Painsley Catholic College

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy

INTERNAL POLICY

Approved by:	Directors	**Date:** September 2026
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Adapted from the DFE guidance released in May 2018 "*Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges. Advice for governing bodies, proprietors, headteachers, principals, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding lead", "Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2026" and "Working together to safeguard children 2026"*

We recognise that Painsley Catholic College's legal responsibilities are that we have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and staff in our school against sexual violence and sexual harassment. As part of our duty we are required to have due regard to documents: "*Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges. Advice for governing bodies, proprietors, headteachers, principals, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding lead*", "*Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2026*" and "*Working together to safeguard children 2026*"

'Keeping children safe in education' says that all staff should be aware that children are capable of abusing their peers and that they should be clear about their relevant policies and procedures to address peer-on-peer abuse. This matches the Catholic Social Teachings of human dignity and rights and responsibilities. As children of God, we must treat each other with respect at all times.

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1. What is meant by sexual violence and sexual harassment between children?

We recognise sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or abusive towards another child, young person or adult.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any sex. They can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Painsley Catholic College recognises that children who are complainants of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. We recognise sexual violence and sexual harassment may occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. We will actively look to identify any issues and intervene early to better protect the students. It is important that all complainants are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. We will aim to support students to access their education and get the correct specialist support, working in partnership with the police and children's services where appropriate to do so.

At Painsley Catholic College, we are clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and are not an inevitable part of growing up. We will always challenge behaviour or language that seeks to normalise sexual harassment or violence in school such as; grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bra's and lifting up skirts. Sanctions will be applied in accordance with our values and expectations policy.

At Painsley Catholic College, we recognise that reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are extremely complex to manage at times but realise it is essential that complainants are protected, offered appropriate support and every effort is made to ensure all the correct procedures are followed and the students feel supported throughout the process.

2. What is the definition of sexual violence?

For the purpose of this policy, when referring to sexual violence we are referring 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.

3. What is consent?

Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g.to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs.

It is important to note that:

- A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity;
- The age of consent is 16;
- Sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

We will, when made aware of sexual activity involving a child under the age of 13 refer this to the police and children's social care. We will use the statutory guidance and our professional curiosity to establish whether risk factors are present before making a decision on whether to engage external agencies if the children are aged 13 to 17.

4. <u>What is sexual harassment?</u>

For the purpose of this policy, when referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child on child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- Sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;

- Sexual "jokes" or taunting;

- Physical behaviour, such as: deliberating brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature; and

- Online sexual harassment, which might include: non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos and sharing sexual images and videos (both often referred to as sexting); sexualised online bullying and inappropriate sexual comments on social media; exploitation; coercion and threats. Online sexual harassment may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

It is important that Painsley Catholic College considers sexual violence and sexual harassment as set out in the terms above to ensure we create an atmosphere that if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

It is also important to note when considering harmful sexual behaviour, ages and the stages of development of the children are critical factors to consider. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or smaller in stature

5. How do we respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are likely to be complex and require difficult professional decisions to be made, often quickly and under pressure. Guidance from the DFE is clear that it does not attempt to provide (nor would it be possible to provide) detailed advice on what we should do in any or every particular case; it provides effective safeguarding practice and principles for us to consider in our decision making process. Ultimately, all decisions in school will be made on a case-by-case basis. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputies (DDSLs) will take the leading role and will use their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as children's social care and the police as required.

Some situations are statutorily clear:

- A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- The age of consent is 16
- Sexual intercourse without consent is rape
- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are defined in law; and
- Creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of under-18s is illegal (often referred to as sexting). This includes children making and sharing sexual images and videos of themselves.

Painsley's basic safeguarding principle is: if a child has been harmed, is in immediate danger, or is at risk of harm a referral will be made to children's social care. We will inform parents that we are making a referral to children's social care; however, this too is on a case by case basis. It may be that we have assessed the situation and believe that a referral is needed without parental knowledge in order to safeguard students involved.

Once a referral is processed, children's social care will consider if early help, section 17 and/or 47 statutory assessments are appropriate. We will support in an early help assessment, child protection enquiry, strategy discussion and child protection conference.

