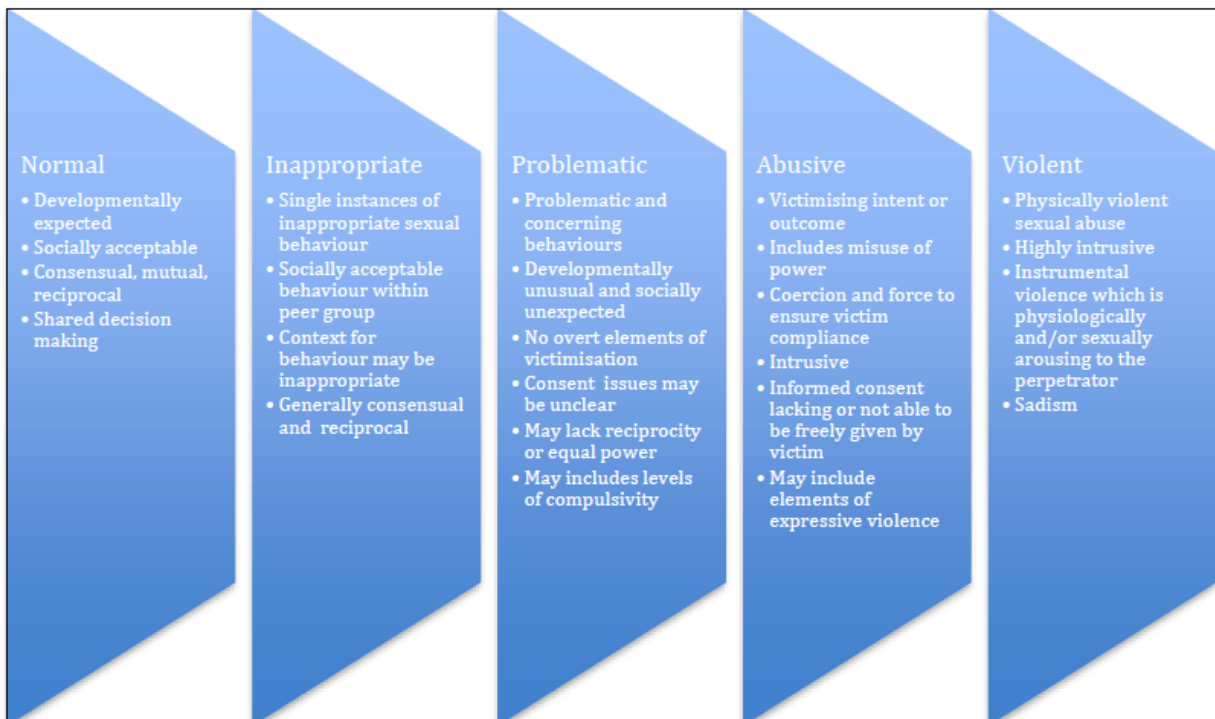
- Sexting
- Online abuse
- Child-on-child grooming
- The distribution of youth involved sexualised content, and harassment.

### 5. Understanding behaviour

5.1 We understand that all behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

5.2 Sexual Behaviour: Simon Hackett has proposed the following continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children, which may be helpful when seeking to understand a student's sexual behaviour and deciding how to respond to it. Hackett's continuum relates exclusively to sexual behaviours and is not exhaustive.

[nspcc.org.uk/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework](https://nspcc.org.uk/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework)





ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

5.3 When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on aspects of Hackett's continuum 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

### 6. Identification of child-on-child abuse

6.1 All colleagues should be alert to the well-being of students and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, colleagues should be mindful of the fact that the ways in which children will disclose or present with behaviours as a result of their experiences will differ.

6.2 We will regularly review behaviour incident logs which can help to identify any changes in behaviour and/or concerning patterns or trends at an early stage.

6.3 Any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse and colleagues 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.

6.4 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 questioning or exploring their sexuality may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their peers.



