

Child on Child Policy 2026

Including online abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual violence

Our safeguarding commitment

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. We want every pupil to feel safe, heard and respected. We do not dismiss harmful behaviour as banter, a joke or part of growing up.

Policy owner	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Policy review date	September 2026
Next review	September 2027, or earlier following statutory or local guidance changes
Reviewed by	Mr Jamie Broughton
Approved by governing body	_____
Approval date	_____

This policy is written for pupils, parents and carers, staff, volunteers and governors in a mainstream secondary school in England.



Key safeguarding contacts

Role or route	Details
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mr Jamie Broughton
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads	Mrs Claire Moss; Mrs Gemma Lloyd Davies; Mrs Laura Proust; Mr Andrew Ward; Mr Adam Kirk; Mr Edward Rollit
How staff report concerns	Record immediately on CPOMS. Lunchtime supervisors and invigilators use the school's red safeguarding referral if they cannot access CPOMS. Call 999 if a child is at immediate risk of serious harm. Staff will not delay emergency action while completing an internal record.
How pupils report concerns	Tell any trusted adult, a form tutor, Head of House or a member of the Safeguarding team. In an emergency, go to the nearest adult.
How parents and carers report concerns	Contact the school and ask to speak to the DSL or a deputy DSL. If a child is in immediate danger, call 999 without delay.



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1. Context and definition

Child-on-child abuse is harmful behaviour by one child or a group of children towards another child. It can happen inside or outside school, online or offline, and between children of any age or sex. It may be a single serious incident or a pattern of behaviour.

All staff must keep an attitude of “it could happen here”. We challenge inappropriate behaviour early. We never pass it off as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “boys being boys” or an inevitable part of growing up.

The term “child” means anyone under 18. Throughout this policy, “child who has been harmed” and “child alleged to have caused harm” are used where possible. These terms do not pre-judge what has happened.

2. Purpose and scope

This policy explains how the school prevents, identifies, records and responds to child-on-child abuse. It aims to protect every child, support those affected, set clear expectations for adults and pupils, and ensure decisions are child-centred, fair and proportionate.

It applies to all pupils, staff, governors, volunteers, visitors and activities linked to the school, including journeys to and from school, school transport, trips, clubs, work experience and online activity that affects pupils in school.

3. Policy principles

The welfare and best interests of the child come first where children’s wishes and feelings will be heard and taken seriously. A child can experience and cause harm at the same time: both may need safeguarding support. We act promptly, record decisions and share information lawfully and only when needed. We consider age, development, SEND, communication needs, trauma, power differences and the wider context. We do not promise confidentiality as information is shared with people who need it to keep children safe.

Equality and dignity are central. Harm linked to prejudice, discrimination, sexism or misogyny will be challenged and our response may include safeguarding action, support, education and a proportionate behaviour consequence.

4. Legal and guidance framework

This policy should be read alongside the school’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and current statutory guidance. It reflects the school’s duties under safeguarding, education, equality, data protection and human rights law.

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, including Part One and Part Five
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Education Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- Sexual Offences Act 2003

5. Links with other school policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy, including online bullying
- Behaviour Policy
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use policies



- Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy
- Managing Allegations and Whistleblowing Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection and Records Management policies

6. What child-on-child abuse may look like

The list below is not exhaustive. A concern should be reported even if it does not fit a label.

Type	Plain-language description
Bullying	Repeated or potentially repeated physical, verbal, emotional or online behaviour involving a real or perceived power imbalance.
Physical abuse	Hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm.
Sexual harassment	Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, including comments, jokes, rumours, unwanted messages, sexualised name-calling, displaying sexual material or unwanted touching.
Sexual violence	Sexual offences or other sexual acts carried out without consent. These concerns require an immediate safeguarding response.
Harmful sexual behaviour	Sexual behaviour that is developmentally inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent. Behaviour is considered on a continuum and in context.
Image-based abuse	Taking, requesting, creating, sharing or threatening to share nude or sexualised images without consent, including AI-generated or altered images, deepfakes and nudification.
Online abuse	Harassment, threats, coercion, impersonation, exclusion, hateful content, doxxing, image sharing or encouraging self-harm through digital services.
Abuse in intimate relationships	Controlling, coercive, threatening, physical, emotional or sexual behaviour between current or former young partners.



