Child on Child abuse (KCSIE 2026) Summary

What Child-on-Child Abuse Is

Child-on-child abuse refers to any situation where a child is harmed, exploited or abused by another child. It includes **physical**, **sexual**, **emotional**, and **online-facilitated** harm. It can be:

- **single incidents or patterns of behaviour**
- **offline or online**
- **carried out by individuals or groups**
- **disguised as friendship, banter or "jokes"**

All child-on-child abuse is safeguarding. All concerns must be reported to the DSL.

Forms of Child-on-Child Abuse

KCSIE 2026 identifies the following:

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) Includes: • sexualised touching • sexual comments or pressure • sexual activity without consent • coercion, manipulation or threats • sexualised behaviour inappropriate for age or development HSB may overlap with CSE or online sexual abuse	**Sexual Violence & Sexual Harassment** Includes: • rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault • unwanted sexual comments or jokes • sexualised name-calling • sharing sexual rumours • unwanted touching
Image-Based Abuse Includes: • taking, possessing or sharing sexual images of under-18s • threatening to share images (real or AI-generated) • sexual extortion ("sextortion") • upskirting (a criminal offence)	**Physical Abuse** Includes hitting, kicking, biting, choking, or any physical harm
Bullying (including prejudice-based) Includes verbal, physical, relational, or online bullying.	**Online-Facilitated Abuse** Includes: • coercion via social media or gaming • sexualised dares or challenges • pressure for images or personal details • deepfake or AI-generated sexual imagery • threats to create or share sexual content
Criminal Exploitation Includes: • forcing or encouraging children to commit crimes • gang involvement • debt bondage • using children to recruit other children	**Patterning** • Patterning = filming child-on-child assaults and sharing the footage online to humiliate, shame or intimidate a pupil. • It is treated as child-on-child abuse and a safeguarding incident, not "banter", "fighting" or "misbehaviour". • Patterning often involves groups, peer pressure and bystanders — staff must consider all pupils involved, not just the filmer or the victim.
Misogyny Misogyny is recognised as an early form of sexual harassment and sexual violence Any use of misogynistic language, attitudes or behaviours will be treated as safeguarding concerns	

Key Vulnerability Factors

Children may be more at risk if they experience:

- SEND or communication difficulties
- previous trauma, abuse or neglect
- domestic abuse
- low self-esteem
- mental health difficulties
- being a young carer
- gang association
- social isolation
- uncertainty around sexual orientation
- homelessness or residential care

SEND pupils, especially those at Aspire School, are particularly vulnerable due to communication barriers.

AI generated images

AI-generated intimate images (including deepfakes, nudification apps and digitally altered sexual content) must be treated in exactly the same way as real nudes or semi-nudes. This includes wholly AI-generated.

KCSIE 2026 clarifies that AI-generated CSAM is **illegal**, even if no real child was involved. This must be treated as a urgent safeguarding risk and reported immediately to a DSL.

Indicators of Child-on-Child Abuse

Staff should be alert to:

- sudden changes in behaviour or mood
- withdrawal, secrecy or fear of peers
- distress linked to online activity
- unexplained injuries
- sexualised behaviour inappropriate for age
- avoidance of certain pupils or spaces
- panic about being photographed or filmed
- deleting accounts or refusing devices
- unexplained gifts, money or possessions
- rumours, comments or disclosures from peers

Staff Actions — What You Must Do

If you are worried about child-on-child abuse:

1. **Inform the DSL immediately** (in person wherever possible).
2. **Record concerns on CPOMS**, including the child's exact words if they disclose.
3. **Do not investigate** or question the child beyond what is necessary.
4. **Reassure the child** and ensure they feel heard and safe.
5. **Maintain confidentiality** — only share with DSL/deputy.

The DSL will assess risk, consider links to CSE/CCE/HSB, liaise with external agencies, implement safety planning, and monitor patterns through caseload reviews.

Bourne Alliance
Multi Academy Trust

Policy document for: Child on child abuse

Updated: Autumn 2026

This policy forms part of the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and reflects the latest KCSIE guidance. Keeping children safe in education 2026 (comes into force from 1 September 2026)
All staff must read part 1 as a minimum.

