Woodcroft Primary School's Managing Allegations Against Another Pupil Policy

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Co-ordinator responsible for the policy in consultation with the staff and governors:

Head Teachers

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Introduction

DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) says that "All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children at any age. All staff should be clear as to the school policy and procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse." The guidance also states the importance of minimising the risks of child-on- child abuse. In most instances, the conduct of students towards each other will be covered by the school's Behaviour policy. Some allegations may be of such a serious nature that they may raise safeguarding concerns. These allegations are most likely to include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. It is also likely that incidents dealt with under this policy will involve older students and their behaviour towards younger students or those who are vulnerable.

The safeguarding implications of scxual activity between young people

The intervention of child protection agencies in situations involving sexual activity between children can require difficult professional judgements. Some situations are statutorily clear – for example, a child under the age of 13 cannot consent to sexual activity. But it will not necessarily be appropriate to initiate safeguarding procedures where sexual activity involving children and young people below the legal age of consent (16 years) comes to notice. In our society, generally the age at which children become sexually active has steadily dropped. It is important to distinguish between consensual sexual activity between children of similar ages (where at least one is below the age of consent) and sexual activity involving a power imbalance, or some form of coercion or exploitation. It may also be difficult to be sure that what has or has been alleged to have taken place definitely does have a sexual component.

As usual, important decisions should be made on a case by case basis, on the basis of an assessment of the children's best interests. Referral under safeguarding arrangements may be necessary, guided by an assessment of the extent to which a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

Key specific considerations will include:

- The age, maturity and understanding of the children
- Any disability or special needs of the children
- Their social and family circumstances
- Any evidence in the behaviour or presentation of the children that might suggest they have been harmed
- Any evidence of pressure to engage in sexual activity
- Any indication of sexual exploitation

There are also contextual factors. Gender, sexuality, race and levels of sexual knowledge can be used to exert power. A sexual predator may sometimes be a woman or girl and the victim a boy. However, as stated in KCSiE 2024, "staff should be aware it is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys."

Policy

Within Woodcroft Primary School, we believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the school and other students.

We recognise that some students will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under the schools' Behaviour policy.

Prevention

As a school, we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:

- Providing a developmentally appropriate PSHE syllabus which develops students' understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe
- Having systems in place for any student to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued, delivered through the school's values and ethos
- Delivering targeted work on assertiveness and keeping safe, to those pupils identified as being at risk, through working with a range of staff including teachers, LSAs, ELSAs and DSLs
- Developing robust risk assessments and providing targeted work for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils - these are completed by the SENCo and the Home School Link Worker.

Alligations against other pupils which are safeguarding issues

Occasionally, allegations may be made against students by other pupils in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. It is likely that, to be considered a safeguarding allegation against a pupil, some of the following features will be found.

If the allegation:

- Is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger pupil or a more vulnerable pupil
- Is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence
- Raises risk factors for other pupils in the school
- Indicates that other pupils may have been affected by this student
- Indicates that young people outside the school may be affected by this student.

Examples of safeguarding issues against a student could include:

- **Physical abuse:** violence, particularly pre-planned and forcing others to use drugs or alcohol
- **Emotional abuse:** blackmail or extortion, threats and intimidation
- **Sexual abuse:** indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assaults and forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting

- **Sexual exploitation:** encouraging other children to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour (for example, having an older boyfriend/girlfriend, associating with unknown adults or other sexually exploited children, staying out overnight) and photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts. *(Consensual image sharing, between older children of the same age, may require a different response. It might not be abusive – but children should still know it is illegal.)*

Procedure

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another pupil, members of staff should report their concerns directly to a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

At Woodcroft the DSLs are Mr Barry Fanning (Headteacher), Mrs Emma Wilkinson, Mrs Laura Sherwell (both Assistant Headteachers), Mrs Dawn Pink (Home School Link Worker) and Mrs Kirsty Hawkins (Key Stage Leader).

A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances. The DSL should contact Children's Services via an Inter-agency referral or seek advice from the professionals line if they are unsure the allegation meets threshold. The DSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and the referral. If a child is in immediate danger then the DSL will immediately inform the police.

If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place, the DSL will refer the case to Children's Services and inform the police.

The school will inform Parents, of both the student being complained about and the alleged victim, unless informed otherwise by children's services or the police.

The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome, and keep a confidential sealed copy in both pupils' files.

It may be appropriate to suspend the pupil being complained about for a period of time, in accordance with the school's Behaviour policy and procedures.

Where neither Social Services nor the Police accept the complaint, a thorough school investigation should take place into the matter using the school's usual disciplinary procedures. In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative supervision plan. The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.