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

6.5 Child-on-child abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure will also be different.

### 7. Prevention

7.1 A whole-school approach is focused around prevention of bullying, promoting an ethos of respect based on shared values and character virtues. We develop an attitude of intolerance towards any form of abuse. These include:

- Effective school leadership that promotes belonging for all. We celebrate our differences and show respect for all members of our school community.
- Students understand and develop their role as active and responsible citizens and are equipped with the skills to challenge discrimination.
- Use of curriculum opportunities, in particular tutor periods and Core Studies lessons where issues of diversity and bullying are discussed. Children and young people learn to understand the impact of bullying, why people bully and where to report incidents involving them or their peers.
- Assemblies, Core Studies lessons and form time activities ensure children and young people clearly understand and can define bullying, know that all staff are trained to support them and that they have a platform to discuss anything affecting their health and well-being.
- Heads of Progress and Student Support Managers provide one to one and group sessions to promote resilience, confidence and self-esteem.
- Whole school assemblies
- Student surveys
- Poster campaigns
- Improved supervision in potential problem areas
- Peer mentoring and Buddy Schemes
- Assertiveness training
- Review of general and specific staff induction and continuing professional development to ensure staff training reflects the anti-bullying policy and practice of the school
- Child-on-child abuse is a scheduled item on the staff safeguarding training programme which clearly identifies risk factors, signs of abuse, advice, guidance and actions.

7.2 We actively seek to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by educating governors, our senior leadership team, staff, students, and parents about this issue. This includes



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

training governors, the senior leadership team, and staff on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify, and respond to it.

7.3 This includes:

- contextual safeguarding
- the identification and classification of specific behaviours, including digital behaviours
- the importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how 'low level' they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay, banter or teasing
- social media and online safety, including how to encourage children to use social media in a positive, responsible and safe way, and how to enable them to identify and manage abusive behaviour online
- educating students about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse, positive, responsible, and safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts about consent, via RSHE, Core Studies, Healthy Relationships days and the wider curriculum
- Students are frequently 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 regularly informed about our approach to such issues.

7.4 Engaging parents on these issues includes:

- Safeguarding documents are shared on the school website
- Parental concerns will be addressed by the pastoral team in the first instance
- Parents will be given the opportunity to discuss incidents and be kept fully informed of actions taken to resolve and eliminate issues affecting their children
- Supporting the on-going welfare of students by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise student mental health, to address underlying mental health needs.

### **8. Responses to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse:**

8.1 All concerns and allegations of child-on-child abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our academy environment.

8.2 Any response will:

1. Include a thorough investigation of the concern or allegation, and the wider context in which it may have occurred (as appropriate) – depending on the nature and seriousness of the alleged





ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

incident. (It may be appropriate for the police and/or children's social care to carry out this investigation).

A clear account of the incident will be recorded by a Student Support Manager, Head of Progress or DSL who will investigate the incident by interviewing all concerned and record outcomes.

2. Students who have allegedly experienced the abuse will be offered the opportunity to discuss their experience with their form tutor or another member of staff, be offered support to restore self-esteem and build confidence.
3. Treat all students involved as being at potential risk – while the student allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other students, they may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves.
4. Take into account that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the students involved and consider and address the effect of wider sociocultural contexts – such as the child's/children's peer group (both within and outside the school); family; the academy environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the student/students' online presence.
5. Students who have bullied will be helped by discussing what happened, discovering why the student became involved and establishing a sense of wrong-doing. Parents/carers will be informed (where appropriate to do so) to help change the attitude and behaviour of the student.
6. We will consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the student/students' needs and to mitigate risk, and – the potential complexity of child-on-child abuse and of student's experiences, and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent.
7. While students may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited, they are not consenting, – the views of the student/students are affected.
8. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL/appropriate member of the safeguarding team will discuss the proposed action with the student/students and their parents/carers and obtain consent to any referral before it is made where possible. Parents will be kept informed and are discouraged from taking matters into their own hands.
9. We will manage the student's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so. It is particularly important to take into account the wishes of any student who has allegedly been abused, and to give that student as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and how they will be supported.



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

10. We will ensure that a safeguarding response is in place for both the student who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the student who has allegedly been responsible for it (and the additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter).

### **9. What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s)?**

9.1 If a colleague thinks for whatever reason that a student may be at risk of or is experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a student may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss the matter with their HOP / DSL as soon as possible to explain their concern and register a note of concern on the internal referral system CPOMS.

9.2 Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to children's social care (and, if appropriate, the police) is made immediately.

9.3 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 in line with the Safeguarding and Child protection policy.

9.4 If a student 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 student and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement without promising confidentiality. For further details please see the procedures set out in the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.

### **10. How we will respond to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse?**

10.1 The HOP, SSM, DSL and/or DSL (Deputy) will discuss the concern or allegation with the member of staff who has reported it and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected.

10.2 Where any concern or allegation indicates that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL and or DSL (Deputy) will consider what urgent action can be taken in addition to the actions and referral duties set out in the Children and Safeguarding Policy.

10.3 The DSL and or DSL (Deputy) will always use their professional judgement to assess the nature and seriousness of the alleged behaviour and determine whether it is appropriate for the alleged behaviour to be to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required.