Painsley Catholic College will work closely with the police as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes. Where there is a report of a rape, assault by penetration or sexual

assault, the starting point is it should be passed to the police who will advise and log according to their own guidelines.

Other sources of support are outlined at the end of the policy.

6. Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment online

We are aware that incidents of sexual violence and sexual harassment that occur online (either in isolation or in connection to offline incidents) can introduce a number of complex factors. These include the potential for the incident to take place across a number of social media platforms and services and for things to move from platform to platform online. It also includes the potential for the impact of the incident to extend further than our local community (e.g. for images or content to be shared around neighbouring schools/colleges) and for a complainant (or alleged perpetrator) to become marginalised and excluded by both online and offline communities. There is also the strong potential for repeat victimisation in the future if abusive content continues to exist somewhere online.

We will act in accordance with our Online safety and Anti-bullying policy if we are made aware that our students are using online platforms which in any way jeopardises the safety of other members of our school community.

7. The immediate response to a report - managing the disclosure

We will always do our utmost to ensure that complainants are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. In some cases, the complainant may not make a direct report or disclosure. For example, a friend may make a report or a member of our school may overhear a conversation that suggests a child has been harmed. As with all safeguarding concerns, our staff are trained to follow the school protocol regarding the recognised signs of safety and will speak to one of the safeguarding team. This discussion will be handled sensitively and with the support of children's social care if required. The complainant will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor will the complainant ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

It is important to note that there may be reports where the alleged sexual violence or sexual harassment involves pupils or students from the same school, but is alleged to have taken place away from the school premises, or online. There may also be reports where the children concerned attend two or more different schools. The safeguarding principles and duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils and students, remain the same.

Our safeguarding practice includes:

- Not promising confidentiality at this initial stage as it is very likely a concern will have to be shared further (for example with the designated safeguarding lead or deputy safeguarding lead or children's social care) to discuss next steps.

- Only sharing the report with those people who are necessary in order to progress it.

- Listening carefully to the child, being non-judgmental, being clear about boundaries and how the disclosure will be progressed, not asking leading questions and only prompting the child where necessary with open questions – Use TED, tell me, explain to me, describe to me, where, when, what etc;

- When making a record of the disclosure we wait until the end of the disclosure and immediately write up a thorough summary and log it on My Concern (our child protection recording system) as well as speaking to the DSL or DDSL face to face. This allows us to devote our full attention to the student and to listen to what they are saying. It may be appropriate to make notes during the disclosure (especially if a second member of staff is present, this would be good practice to ensure two members of staff are present, ideally a member of the safeguarding team). However, if making notes during any disclosures we are conscious of the need to remain engaged with the student;

- Make sure to only record the facts as the student presents them. The notes should not reflect the personal opinion of the note taker. We are aware that notes of such disclosures could become part of a statutory assessment by children's social care and/or part of a criminal investigation. Notes should accurately note the date and time of the start and end of any meeting and identify all persons present, even where presence is only for part of the meeting.

- If possible, aim to manage disclosures with two members of staff present, (preferably one of them being the DSL). However, this might not always be possible; and

- Inform the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) as soon as practically possible if the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) are not involved in the initial disclosure.

8. Considering confidentiality and anonymity

a) Confidentiality

Staff taking a disclosure will never promise confidentiality as it is very likely that it will be in the best interests of the complainant to seek advice and guidance from others in order to provide support and engage appropriate agencies. We do not consider ourselves to be experts in this area and it is vital that appropriate support is flagged up to the students and parents or organised by us for them.

We recognise the complainant may ask us not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment. There are no easy or definitive answers when a complainant makes this request. If the complainant does not give consent to share information, staff may still lawfully share it, if it can be justified to be in the public interest, for example, to protect children from harm and to promote the welfare of children. The DSL/DDSL will consider the following:

• Parents or carers will be informed (unless this would put the complainant at greater risk);

• The basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger or has been harmed a referral will be made to children's social care; and

• Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes. The starting point is that reports will be passed to the police often via a call to children's social care.

Ultimately, the DSL will have to balance the complainant's wishes against their duty to protect the complainant and other children within the school setting.