Type	Plain-language description
Initiation or hazing	Rituals used to admit someone to a group that involve humiliation, intimidation, abuse or violence.
Prejudice-related abuse	Harm connected to a person's actual or perceived identity, background or protected characteristic.
Misogyny and sexism	Language, attitudes or behaviour that demean girls or women, or reinforce entitlement, hostility or control. Early signs will be challenged.
Financial exploitation	Pressure, threats or manipulation to obtain money, accounts, goods, bank details or involvement in fraud or criminal activity.

7. Where and how abuse can happen

Abuse can occur anywhere; in classrooms, corridors, toilets, changing rooms, social areas or secluded spaces, during breaks, before or after school, on transport, trips, clubs or work experience, at home or in the community when the impact continues into school, through phones, games, social media, messaging, livestreams, AI tools or other online services, within friendships, peer groups or intimate relationships or between two children or involving a group

8. Recognising indicators and assessing context

A child may not describe what happened as abuse. They may be worried about blame, punishment, peer pressure, embarrassment, retaliation or losing friendships. Staff should notice changes, listen carefully and report concerns rather than investigate them, as part of their Safeguarding training.

8.1 Factors the Safeguarding team will consider

The following factors will be considered when there is a Child on Child Abuse concern;

- the child's account, wishes, feelings and immediate safety
- the age and developmental stage of all children involved
- any difference in power, status, popularity, size, ability or authority
- SEND, communication needs, mental health, trauma and previous experiences
- the nature, frequency, intent and impact of the behaviour
- whether there was coercion, threats, bribery, secrecy, grooming or exploitation
- whether behaviour involved inappropriate knowledge or use of technology
- location, witnesses, peer-group influence and risk of gossip or retaliation
- whether the behaviour may amount to a crime
- risk to other pupils, siblings, staff or the wider community

8.2 Consent

Consent means choosing freely and having the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Consent can be withdrawn at any time. Silence, lack of resistance, previous contact or a relationship does not by itself mean consent. The DSL will obtain specialist advice where needed.



9. What pupils should do;

The school will educate and advise students on the following through appropriate assemblies and PSHE / RSE curriculum;

- Tell a trusted adult as soon as you can. You may bring a friend if that helps.
- If speaking feels difficult, write it down or use the school's reporting route.
- Do not forward images, messages or videos. Keep the device and show it to a trusted adult.
- Do not confront the other child or try to investigate.
- Tell an adult if you are worried about a friend, even if they ask you to keep it secret.
- Call 999 in an emergency.

10. What parents and carers should do

- Listen calmly and take what your child says seriously.
- Avoid asking repeated or leading questions. Use prompts such as "Tell me what happened" and "What happened next?".
- Do not contact or confront another child or family. This can increase risk and affect enquiries.
- Save messages or usernames, but do not copy or forward nude or sexualised images.
- Call 999 if there is immediate danger.
- Contact the DSL or a deputy DSL promptly.
- Work with the school on safety planning, support and review.

11. Expected staff action at Droitwich Spa High School.

Staff must act immediately

Make the child safe, listen, reassure, record and report. Do not investigate, mediate or promise confidentiality before the DSL has assessed the concern.

11.1 Receive and respond

Staff will be advised and trained on the following;

- To stay calm and take the concern seriously.
- To listen without judgement. Do not show shock or disbelief.
- To use open prompts only when clarification is essential.
- To explain that they must share the information with the safeguarding team.
- To not ask the child to repeat the account to several adults.
- If there is immediate danger or urgent medical need, call 999 and inform the DSL.

11.2 Record

- To record as soon as possible on CPOMS, or use the red safeguarding referral if you do not have access.
- To use the child's exact words in quotation marks.
- To use clear, factual language and proper names for body parts where relevant.
- To include the date, time, place, people present, visible injuries, actions taken and who was informed.
- To separate fact, observation and professional opinion.
- To preserve potential evidence by not viewing, copying, printing, saving, forwarding or asking a child to share an illegal image.



11.3 Report

Staff will send the record immediately to the DSL or a deputy DSL. If the DSL team is unavailable and a child may be at risk of significant harm, follow the school's safeguarding escalation procedure and contact Children's Services or the police as appropriate. Staff will not assume someone else has reported it.

