

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

Expanse Learning College

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5

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1. Scope

This policy applies to all staff at Expanse Learning College across all sites (hereafter the College)

2. Context, Definition and Forms of 'Child-on-child' Abuse

Peer abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually, or emotionally hurt others. All staff should recognise that students can abuse their peers and be aware of safeguarding issues from peer abuse including:

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

This abuse can:

- Be motivated by perceived differences e.g., on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other differences
- Result in significant, long lasting, and traumatic isolation, intimidation, or violence to the victim; vulnerable adults are at particular risk of harm

Students or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs such as:

- Significant disruption in their own lives
- Exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering abuse
- Educational under-achievement
- Involved in crime

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the priority of any education setting, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical. College staff, alongside the Designated Safeguarding Team must make their own judgements about each specific case and should use this policy guidance to help.

3. Responsibility

Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024) states that **all staff** should be aware that students can abuse other students (often referred to as child-on-child abuse) and that it can happen both inside and outside of college and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

All staff should understand that even if there are no reports in our college, it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important if staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) immediately.

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, many of which are listed below, that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for students and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to students accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

4. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to explore some forms of child-on-child abuse. The policy also includes a planned and supportive response to the issues. At the College we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Sexual violence/sexual harassment Policy
- Behaviour Policy

5. Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act, 1989 that the child's welfare is paramount. Another key document is Working Together 2018, highlighting that every assessment of a child, 'must be informed by the views of the child'. This policy is also reflective of Working together to safeguard children (2023) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024).

6. Abuse and harmful behaviour

It is necessary to consider:

- what abuse is and what it looks like
- how it can be managed
- what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual
- what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up.'

- Students are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same protection procedures.
- Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and should not develop high thresholds before acting.
- Staff should be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.
- Staff should be aware of the added vulnerability of students and young people who have been the victims of violent crime (for example mugging), including the risk that they may respond to this by abusing younger or weaker children.

The alleged perpetrator is likely to have considerable unmet needs as well as posing a significant risk of harm to other children. Evidence suggests that such students may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, may have witnessed or been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, may have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences. They may therefore be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and need protection. Any long- term plan to reduce the risk posed by the alleged perpetrator must address their needs.

7. Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

Physical abuse

This may include hitting, kicking, nipping/pinching, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a student harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will follow the College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Sexual Violence/Sexual Harassment Policy.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two students of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of students sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single student or group of students.

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour, and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as to the young person it is intended towards.

Sexually harmful behaviour may include:

- inappropriate sexual language
- inappropriate role play
- sexual touching
- sexual assault/abuse.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter,” “part of growing up,” “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts, and genitalia, flicking bras, and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among college aged students that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. To be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.
- Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g., size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Online Bullying / Cyber bullying

Online Bullying / Cyberbullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, e-mail, chat rooms etc.) to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

Online bullying can take many forms:

- Abusive or threatening texts, emails, or messages
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites
- Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- Stealing someone’s online identity
- Spreading rumours online
- Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms, or games
- Developing hate sites about another person
- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Encouraging a young person to self-harm
- Pressuring students to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

Sharing nudes and semi nudes

This term relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content; these are created and sent electronically. They are often ‘shared’ via social networking sites and instant messaging services. This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

DSL will follow the UKCCIS: Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes December 2020.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1008443/UKCIS_sharing_nudes_and_semi_nudes_advice_for_education_settings__Web_accessible_.pdf

Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private College, sports team etc. There are several different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies. The ceremony welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

Prejudiced Behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – for example disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity.

Teenage relationship abuse

Teenage relationship abuse is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, to gain power and maintain control over the partner. This abuse may be sexual exploitation.

Upskirting

Up skirting typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm.

Expected staff action

Staff should consider the seriousness of the case and make a quick decision whether to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately before taking any further in-College actions. If in doubt always inform the DSL or an appropriate member of the SLT.

8. Recognising peer abuse

An assessment of an incident between peers should be completed and consider:

- Chronological and developmental ages of everyone involved
- Difference in their power or authority in relation to age, race, gender, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
- All alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident
- Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
- What was the degree of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour, or bribery?
- The effect on the victim
- Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret
- The student or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour, if they admit that it occurred
- Whether this was a one-off incident, or longer in duration

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the students and the parents when they become involved. Avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture and leave a student labelled.

Staff will talk to the students in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgmental, dismissive, or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Initial response

- Any direct disclosure by a student of abuse should be taken very seriously and managed sensitively. Basic principles of listening sensitively, providing reassurance, not asking leading questions and not guaranteeing confidentiality should be remembered.
- The student will be reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. They will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by making a disclosure nor will they ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- The response to all incidents should be conducted in line with the Safeguarding and Student Protection Policy.