What is child on child abuse?

All members of staff at BA MAT schools recognise that children can abuse other children through bullying or exploitation and or harmed by peers who are the same or similar age. This is known as child-on-child abuse and can happen both inside and outside of school and online.

All schools recognise that child-on-child abuse can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Bullying, including cyberbullying, racist, religious, sexual, homophobic, or disability bullying
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children including CSE
- Verbal abuse
- Violence and physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- Domestic violence
- Online abuse including cyber bullying, online hate content/hate speech, radicalisation, harmful online challenges, "patterning" (shared video content of a child being attacked by others which is intended to cause further harm and humiliation). This is not an exhaustive list
- Gang activity
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery). Sharing images is illegal and abusive even when it is consensual
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- Upskirting (which is a criminal offence), which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. This can be directed towards all genders
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals to initiate a child into a group which could also be online. These are activities which involve harassment, abuse or humiliation.

Any allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with in line with the **child protection** policy and KCSIE (in particular, part two and five).

AI risks and AI generated intimate images

AI-generated intimate images (including deepfakes, nudification apps and digitally altered sexual content) must be treated in exactly the same way as real nudes or semi-nudes. This includes wholly AI-generated sexual images of children, which are illegal regardless of whether a real child was involved. These images may be used to control, humiliate, coerce or blackmail (sextortion) including in child on child contexts. Staff must not minimise harm because an image is 'fake' or digitally created. All incidents must be reported immediately to the DSL.

KCSIE 2026 explicitly states that:

- deepfakes

- nudification apps
- digitally altered sexual images
- wholly AI-generated sexual images must be treated **exactly the same** as real nudes/semi-nudes.

In any such incident, safeguarding procedures are followed including referral to the Front Door by the DSLs.

AI-generated CSAM (child sexual abuse material)

KCSIE 2026 clarifies that AI-generated CSAM is **illegal**, even if no real child was involved. This must be treated as a urgent safeguarding risk and reported immediately to a DSL.

Patterning

'Patterning', is a term used to describe behaviour where children film child-on-child violent assaults and share the footage on social media platforms. The practice of 'patterning' is specifically carried out with the deliberate intention of embarrassing victims even further by making the video footage across the web. This is an increasing issue.

Patterning is treated as **child-on-child abuse**

'Patterning' is an extension of bullying by individual bullies and/or gangs seeking power and attention who, by using social media, are able to publicly ridicule victims beyond the confines of the playground to national and international audiences. Patterning is seen as 'sport', an amusement for the perpetrators without any consideration of the impact sharing such footage has on their victims.

Lots of approaches to tackling this issue have already been tried, with success. Approaches that have strong evidence of success include:

- Mentoring (where a mentor works closely with an individual to give advice and help to identify and solve problems) can prevent future behavioural problems if it is done well.
- Bullying prevention Anti-bullying programmes (for example, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme and KiVa10) can reduce reported victimisation.
- Improving social skills Improving social skills can strengthen school attachment and raise achievement, and can also reduce anti-social / aggressive behaviour and prevent future violence. Involving parents
- Programmes that work with both parents and young people have been shown to be successful in reducing behavioural problems and preventing violence.
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) Well-administered CBT (for example, anger-coping skills training, problem-solving skills training) has been shown to be effective in addressing aggression and conduct disorders in pre-adolescents.

Misogyny

Misogyny is recognised as an early indicator of sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour.

Misogynistic language, attitudes or behaviours — including sexist comments, objectification, gender-based hostility or derogatory remarks about girls or women — will be treated as safeguarding concerns and may meet the threshold for child-on-child abuse.

Staff must challenge misogynistic behaviour immediately and report all incidents to the DSL.

What should staff do?

Staff must not view, save, forward or investigate AI generated sexual content. Secure the device (where relevant) and report it immediately to a DSL.