12. DSL response and decision-making

- Check immediate safety, medical needs and whether children need to be separated.
- Speak with children separately using consistent, open questions.
- Consider the child's wishes and feelings without placing responsibility for the outcome on them.
- Assess risk to each child and others, using Annex A where relevant.
- Consider referral to the police, Children's Services, Family Help or specialist services.
- Avoid actions that could prejudice a police or social care enquiry.
- Agree an education, safety and support plan for each child.
- Record the rationale for decisions, including decisions not to refer.
- Review arrangements and adjust them when risks or needs change.

12.1 Possible response routes

The appropriate route will depend on the facts, risk and professional advice. More than one route may be used.

- Manage internally with a recorded safeguarding and behaviour response
- Provide Family Help or early support
- Refer to Children's Social Care
- Report to the police
- Seek specialist harmful sexual behaviour or health advice
- Use a multi-agency assessment or strategy discussion

13. Sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour

All reports will be taken seriously, including online reports and reports made after a delay. Sexual harassment and sexual violence are never acceptable. The school will consider the behaviour as part of a continuum, from inappropriate or problematic behaviour to abusive and violent behaviour.

13.1 Immediate considerations

- the wishes and safety of the child who has been harmed
- whether a crime may have been committed
- the developmental stage and needs of each child
- whether contact should be limited during the school day, transport or activities
- risk of intimidation, retaliation, online contact or social media commentary
- safe arrangements for lessons, breaks, changing rooms and movement around school
- support for witnesses and the wider peer group
- whether disciplinary action can proceed without affecting an external investigation

13.2 Images and AI-generated abuse

Concerns involving nude, semi-nude, intimate or sexualised imagery, including AI-generated or altered imagery, deepfakes and nudification, must be reported immediately to the DSL. Staff must not search for, view, copy, print or forward an image unless this is specifically required under current national guidance and authorised through the safeguarding process.



13.3 Misogyny and early intervention

Sexist or misogynistic language and behaviour can create an unsafe culture and may escalate. Staff will challenge it early, record safeguarding concerns where appropriate, provide education and support, and monitor patterns across individuals, groups and locations. The Heads of House will apply the Behaviour and Discipline policy as and where appropriate.

14. Informing parents and carers

The DSL, a member of the Safeguarding Team or Pastoral Team will normally inform parents or carers as soon as appropriate, preferably through direct conversation. The school may delay or withhold contact if doing so could place a child at greater risk, prejudice an investigation or conflict with advice from Children's Services or the police. The reason will be recorded.

Where a child asks for information not to be shared, the DSL will listen and explain what can and cannot remain private. Decisions will consider safeguarding risk, the child's age, understanding, competence, wishes and the need for support. Annex E provides further information about Gillick competence and Fraser guidelines.

15. Supporting the child who has been harmed

Support could manifest itself in a number of ways. This list below is not exhaustive;

- a trusted adult and regular check-ins
- a personalised safety plan and practical adjustments
- counselling, mentoring or advocacy
- school nurse, health or specialist support
- support with attendance, learning and missed work
- careful management of peer groups, online risks and rumours
- referral to Family Help, Children's Services or specialist services
- Risk Assessment
- a choice about restorative work only when it is safe, suitable, voluntary and does not replace safeguarding action

16. Supporting the child alleged to have caused harm

A child who has caused or may have caused harm can also have unmet needs or be experiencing harm. Support does not remove accountability. The school will use a balanced plan to reduce risk, address needs and help the child understand and change their behaviour.

- clear boundaries, supervision and a risk-management plan
- assessment of safeguarding, SEND, mental health and family needs
- mentoring, counselling, education or specialist intervention
- work on healthy relationships, consent, empathy, online safety and prejudice
- a proportionate behaviour consequence where appropriate
- an education plan that protects all children and avoids unnecessary disruption
- multi-agency planning when risk is significant or complex

17. Safety planning and risk assessment

Risk assessment is a safeguarding tool, not a judgement of guilt. It should be proportionate, reviewed regularly and created for each child. It must consider physical and emotional safety, lessons, social times, transport, online contact, peer groups and activities outside school.



Where possible, arrangements should not place the burden of change on the child who has been harmed. The school will avoid automatic removal from shared classes without assessing the effect on both children and seeking appropriate advice.