10.4 Where the DSL and or DSL (Deputy) considers or suspects that the alleged behaviour in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum or where the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question might otherwise require it, the DSL and or DSL (Deputy) should contact children's social care and/or the police immediately and, in any event, within 24 hours of the DSL and or DSL (Deputy) becoming aware of the alleged behaviour.



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

10.5 The DSL and or DSL (Deputy) will always refer to the police if there are aggravating factors:

- If the incident involves an adult (over 18).
- If there are concerns about the capacity to consent (SEND).
- Images show atypical sexual behaviour for their development stage or violent acts.
- Images show sex acts with a child under age 13.
- The disclosure places the pupil (or any child) at risk of imminent harm (self-harm, exploitation, harmful response from home etc).

### 11. Risk Assessments

11.1 We will carry out a risk assessment in respect of

- any student who is alleged to have behaved in a way that is considered to be abusive or violent
- any student who has reportedly been abused or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another student
- any student who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another student as deemed appropriate by the DSL and or DSL (Deputy)

11.2 Where it is alleged that a student has behaved in a way that is considered to be inappropriate or problematic (as opposed to abusive or violent), the DSL and or DSL (Deputy) will use their professional judgment – based on the particular concern or allegation raised, and the needs and circumstances of the individual children in question – to determine whether it would be appropriate to contact children’s social care, and to carry out a risk assessment.

11.3 Careful consideration will also be given to a range of factors including the context, severity of the alleged behaviour, impact of the alleged behaviour on others, risk to others, and whether there are any patterns of behaviour occurring.

11.4 Where other students have been identified as witnesses to alleged abuse or violence, consideration should also be given by the DSL and or DSL (Deputy) to whether there might be any risks to those children, and whether a risk assessment would be appropriate in relation to any risks presenting to them.

### 12. Information sharing, data protection and record keeping

12.1 When responding to a concerns or allegation of child-on-child abuse, we will

- always consider carefully, in consultation with Children’s Social Care, the police and other relevant agencies (where they are involved), how to share information about the concern or allegation with the student(s) affected, their parents, relevant staff, and other appropriate individuals



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

- record the information that is necessary for the academy and other relevant agencies (where they are involved) to respond to the concern or allegation and safeguard everyone involved
- keep a record of the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including relevant authorities, and ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and to only use it for the agreed legal purpose
- be mindful of and act in accordance with its safeguarding and data protection duties, including those set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children and the HM Government advice on Information Sharing

### 13. Disciplinary action

13.1 We will consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any student involved in child-on-child abuse. However, if there are police proceedings underway, or there could be, it is critical that we work in partnership with the police and Children's Social Care.

Where a matter is not of interest to the police or Children's Social Care, school leaders will still consider what is the most appropriate action to take to ensure positive behaviour management.

13.2 Disciplinary action could include but is not limited to:

- Official warning to cease offending
- Exclusion from certain areas of the school premises or certain activities
- Detentions
- Isolation
- Referral to senior staff and/or external agencies, e.g. Education Welfare Officer, Police Liaison Officer
- Internal fixed term exclusion
- External fixed term or permanent exclusion

13.3 Disciplinary action is appropriate to

- ensure that the student(s) involved take responsibility for and realise the seriousness of their behaviour
- demonstrate to students and others that child-on-child abuse can never be tolerated
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of other students

13.4 However, these considerations must be balanced against any police investigations, children's own potential unmet needs, and any action or intervention planned regarding safeguarding concerns.



ST BENET BISCOP  
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## Child on Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy

13.5 Before deciding on appropriate action we will always consider our duty to safeguard all students in our care from harm; the underlying reasons for a student's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the student; the risk that the student may pose to other students; and the severity of the peer on-peer abuse and the causes of it.

13.6 The school will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed moves or exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognizing that even if this is ultimately deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this policy may still be required. For example, action may still need to be taken by the academy in relation to other students who have been involved with and/or affected by child-on-child abuse.

13.7 Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of child-on-child abuse, and the school 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.

### **14. Development, Monitoring and Review**

14.1 We:

- Monitor, evaluate and review our child-on-child abuse on a regular basis
- Support staff to identify and tackle bullying appropriately through a comprehensive CPD programme
- Ensure that students are aware that all bullying concerns will be dealt with sensitively and effectively and seek feedback from students via the Student Council, Student Representatives and student questionnaires.
- Learn from anti-bullying good practice elsewhere and utilise the support of the LCT Network and relevant statutory and or voluntary organisations when appropriate.