KCSIE 2026 requires DSLs to:

- follow the nudes/semi-nudes guidance
- consider Early Help
- refer to police/CEOP
- treat AI-generated images as sexual abuse
- ensure filtering & monitoring systems address AI risks

See the **AI and the risks** and **Deepfakes** policies

Schools approaches

All our schools adopt a zero-tolerance approach to child-on-child abuse. We believe that abuse is abuse and it will never be tolerated or dismissed as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys"; this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, can create an unsafe environment for children and a culture that normalises abuse, which can prevent children from coming forward to report it.

All staff have a role to play in challenging inappropriate behaviours between children. Staff recognise that some child-on-child abuse issues may be affected by gender, age, ability and culture of those involved. For example, for gender-based abuse, girls are more likely to be victims and boys more likely to be perpetrators.

BA MAT schools recognise that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse is still likely to be taking place, and it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such, it is important that staff speak to the DSL (or deputy) about any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse.

All staff have a role to play in challenging inappropriate behaviours between children. Staff recognise that some child-on-child abuse issues may be disproportionally affected

- By gender (girls are more likely to become victims)
- Children with SEND (are 3 times more likely to become victims)
- Children are or perceived by their peers to be LGBTQ+

Measures in place to prevent occurrences of child on child abuse

Mainstream schools

In order to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse, each school will:

- Challenge direct/indirect comments, behaviours and actions
- Educate our pupils using the RSE Curriculum, Discovery and Computing curricula to enable them to stay safe, be aware of their roles and responsibilities to themselves and each other.
- Enhance our curriculum with local and national initiatives to educate our pupils i.e. Clever Never Goes, NSPCC Speak Out! Stay Safe! Pantasaurus
- Ensure that Talk Time boxes are located in all communities, allowing opportunities for pupils to request 1:1 time with trained counsellors
- Provide each community with a Community Lead who has a responsibility for pastoral support
- Provide child friendly information posters located around the school
- Lead assemblies linked to school values and British Values, including our work on No Outsiders to increase a sense of belonging and acceptance

Aspire school

In order to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse, the school will:

- Educate our pupils using the RSE Curriculum, Discovery and Computing curricula to enable them to stay safe, be aware of their roles and responsibilities to themselves and each other.
- Enhance our curriculum with local and national initiatives to educate our pupils i.e. Clever Never Goes, NSPCC Speak Out! Stay Safe! Pantasaurus
- Systematically analyse behavioural incident data and emerging trends, ensuring findings are shared with safeguarding and behaviour leaders to identify patterns, address underlying antecedents, and implement timely, proportionate interventions that reduce risk and improve pupil outcomes.
- Maintain a robust and effective incident recording system that enables all pupils affected by an incident to be accurately identified, recorded and monitored, ensuring appropriate support, safeguarding oversight and follow-up intervention, including in cases of child-on-child abuse.
- Provide regular safeguarding, behaviour and Team Teach training to ensure staff can identify, prevent and respond appropriately to child-on-child abuse. This training will include methods of supporting revisiting of incidents through appropriate methods for the child's needs. This may include verbal, visual, puppets, or object reference support.
- Ensure staff understand the links between trauma, SEND, communication difficulties and vulnerability whilst maintaining high safeguarding expectations for all pupils.
- Utilise individual risk assessments, wellbeing plans and Behaviour Support Plans to identify vulnerabilities, minimise risk and provide proactive support for pupils who may be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse.
- Ensure the views, wishes and experiences of pupils are gathered using communication approaches appropriate to their developmental stage, communication profile and SEND needs.
- Designated safeguarding and behaviour leads will regularly review pupils identified as vulnerable through safeguarding records, behavioural trends, risk assessments and additional vulnerability indicators, ensuring concerns are identified early and appropriate support, monitoring and intervention plans are implemented.

Heightened risks for pupils with SEND

See the children at **greater risk of harm** policy in the safeguarding library which sets out factors including SEND which put some children at greater risk of harm

Reporting and acting on reports

Each school wants children to feel able to confidently report abuse and know their concerns will be treated seriously. All allegations of child-on-child abuse will be reported to the DSL and will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with in line with associated policies, including **child protection, anti-bullying, cyber bullying and behaviour/Wellbeing Around the Child**. Pupils who experience abuse will be offered appropriate support, regardless of where the abuse takes place.