- Any incident should be referred to the DSL/DSO without delay.
- The DSL/DSO should meet with staff involved and there should be subsequent interviews with the young people involved, if appropriate.
- If the incident involves the sharing of nudes or semi-nudes, the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) guidance 'Advice for education settings, responding to incidents and safeguarding students and young people' will be referred to.

Investigation

- The DSL/DSO will decide if further information is required to decide on the best response.
- Staff should be asked to provide relevant facts about the circumstances of the students involved which could influence the decisions of the DSL/DSO.
- In incidents that involve young people not at Expanse College, the DSL will decide if there is a need to contact another college, setting or individual.
- If it is felt that there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that' the victim is 'suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm,' it might be appropriate to temporarily educate in an alternative class/setting the student against whom an allegation of abuse has been made whilst the investigation is carried out.
- When necessary, the DSL will take advice from Children's Social Care and or the Police on the investigation of such allegations and will take all appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of all students involved, including the student or students accused of abuse.
- If a student against whom an allegation of abuse has been made is required to be interviewed by the police, then the student will be supported during the interview by an appropriate adult.

Risk Assessment and Referral

- The DSL will assess the risk presented by the incident to the individuals involved and, in conjunction with the Head, will decide whether a referral to the police or social services is required, or whether to proceed using the College's internal support systems. The College may also choose a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion for a period to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour, or, if required, Early Help from our local network of supporting services as outlined in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Parents should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm.
- At any point in the process, if there is a concern a young person has been harmed, or is at risk of serious harm, a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and or the Police. Any staff member can make such a referral but should inform the DSL as soon as possible that a referral has been made.

Recording Process and Outcomes

- Notes should be made of all conversations and meetings to do with any incident of child-on-child abuse. Formal written records should be completed immediately or within 24 hours via Pastoral/Safeguarding event on Databridge. Records should include date, time, place, persons involved, nature of disclosure and any relevant details. Records of all safeguarding concerns are managed by DSL.
- The DSL will offer ongoing support in the best interests of the students in our care and action may need to be coordinated where there is a wider investigation involving Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

After care

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident.

Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g., self-harm). For this reason, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

9. Preventative Strategies

Child-on-child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most robust policies and support processes. It is important to develop appropriate strategies to proactively prevent child-on-child abuse. The College has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them.

There is a strong and positive SRE/On-Line Safety/PGW curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives students an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another.

Staff will not dismiss issues as ‘banter’ or ‘growing up’ or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. Staff will consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action.

Young people are part of changing their circumstances and, through college council and student voice for example, we encourage young people to support changes and develop ‘rules of acceptable behaviour’. We involve students in the positive ethos in college; where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

10. Where to go for further information

- DfE: Statutory guidance: Working together to safeguard students 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>
- DfE: Statutory guidance: Keeping children safe in education 2021 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1020050/KCSIE_2021_September_guidance.pdf
- DfE Guidance: Sexual violence and sexual harassment between students in schools and colleges 2021 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014224/Sexual_violence_and_sexual_harassment_between_children_in_Colleges_and_colleges.pdf
- DfE: Searching, screening and confiscation at college <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>
- UKCCIS: Sharing nudes and semi nudes <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>
- DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>
- DfE: Relationship and Sex Education <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>
- DfE: Behaviour and discipline in colleges <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-and-discipline-in-Colleges>
- DfE: Students Missing Education <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>
- DfE: Mental health and behaviour in colleges <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-Colleges--2>
- Brook Traffic Light Tool <https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/category/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool>
- Gov.uk: Equality Act 2010: advice for colleges <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-Colleges>
- Equality and Human Rights Commission: [Public Sector Equality Duty | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/public-sector-equality-duty)
- NSPCC: [Protecting children from harmful sexual behaviour | NSPCC Learning](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/protecting-children-from-harmful-sexual-behaviour/)
- Early Help: [Early Help and Prevention Strategy \(wigan.gov.uk\)](https://www.wigan.gov.uk/early-help-prevention-strategy/)

11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months but can be revised as needed.

Impact of non-compliance:

Staff:	Disciplinary action, Support, Action Plan
Student:	Fixed Term Exclusion, Permanent Exclusion
Legislation/organisational:	statutory and non-regulated compliance, damaged professional/corporate image, loss of funding
Compliance lead:	Head Learning Support
Policy Reference:	ELCO-SAFG-POL-0016
Version:	4
Agreed policy location:	Intranet and Webpage
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Does the policy require Governor approval?	No

Version Control

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1	29/04/2021	First Issue	29/04/2021
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3	24/11/2022	Reviewed in line with KCSIE 2022	23/11/2023
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5	05/09/2024	Reviewed in line with KCSIE 2024 – Appendix F and Early Help	05/09/2025