



MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE

College Policy and Procedures on Peer on Peer Abuse

Context:

In recent years there has been growing recognition that children can suffer significant harm, and abuse, at the hands of other children or young people.

Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2019 makes clear that all staff should be aware that safeguarding and child protection issues can also ‘manifest themselves via peer on peer abuse’. Staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers and be clear about College Policy and Procedures regarding peer on peer abuse.

KCSIE September 2019 also makes clear that schools that provide residential accommodation should be especially alert to inappropriate pupil relationships and the potential for peer on peer abuse. Therefore, it is right that Marlborough College, as a full co-educational boarding school, does all it can to manage any abusive peer behaviour as part of our duty of care and in line with expectations laid down by KCSIE.

The following document:

- defines peer on peer abuse
- reflects on the different forms of peer on peer abuse, including contextual abuse
- outlines procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse
- outlines how allegations and disclosures of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with
- outlines how victims of peer on peer abuse will be supported.

This document has been created with reference to **KCSIE September 2019, Part Five, and Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges (May 2018)**. In addition, clear reference is made to the guidance contained in **UKCCIS Sexting in Schools and Colleges**.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

Behaviour Management Policy
Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
Policy on Pupil Access to Pastoral Support
College Policy and Procedures on Sexting
PSHE Policy
Social Media Policy
ICT Policy
Pastoral Aims

Staff Code of Conduct – Firefly
Rules of Custom for Mobile Devices – Firefly
School Rules - Almanac

This Policy should also be read with the understanding of the following key principles based on the KCSIE Statutory Guidelines for Schools and Colleges September 2019:

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children at Marlborough College is the responsibility of **all** staff.
- Staff should always consider what is in the best interests of the pupils in our care.
- No single staff member can have a full picture of each child and so prompt action and sharing of information is crucial.
- Staff should be aware that abusive behaviour amongst peers can put children in danger; abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter” or “part of growing up”, or “having a laugh”.
- All staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via peer on peer abuse. This may include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyber bullying) gender based violence/sexual assaults, sexting, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying.
- Finally, as regarding any safeguarding issue, all members of the community are asked to cultivate an understanding that ‘it could happen here’ and be prepared to ‘think the unthinkable’.

Definition and Forms of Peer on Peer Abuse:

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that should be dealt with by the College’s behavioural and disciplinary systems. If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse: unkindness, physical fighting and harassment between children are not always or inevitably seen as child protection issues. However, it may be appropriate to regard peer on peer behaviour as abusive if harm is caused because:

- There is a significant **power imbalance** between the young people concerned. The abuse of children is often constructed around an age differential between the abuser and the abused, but in cases of peer-on-peer abuse this may not always be the case. In such circumstances, power imbalances can manifest in other ways, for example gender, social status within peer groups, intellectual ability, physical development, economic wealth, social marginalisation and so on. It is important to note that the perpetrator and/or victim may well be subject to power imbalances with other individuals in an incident of abuse and so it is important to investigate any incident as fully as possible.
- The perpetrator has **repeatedly** tried to harm one or more other children.
- There are concerns about the **intention** of the alleged perpetrator. If evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether severe harm was caused or not.

Different forms of abuse are well documented in the College’s ***Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy***, found on the College website. These include physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect. In the context of peer on peer abuse examples include:

- Teenage relationship abuse (both physical and emotional),
- Sexual touching/harassment, sexual violence or assault,
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals,
- Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery),
- Prejudiced behaviours such as sexism, racism and social marginalisation,
- Bullying, where the context meets the criteria referred to above,
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm.
- ‘Upskirting’ – the intrusive practice of taking a picture under another person’s clothing without their knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals to obtain sexual gratification, or to cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. The offence of upskirting came into force in April 2019.
- Serious violence, including the threat of violence to others with knives or other weapons, or verbal threats of violence, designed to intimidate and control.

Issues surrounding Honour Based Violence (HBV), Forced Marriage and Radicalisation may also be relevant where coercion or power imbalances are involved between peers. It is also important to recognise that peer on peer abuse may well involve pupils here at the College and young persons and children in other contexts, thus making a full range of abuse types possible. When dealing with any disclosure of abuse it is important to remember the three bullet points above regarding power, frequency and intention. The extent to which any victim has given consent is also important.

Prevention:

In the broadest sense, it is hoped that the College's Pastoral, Academic and Co-Curricular Aims create and sustain an environment that helps to minimise the risk and occurrence of peer on peer abuse.

The College also looks to take a proactive, preventive and educative approach to safeguarding issues with its staff and pupils. Opportunities are sought to give teaching and learning opportunities to our pupils, within the context of PSHE. The possible avenues for such education to take place, including education about abusive behaviour, include the following:

- College yeargroup assemblies
- House assemblies
- Pastoral discussion between pupils and HMs, RHTs, Tutors, Dames, SMT
- Engagement between pupils and the wider pastoral team, including Medical Centre staff, Chaplains, Counselling Team etc.
- Artemis sessions in House led by Artemis Tutors
- Yeargroup PSHE presentations from external speakers, including the College Medical Officers.
- Yeargroup meetings with School Counsellor
- LGBTQ+ Discussion Forum

Such lessons should be given in an emotionally safe environment; ground rules of confidentiality should be given and any vulnerable pupils identified and managed in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

Lessons in Artemis should include what abuse is; who to tell; what to say; what to do; what not to do and where to get support from within and outside of the school; issues of consent, sexual violence and harassment.