Concerns about learners' behaviour, including child on child abuse taking place offsite will be responded to as part of a partnership approach with pupils and parents/carers. Offsite behaviour concerns will be recorded and responded to in line with existing appropriate policies, for example **anti-bullying, acceptable use, online safety, racist, derogatory & discrimination, behaviour and child protection** policies. *Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives headteachers a statutory power to discipline pupils for poor behaviour outside of the school premises e.g. when children are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff, to such extent as is reasonable.*

How incidents are initially managed and ongoing actions

Staff must:

- Reassure the child that they are being taken seriously and will be supported
- Do not promise confidentiality – explain that information must be shared to keep them safe
- Report the concern to a DSL/deputy immediately

- Log the concern and the child's words on CPOMS under the relevant category/ies
- Maintain a calm, nonjudgemental approach and avoid leading questions or expressing opinions

We understand that a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims. If we receive a report of Child on Child abuse, we will follow the principles set out in Part 5 of KCSIE and those outlined in the safeguarding and child protection policy. The Trust will listen to and work with the pupil, parents/carers and any multi-agency partner needed to ensure the safety and security of that child. This may be conducted via virtual meetings where necessary. All concerns will be recorded on CPOMS and appropriate referrals made.

Whilst protection and support for the victim is in place, it is essential to remember that the perpetrator may also be at risk of harm. Our schools ensure that the perpetrator is also treated as a victim and an assessment of their risks and needs will be undertaken which will also involve working with the perpetrator to help them understand their behaviour and the effect it has on others.

DSL actions

When a report of child-on-child abuse is received, the DSL will follow the principles set out in **Part 5 of KCSIE 2026** and the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. This includes:

Conducting a Written Risk Assessment

A structured risk assessment will be completed for **every** incident of sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, or sexual violence. This will consider:

- The victim's safety and wellbeing
- The alleged perpetrator's needs, vulnerabilities, and level of risk
- The wider cohort, including peer group impact
- Timetable, proximity, shared spaces, and supervision
- Online contact, social media circulation, rumours, and digital risks
- Immediate protective measures required
- A schedule for reviewing and updating the risk assessment

The DSL team will use Trust guidance, including addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf, to support decision-making.

Safety Planning

A Safety Plan will be created for:

- The victim
- The alleged perpetrator
- Any other pupils affected

This may include supervision arrangements, timetable changes, safe spaces, staff oversight, and online safety measures.

Multi-Agency Decision-Making

Where necessary, the DSL will contact:

- Police
- Children's Social Care via the Front Door
- Other relevant agencies (Youth Justice, Early Help, VRU)

All decisions and actions will be recorded on CPOMS.

Managing Confidentiality, Rumours and Social Media

The DSL will take steps to:

- Manage confidentiality appropriately

- Address rumours or online circulation
- Prevent victim-blaming
- Support pupils affected by peer pressure or social media exposure

Support measures

All our schools take the report of Child on Child abuse very seriously and will listen carefully to all those involved while avoiding victim blaming. Each case will be treated sensitively and the support given to those involved may vary but could include:

- Pastoral Support such as check ins with a trusted school adult
- Working with parents
- Wellbeing support – such as Play Therapy
- School Counselling
- Blue Sky Counselling
- Direct education with those involved and/or reviewing, adapting and develop our educational approaches
- Class based/school-based education through PSHE/circle time and assemblies
- Working with other agencies
- Support from our Trauma Teacher
- Writing a Risk Assessment and/or a wellbeing plan

All children at Aspire have a risk assessment in place, so this may then be accompanied by a Behaviour Support Plan.

Recording, Information Sharing and Transfer

- All incidents will be recorded on CPOMS with a clear chronology.
- Information will be shared with agencies in line with statutory guidance.
- Where a pupil moves school, safeguarding records will be transferred promptly to ensure continuity of support.

Training and Staff Awareness

All staff receive training at induction and through regular updates on:

- Child-on-child abuse
- Sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Online abuse, AI risks, deepfakes and nudification apps
- Challenging misogyny, sexist language and harmful norms
- Responding to disclosures and recording accurately