If we do decide to make a referral to children's social care and/or a report to the police against the complainant's wishes, this will be handled extremely carefully, the reasons will in most cases be explained to the complainant and appropriate specialist support offered.

b) Anonymity

Where we are aware that an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system, we will be mindful of anonymity, witness support and the criminal process in general so that we can offer support and act appropriately. In addition we will endeavour to do all we can to reasonably protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment. We will carefully consider which staff in our school should know about the report and any support that will be in place for the children involved.
We are, however, mindful that if an investigation in ongoing it is not our place to offer guidance and support to the children and their families beyond what could reasonably be expected in regards to their education.

We will also act in accordance with our Online safety and Anti-bullying policies when considering the potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours and exposing complainants' identities.

9. Risk Assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the DSL will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs assessment will consider:

• The complainant;

• The alleged perpetrator; and

• The other children (and, if appropriate, staff) at school.

The risk assessments will be recorded (written or electronic) and will be kept under regular review, reflecting any changes in circumstances. At all times, we will be actively considering the risks posed to all our pupils and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe during school hours. The DSL will continue to liaise with children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. Any such professional assessments will be used to inform our approach to supporting and protecting the pupils and updating our own risk assessment.

10. Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment

We will carefully consider any report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment.

Important considerations will include:

- The wishes of the complainant in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Complainants should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered;

- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including: might a crime have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;

- The ages of the students involved;

- The developmental stages of the students involved;

- Any power imbalance between the students (e.g. is the alleged perpetrator significantly older);

- If the complainant has a disability or learning difficulty;

- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse (where this may be known)

- Are there ongoing risks; and

- Other related issues and wider context.

Where incidents and/or behaviours are associated with factors outside of school or occur between children outside school, we will consider contextual safeguarding. This simply means assessments of children in such cases should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare.

11. Options to manage the report

We will consider every report on a case-by-case basis. When to inform the alleged perpetrator will be a decision that will be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to children's social care and/or the police, then, as a general rule, we will speak to the Principal/the CEO and the relevant agency and discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator will be informed of the allegations.

There are four likely scenarios we will need to consider when managing any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment:

a) Manage internally

- In some cases of sexual harassment, for example one-off incidents, we may take the view that the students concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising our values and expectations and Anti-bullying policies and by providing pastoral support.

b) Early help

- In line with a) above, we may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.

c) Referrals to children's social care

- Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger a likely course of action will be that we make a referral to local children's social care.

- At the referral to children's social care stage, we will inform parents or carers unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk). Any such decision will be made with the support of children's social care.

- If a referral is made, children's social care will then make enquiries to determine whether any of the children involved are in need of protection or other services.

- Where statutory assessments are appropriate, we will (especially DSLs) work alongside, and cooperate with, the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the complainant and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.

- We do not need to wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a children's social care investigation before protecting the complainant and other children in the school. It will be important for us to work closely with children's social care (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions we take do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. The risk assessment will help inform all of our decisions.

- In some cases, children's social care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. We (led by the DSL) may refer again if we believe the child

remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm. If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, we will consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support and pastoral support.

- Whatever the response, it is vital that all stakeholders at Painsley Catholic College believe that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

- All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions will be recorded as part of the child's safeguarding file (normally on MyConcern).

d) Reporting to the police

- Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is it will be passed on to the police following discussions with children's social care.
- At this stage, we will inform parents or carers unless there are compelling reasons not to, for example, if informing a parent or carer is likely to put a child at additional risk. In circumstances where parents or carers have not been informed, it will be especially important that we support the child in any decision they take. This should be with the support of children's social care.

- Where a report has been made to the police, we will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. We will also discuss the best way to protect the complainant and their anonymity.

12. Considering bail conditions

- In the absence of bail conditions, when there is a criminal investigation, early engagement and joined up working between school, children's social care and the police will be critical to support the complainant, alleged perpetrator and other children involved (especially potentially witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought in order to help us manage our safeguarding responsibilities.
- The term 'Released Under Investigation' or 'RUI' will replace those previously on bail for offences in circumstances that do not warrant the application of bail to either re-attend on a particular date or to include conditions preventing activity or in some cases ensuring compliance with an administrative process.
- Where bail is deemed proportionate and necessary, as above, we will work with children's social care and the police to manage any implications and safeguard our children. An important consideration will be to ensure that the complainant can continue in their normal routine, including continuing to receive a suitable education.