18. Behaviour, sanctions and restorative approaches

Safeguarding and behaviour processes can operate together. Any sanction will reflect the school's Behaviour and Discipline Policy, the seriousness and context of the conduct, the child's needs and any external investigation. A restorative approach will only be considered when it is safe, appropriate and voluntary for the child who has been harmed.

19. Recording, confidentiality and information sharing

- Records will be accurate, timely, secure and kept in the child's safeguarding record on CPOMS.
- Each child's record will clearly distinguish information about them from information about others.
- Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis to safeguard children.
- The school will record referrals, advice, meetings, risk assessments, decisions, actions and reviews.
- Staff must not discuss incidents with colleagues, pupils or families unless authorised for safeguarding purposes.
- Media enquiries and social media commentary will be referred to the Headteacher.

20. Police, Children's Services and multi-agency working

The DSL will refer to statutory agencies when thresholds are met or specialist advice is needed. The school will cooperate with enquiries, share relevant information, support children and review school-based safety arrangements. If agencies decide not to take further action, the school may still provide safeguarding support and use its behaviour procedures.

21. Attendance, education and transitions

The school will monitor the effect of an incident on attendance, engagement and progress. It will plan carefully for timetable changes, suspension, alternative provision, off-site direction, managed moves or transitions, ensuring safeguarding information is transferred securely to an appropriate person.

22. Prevention

The school will provide;

- a clear culture where pupils can report concerns and adults act
- age-appropriate RSE and PSHE on consent, healthy relationships, respect, online safety and help-seeking
- direct teaching about sexism, misogyny, prejudice, coercion, image-based abuse, AI-generated harm and deepfakes
- staff presence and supervision in identified locations
- safe filtering and monitoring, reviewed through school governance arrangements
- pupil voice, surveys and review of patterns in incidents
- clear behaviour expectations and early challenge
- support and signposting displayed in accessible ways
- work with parents, carers and relevant local services



23. Staff training and responsibilities

All staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors will receive safeguarding information appropriate to their role. All staff will read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 in full and follow the school's reporting procedures. The DSL team will receive suitable training and keep practice under review.

23.1 All staff will;

- notice, challenge, record and report concerns, understanding that abuse may happen online and outside school
- avoid victim-blaming language and assumptions
- protect confidentiality and potential evidence
- follow the DSL's safety arrangements
- complete safeguarding training and updates

23.2 DSL and deputy DSLs will;

- lead assessment, referral, safety planning and review
- ensure children's views are heard and support is coordinated
- liaise with parents, agencies, senior leaders and governors
- monitor patterns, locations, groups and equality impacts
- ensure records on CPOMS are complete and securely transferred
- review policy, training and prevention work

23.3 Governors and senior leaders will

- approve and review this policy
- ensure suitable staffing, training and DSL availability
- seek assurance on culture, reporting, support, filtering and monitoring
- review anonymised themes and actions without compromising confidentiality
- ensure the policy is accessible to pupils, parents, carers and staff

24. Monitoring and review

The DSL will review anonymised patterns, including types of concern, locations, times, online platforms, repeated behaviour, protected characteristics and the effectiveness of support. Findings will inform supervision, curriculum, training and policy. This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if guidance, law, local arrangements or school needs change.

25. Further information

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>
- **Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>
- **Preventing and tackling bullying:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>
- **Teaching online safety in schools:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools>
- **NSPCC Gillick competence and Fraser guidelines:** <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/gillick-competence-fraser-guidelines>



Annex A: Child-on-child risk assessment proforma

Complete one coordinated assessment covering every child involved. Add a separate support plan for each child. Review after any new information, incident, timetable change or agency advice.

Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment for children involved in harmful sexualised behaviour.

Date: _____

Name of perpetrator / alleged perpetrator: _____

Name of victim / alleged victim: _____

Basic information	
Referrer Name and role	
Referrer Contact details (email address and phone number)	
Name of school(s) for victim(s)	
Name of school(s) for child/ren alleged to have caused harm	
Did incident occur on school premises? If not where did the incident occur?	