The College recognises the challenge that young people face in talking about such issues and so learning opportunities should aim to develop confidence in our pupils so that they feel they can communicate about safeguarding issues, including asking questions and disclosing concerns.

The College believes that other underpinning preventive learning about issues, such as consent, healthy relationships, online safety, recognising abusive and coercive behaviour, covered in the avenues outlined above, may help to support learning about abuse.

KCSIE September 2019 states: 'Where there is a safeguarding concern, Governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, any system and processes should operate with the **best** interests of the child at their heart.'

Pupils should be aware that there are a variety of ways in which they can express their views and feelings on any pastoral matter; to access support in order to prevent abuse from occurring, to report abuse that is happening, and to find ongoing support after abuse has been identified. Listed below are options for pupils to find help and support if they feel they are being abused or that one of their peers is at risk from abuse or peer on peer abuse. These are listed in more detail in the *Policy on Pupil Access to Pastoral Support* posted on the College website and details of access to the support below are given in that policy and should also be found on House and Sani Notice Boards.

- Deputy Head, Boarding, Lady Cayley, 01672 892523.
- Housemaster/Housemistress
- Other Residential Staff e.g. RHT, HM Spouses
- Tutors – weekly tutorial meetings
- Dames
- Parents/Siblings
- Any Beak to whom a pupil feels they can speak freely
- Senior Pupils in positions of responsibility such as Heads of House, Heads of Shell, House Captains or Prefects.
- College Sani Staff: the School Medical Officer and other doctors, Sani Nurses
- The College Lead Counsellor, Katia Houghton 07879 669113; any member of the counselling team
- College Chaplains
- The College’s Independent Listener, Dr David du Croz 07900 698707
- External agencies such as Childline 0800 1111, Samaritans and www.childnet-int.org

Procedures Adopted when a Disclosure of Peer on Peer Abuse is made:

The following general principles and guidelines should be followed:

Initial response

- Any direct disclosure by a pupil of an incident 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.
- All incidents should be responded to in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Any incident should be referred to the DSL and the Second Master without delay.
- The DSL should meet with College staff involved and there should be subsequent interviews with the young people involved if appropriate.
- If the incident involves Sexting, use of the Policy and Procedures on Sexting should be made.

Investigation

- The DSL will decide if further information is required to decide on the best response.
- The HM and pastoral team provide relevant facts about the circumstances of the pupil/pupils involved which could influence the decisions of the DSL and Second Master, and which enable a contextual assessment to be made.
- In incidents that involve young people not at the College, the DSL or Master will decide if there is a need to contact another school, college, setting or individual.
- A pupil against whom an allegation of abuse has been made such that there is ‘reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm’ may be suspended from the School during the investigation in accordance with the College’s Behaviour Management and Countering Bullying policies. In the case of a pupil whose parents are abroad, the pupil’s Guardian will be requested to provide support to the pupil and to accommodate him/her if it is necessary to suspend him/her during the investigation.
- When necessary the DSL will take advice from Children’s Social Care/SVPP on the investigation of such allegations and will take all appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils involved including the pupil or pupils accused of abuse.
- If a pupil against whom an allegation of abuse has been made is required to be interviewed by the police, then the pupil 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 pupil/pupils involved and in conjunction with the Master decide whether a referral to the police or Designated Officer for

Allegations is required or whether to proceed using the College's pastoral support and disciplinary system or, if required, Early Help from our local network of supporting services as outlined in the College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

- The HM should inform parents at an early stage and involve them 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/SVPP. 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 peer on peer abuse. Formal written records should be completed immediately or within 24 hours. Records should include date, time, place, persons involved, nature of disclosure and any relevant details. These should be emailed to the DSL immediately and if not being completed by the HM, a copy also emailed to the HM. Records of all safeguarding concerns are kept by the DSL.
- The DSL, HMs and Pastoral teams will offer ongoing support in the best interests of the pupils in our care and action may need to be co-ordinated where there is a wider investigation involving Children's Social Care/SVPP and/or the Police.

The College recognises that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place between children, and within peer groups. While the focus must be a proactive education and support, such that such behaviour is minimised, the College is also committed to responding appropriately and quickly to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, within a framework of effective safeguarding practice.

Part 5 of KCSIE 2019 gives detailed guidance regarding the response to child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment, based on the DfE document Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges.

The College's response to any such report will be led by the DSL and will involve the following elements:

- Initial responses, considering the needs of both victim(s) and alleged perpetrator(s)
- Record Keeping
- Risk Assessment
- Consideration of the various options to manage the report, including internal management, the need for early help, referral to Children's Social Care/SVPP and/or referral to the Police.
- Ongoing response – safeguarding and support

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are almost always complex, and decisions are likely to be made on a case by case basis. The needs and wishes of the victim should be paramount (along with protecting the child) in every response.

At all times the College's response will be underpinned by the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

Author: Management Team

Where found: College Website

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