13. Managing any delays in the criminal process

There may be delays in any case that is being progressed through the criminal justice system. We will not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a police investigation before protecting the complainant, alleged perpetrator and other children in the school. The risk assessment will help inform any decision.

- Considering any disciplinary action against the alleged perpetrator whilst an investigation is ongoing is discussed below in the alleged perpetrator section.
- Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator, it will be important for the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) to work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions we take do not jeopardise the police investigation.
- We will ask the police if we have questions about the investigation. The police will be asked to help and support us as much as they can (within the constraints of any legal restrictions).

14. The end of the criminal process

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, we will update the risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all the children if it has not already, and consider any suitable action in light of our other policies. If the perpetrator remains in school we will be very clear as to our expectations regarding the perpetrator now they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions we think are reasonable and proportionate with regard to the perpetrator's timetable and movement around the school. Our risk assessment will continue to be revisited and revised where necessary.

Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other students in the school. We will do our utmost to ensure that the complainant and alleged perpetrator remain protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online). Where necessary we will invoke sanctions from our values and expectations, Online safety and Anti-bullying policies.

Where cases are classified as "no further action" (NFA'd) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, we will continue to offer support to the complainant and the alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. We will discuss any decisions with the complainant in this light and continue to offer support in order for them to access their education. The alleged perpetrator is also likely to require ongoing support for what will have likely been a difficult experience.

15. Ongoing response - Safeguarding and supporting the complainant

We will:

- Consider the age and the developmental stage of the complainant, the nature of the allegations and the potential risk of further abuse.

- Make certain the needs and wishes of the complainant are paramount (along with protecting the student) in any response. It is important they feel in as much control of the process as is reasonably possible. Wherever possible, the complainant, if they wish, should be able to continue in their normal routine. Overall, the priority should be to make the complainant's daily experience as normal as possible, so that school is a safe space for them.

- Make certain the complainant is not made to feel they are the problem for making a report or made to feel ashamed for making a report.

- Consider the proportionality of the response. Support should be tailored on a case-by-case basis. The support required regarding a one-off incident of sexualised name-calling is likely to be vastly different from that for a report of rape.

- Look to provide a physical space for complainants to withdraw and avoid any action that would have the effect of isolating the complainant, in particular from supportive peer groups

- It may be necessary for us to maintain arrangements to protect and support the complainant for a long time. We will do our best to continue to support this need and will continue to work with children's social care and other agencies as required.

- Aim to do all we can to reasonably protect the complainant from bullying and harassment as a result of any report they have made in accordance with our Online Safety and Anti-bullying Policies.

- Give all the necessary support for the complainant to remain in school, but if the trauma results in the complainant being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another school or college should be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This will only be at the request of the complainant (and following discussion with their parents or carers).

16. Ongoing Considerations: Complainant and alleged perpetrator sharing classes

Once we have decided what the next steps will be in terms of progressing the report, we will consider again the question of the complainant and alleged perpetrator sharing classes and sharing space at school. This will inevitably involve complex and difficult professional decisions, including considering our duty to safeguard children and our duty to educate them. It is important each report is considered on a case-by-case basis and risk assessments are updated as appropriate.

Where there is a criminal investigation into a rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, the alleged perpetrator should be removed from any classes they share with the complainant. We will also consider how best to keep the complainant and alleged perpetrator a reasonable

distance apart on school premises and on transport to and from school where appropriate. This is in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgement on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator; close liaison with the police is essential.

DfE guidance states that where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, the school should take suitable action, if they have not already done so. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the complainant (and potentially other pupils).

Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, the school should, if it has not already, consider any suitable sanctions in light of their behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion. Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school, the principle would be to continue keeping the complainant and perpetrator in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school premises and transport. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the complainant will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.

Reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment will, in some cases, not lead to a report to the police (for a variety of reasons). In some cases, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault or sexual harassment are reported to the police and the case is not progressed or are reported to the police and ultimately result in a not guilty verdict. None of this means the offence did not happen or that the complainant lied. The process will have affected both complainant and alleged perpetrator. Appropriate support should be provided to both as required and consideration given to sharing classes and potential contact as required on a case-by-case basis. In all cases, schools should record and be able to justify their decision making.

All of the above should be considered with the needs and wishes of the complainant at the heart of the process (supported by parents and carers as required). Any arrangements should be kept under review.

17. Safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator

We need to consider the following:

- Safeguarding the complainant (and the wider student body) and providing the alleged perpetrator with an education, safeguarding support as appropriate and implementing any disciplinary sanctions.

- The age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator and nature of the allegations. Any child will likely experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.

- The proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Advice will be taken, as appropriate, from children's social care, specialist sexual violence services and the police.

- If it is the case that the alleged perpetrator is moved to another educational institution (for any reason), then we will ensure that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs.

18. Discipline and the alleged perpetrator

With regards to the alleged perpetrator, we will act in accordance with our values and expectations policy and discipline pupils whose conduct falls below the standard which could be reasonably expected of them. Disciplinary action can be taken whilst other investigations by the police and/or children's social care are ongoing. The fact that another body is investigating or has investigated an incident does not in itself prevent a school from coming to its own conclusion, on the balance of probabilities, about what happened, and imposing a penalty accordingly.

We will carefully consider all cases on a case by-case basis. We will consider if, by taking any action, they would prejudice an investigation and/or any subsequent prosecution. Careful liaison with the police and/or children's social care should help us as a school make a determination. It will also be important to consider whether there are circumstances that make it unreasonable or irrational for us to reach our own view about what happened while an independent investigation is considering the same facts.

19. Discipline and support

Taking disciplinary action and still providing appropriate support are not mutually exclusive actions. They can, and should, occur at the same time if necessary.

On the one hand there is preventative or forward-looking action to safeguard the complainant and/or the perpetrator, especially where there are concerns that the perpetrator themselves may have been a complainant of abuse; and, on the other, there is disciplinary action to punish a perpetrator for their past conduct.

We will be clear during the process as to which category any action they are taking falls or whether it is really both, and should ensure that the action complies with the law relating to each relevant category.

20. Working with parents and carers

We will, in most instances, engage with both the complainant's and the alleged perpetrator's parents or carers when there has been a report of sexual or sexual harassment.

The exception to this rule is if there is a reason to believe informing a parent or carer will put a child at additional risk. We will carefully consider what information they provide to the respective parents or carers about the other child involved and when they do so. In some cases, children's social care and/or the police will have a very clear view and it will be important for us to work with relevant agencies to ensure a consistent approach is taken to information sharing.

It should be the case that we will meet the complainant's parents or carers with the complainant present to discuss what arrangements are being put in place to safeguard the complainant and

understand their wishes in terms of support they may need and how the report will be progressed.

It is also likely we will meet with the alleged perpetrator's parents or carers to discuss any arrangements that are being put into place that impact the alleged perpetrator, such as, for example, moving them out of classes with the complainant and what this means for their education. The reason behind any decisions will be explained. Support for the alleged perpetrator will be discussed. Consideration to the attendance of other agencies will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

We understand that parents and carers may well struggle to cope with a report that their child has been the complainant of an assault or is alleged to have assaulted another child. Details of organisations that support parents are provided on the school website and at the end of the policy.

21. Safeguarding other children

Consideration should be given to supporting children who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape and assault by penetration. Witnessing such an event is likely to be traumatic and support may be required. We will signpost agencies and support services available where need.

Following any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, it is likely that some children will take "sides". We will do all we can to ensure both the complainant and alleged perpetrator, and any witnesses, are not being bullied or harassed.

Social media is very likely to play a central role in the fall out from any incident or alleged incident. There is the potential for contact between complainant and alleged perpetrator and a very high likelihood that friends from either side could well harass the complainant or alleged perpetrator online. Any evidence we have of students using social media inappropriately will be sanctioned according to our values and expectations, Online safety and Anti-bullying policies.