CONSIDERATIONS	RISK (CONSIDER VICTIM, CHILD ALLEGED TO HAVE CAUSED HARM, OTHER PUPILS AND STAFF)	RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)	ACTIONS TO REDUCE RISK	REVISED RISK LEVEL (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)
What is the incident? Who was involved? Where did it happen				
Does this incident constitute a crime? Assault, sexual assault, rape, sharing of indecent images of children, etc etc. As such has this been referred to the police?				
Is it necessary to limit contact between the children involved? Refer to KCSiE and DFE guidance on sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools and colleges.				
Is there an actual or perceived threat from the child alleged to have caused				



harm to the victim and/or others?				
Is either the victim or the child alleged to have caused harm at risk of physical harm as a result of this incident (for example, bullying or 'retribution' by peers)?				
Do they share classes?				
Do they share break times? Do they share peer/friendship groups?				
Do they share transport to/from school?				
Are they likely to come into contact with each other (or anyone else involved in/with knowledge of the incident) outside of school?				
How can such contact be limited?				
Is there a risk of harm from social media and gossip?				

Further action taken by the school or college: Please complete for each child involved.

Action	YES/NO	Date
Police informed		
Referral to MASH		
Referral to external support services		
Referral to internal support services		
Referral to CAMHS		
Referral to early help		
Other		

Action	YES/NO	Date
Police informed		
Referral to MASH		
Referral to external support services		

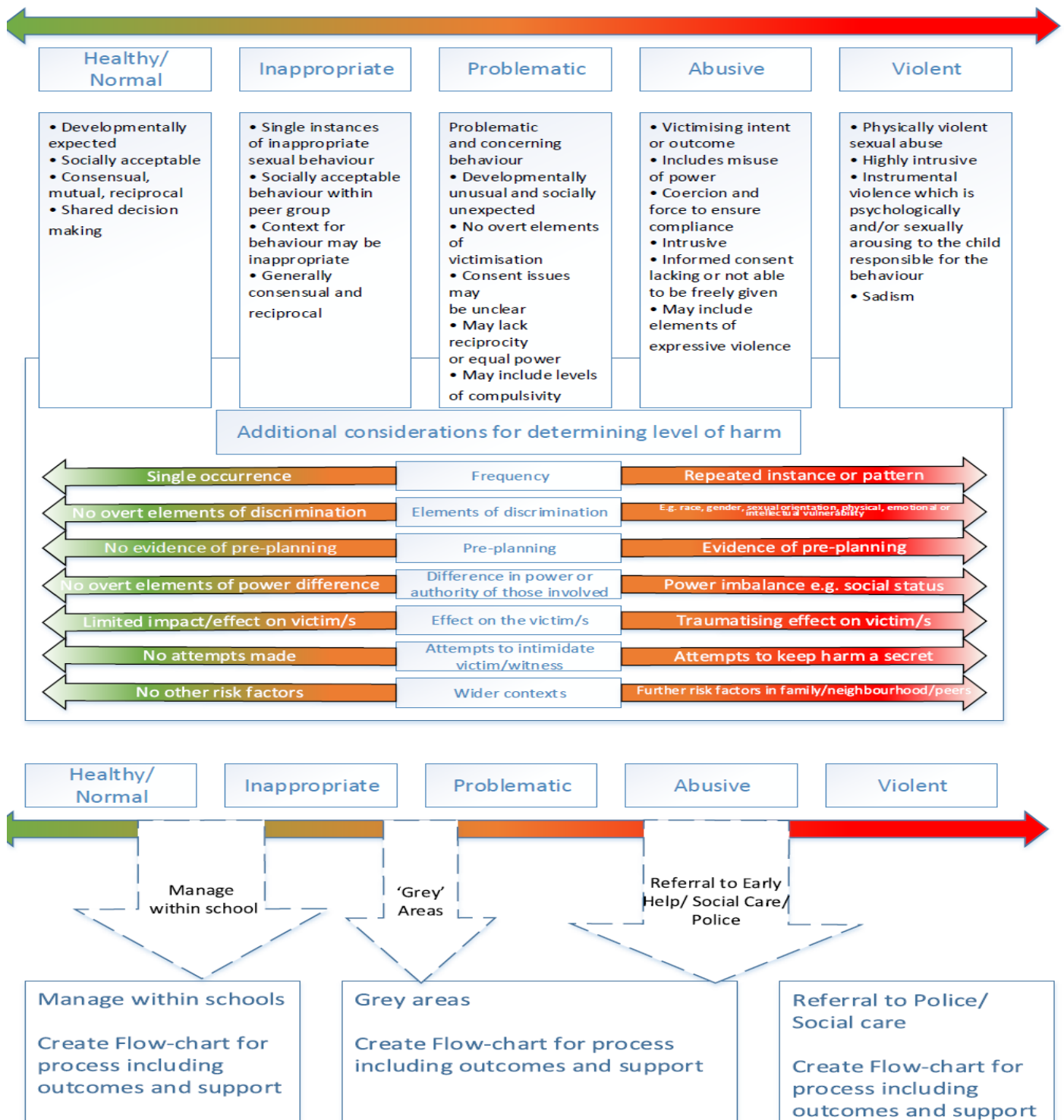


Referral to internal support services		
Referral to CAMHS		
Referral to early help		
Other		

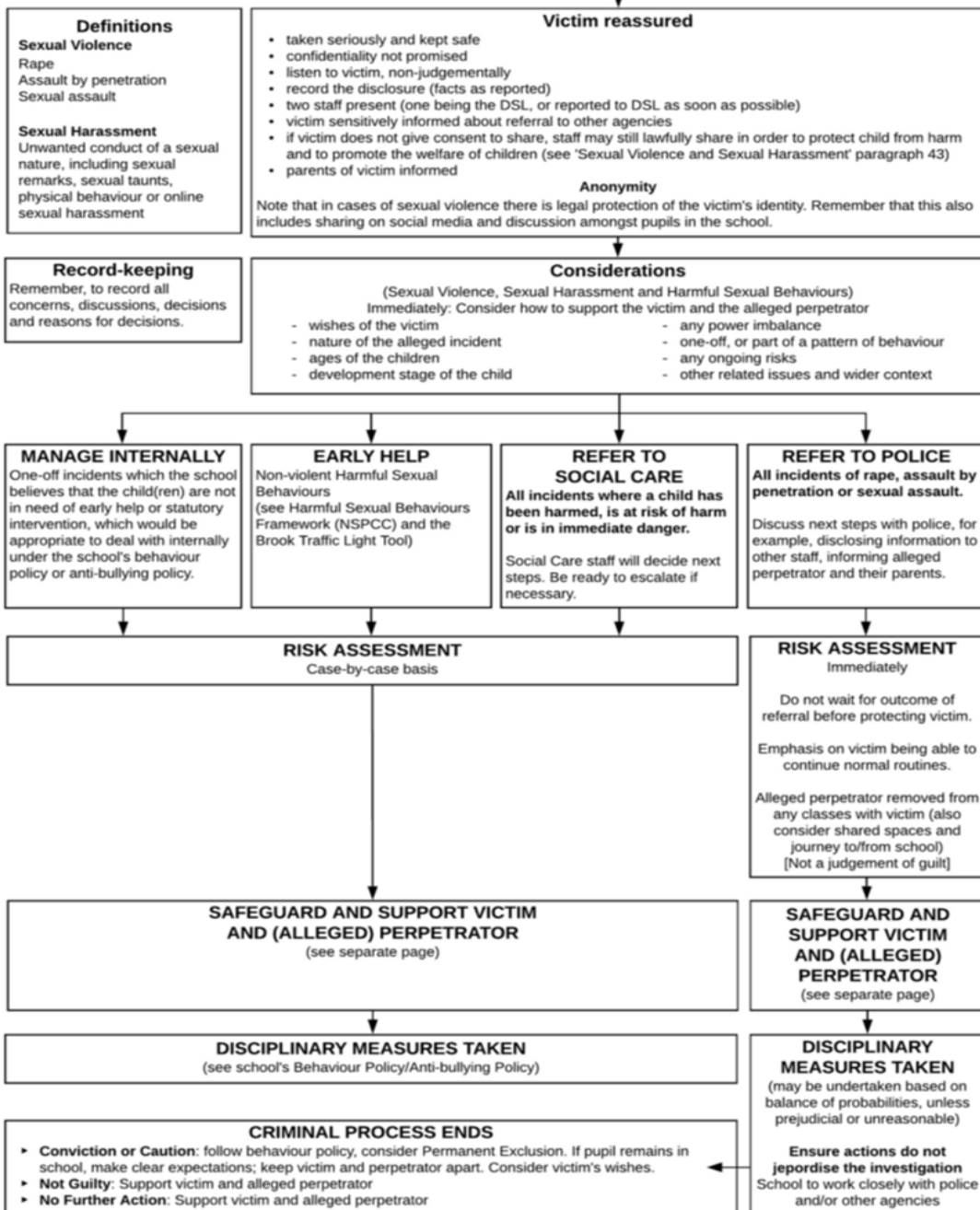


Annex B: Harmful sexual behaviour continuum and response pathway

The DSL should use Hackett's continuum as a professional aid, not as a stand-alone decision. Behaviour must be considered in context, including age, development, consent, coercion, power, frequency, intent and impact.