22. What we do in school to educate our children against harmful sexual behaviours

We have a planned programme of evidence-based content delivered through the curriculum and assemblies. Our programme is developed to be age and stage of development appropriate, and tackles such issues as:

• Healthy and respectful relationships, including information on consent;

• What respectful behaviour looks like;

• Gender roles, stereotyping, equality;

• Body confidence and self-esteem;

• Prejudiced behaviour;

• That sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong; and

• Addressing cultures of sexual harassment.

We also invite organisations and speakers in to deliver information sessions to our students and parents. We have information regarding sexual assault and violence on the safeguarding pages of our website which we update regularly according to lessons learned. We ensure DSLs have appropriate and regularly updated training and all staff are trained to recognise signs of safety and harmful sexual behaviours.

23. Additional support:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

- Working together to safeguard children 2026

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

- The NSPCC

help@nspcc.org.uk

- Specialist Sexual Violence sector organisations

https://rapecrisis.org.uk/

- The Anti-Bullying Alliance

https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/sexual-and-sexist-bullying

- The UK safer internet centre

helpline@saferinternet.org.uk

- Internet Watch Foundation

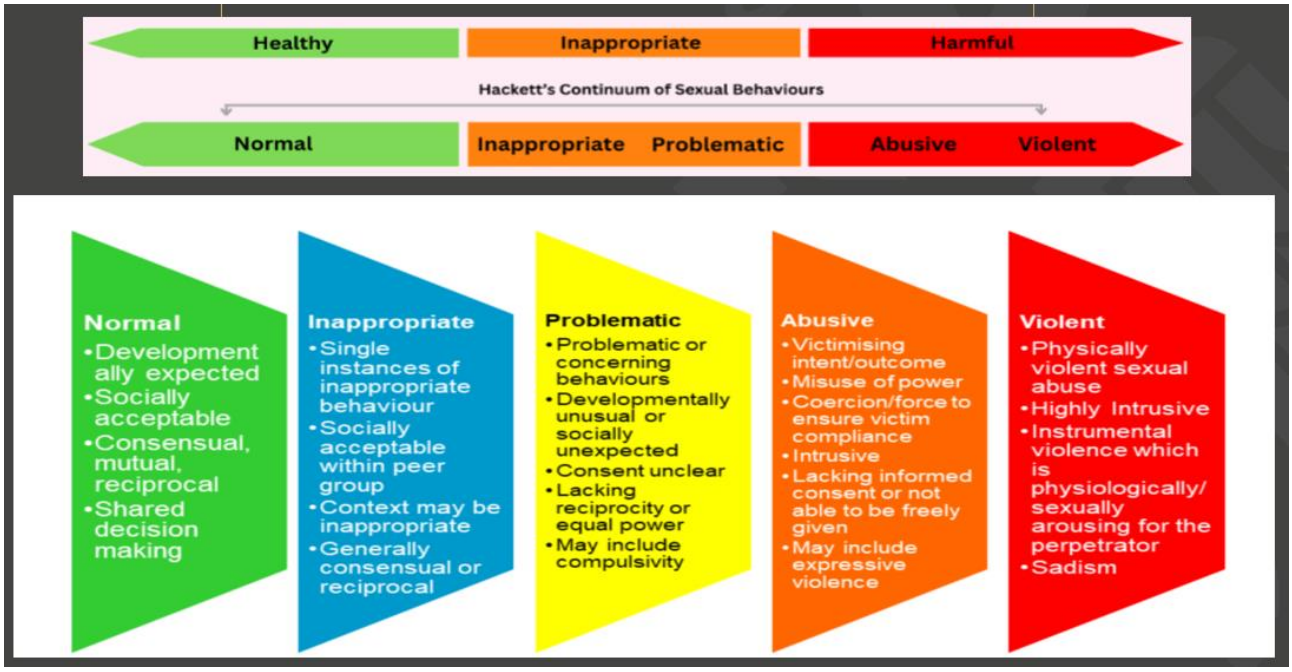
https://www.iwf.org.uk/

- UKCCIS Sexting Advice

https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis

- Think u Know

https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

- Safeguarding Policy,
- Online Safety Policy,
- Anti-Bullying Policy,
- Values and Expectations Policy.

- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- SEND Policy