**PART FOUR:
RESPONSE TO REPORTS**
Summary of responses



Annex C: Additional points for decision-making

Age and development

How old and developmentally mature is each child? Are there differences in understanding, communication or capacity?

Location and supervision

Where did it happen? Was the area open or hidden? What changes to supervision or the environment are needed?

Accounts and impact

What does each child say happened? What is the immediate and longer-term impact? Avoid treating differences in accounts as proof that a report is false.

Understanding and intent

What did each child understand about the behaviour, privacy, consent and likely impact? Was the behaviour deliberate, coerced, imitated or influenced by others or online content?

Power and coercion

Were there differences in age, status, size, ability, popularity or authority? Were there threats, bribes, secrecy, pressure or exploitation?

Frequency and escalation

Was this isolated, repeated or escalating? Has a boundary already been set or the behaviour previously addressed?

Wider safeguarding context

Are there concerns about abuse, domestic abuse, exploitation, criminality, mental health, SEND, attendance or online risk?

Other children

Who witnessed, shared, encouraged or was affected by the behaviour? Who else may be at risk?

Parents and carers

Would contact support safety, or could it create additional risk or prejudice an enquiry?

Professional advice

What advice has been received from police, Children's Services, health or specialist services, and how has it shaped the plan?



Annex D: Types of abuse and examples

Type	Examples
Physical abuse	Hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, pushing, restraining or causing injury.
Bullying	Repeated or potentially repeated harm involving a real or perceived power imbalance, including exclusion, threats and rumours.
Online bullying and abuse	Threatening messages, impersonation, exclusion, humiliating posts, doxxing, hateful content, coercion or encouragement of self-harm.
Sexual harassment	Sexual comments, jokes, rumours, unwanted messages, sexualised name-calling, unwanted touching or displaying sexual material.
Sexual violence	Sexual acts without consent or other conduct that may constitute a sexual offence.
Harmful sexual behaviour	Developmentally inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent sexual behaviour.
Image-based abuse	Creating, requesting, sharing or threatening to share nude, intimate or sexualised images, including altered or AI-generated images.
Upskirting	Taking an image under a person's clothing without permission for sexual gratification or to cause humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence.
Initiation or hazing	Humiliating, intimidating, abusive or violent rituals linked to joining a group.
Prejudice-related abuse	Harm connected to disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or another aspect of identity or background.
Abuse in intimate relationships	Controlling, coercive, threatening, physical, emotional or sexual behaviour in a current or former young relationship.
Financial exploitation	Pressure or manipulation involving money, accounts, possessions, fraud or criminal activity.



Annex E: Gillick competence and Fraser guidelines

Gillick competence is used to consider whether a child under 16 has enough understanding and intelligence to understand fully what is proposed. Fraser guidelines relate specifically to contraceptive advice and treatment. In safeguarding decisions, the child's wishes are important but do not remove the duty to act where a child may be at risk of harm.

The DSL should seek appropriate safeguarding or legal advice when a child asks for information not to be shared with parents or carers. The decision and reasons must be recorded.

- **NSPCC: Gillick competence and Fraser guidelines:** <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/gillick-competence-fraser-guidelines>

Droitwich Spa High School and Sixth Form Centre takes its responsibilities as a data controller and data processor seriously and are committed to using any personal data collected and held in accordance with the law. The schools policies, privacy notices and forms in relation to personal data are available for you to view on our web site at www.droitwichspahigh.worcs.sch.uk or by using the <https://website.droitwichspahigh.worcs.sch.uk/index.php/communications/information-management-and-data-protection/>

The School's Data Protection Officer is the Head of Governance and Compliance and can be contacted at Droitwich Spa High School and Sixth Form Centre, Briar Mill, Droitwich, WR9 0AA or by email at privacy@droitwichspahigh.worcs.sch.uk

