



Boscastle Community Primary School

CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE (including harassment and violence)

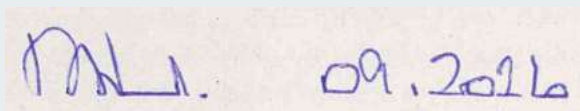
“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility”

Approved by: The Governing Body

Review completed: 21.09.26

Next review due: September 2027, or earlier if statutory guidance changes

**Signed by Chair of
Governors:**

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1. Purpose and statutory context

Boscastle Community Primary School is committed to providing a safe environment in which all children can learn, develop and participate without fear of abuse, harassment or violence from other children.

This policy sets out the school's approach to preventing, identifying, recording and responding to child-on-child abuse. It should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Online Safety Policy.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 requires governing bodies and proprietors to ensure that their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse, well-promoted and accessible reporting systems, arrangements for recording and investigating allegations, and clear processes for supporting victims, alleged perpetrators and other children affected.

KCSIE 2026 is in force from 1 September 2026. All staff must read Part One in full and follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.

Policy principles

- Child-on-child abuse can happen inside or outside school and online.
- Even where there are no reported cases, abuse may still be taking place and may simply not be being reported.
- The school has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. Harmful behaviour will never be dismissed as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys”.
- Child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for both the child who has experienced harm and the child alleged to have caused harm.
- Child-on-child abuse is preventable. Early recognition of risk, timely support and evidence-informed intervention can prevent escalation.
- All reports will be taken seriously, handled sensitively and considered from a child-centred safeguarding perspective.
- The school will use terminology that is appropriate to the child and the circumstances. Not every child who has experienced abuse will wish to be described as a “victim”, and care will be taken when referring to an “alleged perpetrator”.

Related policies

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety / Acceptable Use policies
- RSHE / PSHE policy and curriculum
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy
- SEND Policy

2. Context and vulnerability

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding the behaviour, its context and its impact is essential to deciding the appropriate safeguarding response. The school will distinguish between developmentally expected behaviour, inappropriate or problematic behaviour, and behaviour that is abusive or violent, while recognising that apparently lower-level behaviour can escalate.

The school will consider child-on-child abuse in all contexts. Where an incident is reported to have occurred away from school, including online or in the community, factual information will be recorded and considered as part of the safeguarding picture and may be shared with partner agencies where appropriate.

Children who may be at greater risk

All children can experience child-on-child abuse. Some children may face additional barriers to reporting or may be more vulnerable because of their circumstances or characteristics. These can include children with SEND or disabilities; children who have experienced abuse, neglect or domestic abuse; children in care; children who go missing; children with mental health needs; and children who are LGBTQ+ or are perceived to be LGBTQ+.

KCSIE recognises that some forms of child-on-child abuse are more likely to involve girls as victims and boys as perpetrators, while making clear that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and must be taken seriously. The school will also recognise and respond to prejudice-based harm, including racism, faith-targeted abuse and other forms of discrimination.

Staff should remain alert to times and places where children may be at increased risk around the school day, including immediately after school, as well as less supervised spaces, transport, clubs, visits and online environments.

3. What is child-on-child abuse?

Child-on-child abuse occurs where a child abuses, harms, exploits, harasses or uses violence towards another child. Everyone directly involved is under 18. It may be a single incident or form part of a pattern and can be physical, sexual, emotional, discriminatory or online.

There is not always a simple boundary between behaviour that is appropriately managed through the school's behaviour or anti-bullying procedures and behaviour requiring a child protection response. Professional judgement must take account of the nature and severity of the behaviour, the children's ages and developmental stages, any power imbalance, repetition or escalation, intent, coercion, exploitation, vulnerability and impact.

If any member of staff has a concern about a child's language or behaviour towards another child, they must speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL without delay. If in doubt, staff should treat the matter as a safeguarding concern.

4. Forms of child-on-child abuse

Child-on-child abuse can take many forms. The following examples are not exhaustive.

Physical abuse, assault and threats

Physical abuse can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, nipping or otherwise causing physical harm. It also includes serious physical assault and harm, or threats of harm involving a weapon. Staff must consider the context, intent, impact, pattern of behaviour and any wider risk to others.

Bullying, cyberbullying and discriminatory behaviour

Bullying may include repeated physical or verbal aggression, threats, spreading rumours, exclusion, humiliation or online abuse, particularly where there is a real or perceived imbalance of power. The school will also respond to discriminatory behaviour and prejudice-based incidents, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, sexism, misogyny, misandry, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and disability-related abuse. Such behaviour may be both a behaviour matter and a safeguarding concern.

Abuse in intimate personal relationships

Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes referred to as teenage relationship abuse) may include physical, sexual or emotional abuse, coercion, controlling behaviour, threats, stalking, humiliation, social sabotage or financial exploitation. Although this form of abuse is more commonly associated with older children, staff should remain alert to age-appropriate indicators of controlling or coercive peer relationships.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse may include threats, intimidation, blackmail, extortion, coercion, humiliation, criticism, belittling, name-calling or other behaviour that has a harmful impact on a child's wellbeing, mental health, relationships or sense of safety.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation may involve a child being encouraged, coerced, groomed or recruited into sexual activity, including by another child or group of children. It can include photographing or filming sexual acts, facilitating abuse by others, or using threats, status, gifts, money, affection or other forms of leverage.

Making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes, including AI-generated images

This includes the creation, sending, posting or sharing of nude or semi-nude images, videos or livestreams involving children under 18. Images may be taken by the child, created by another person, digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence, including material sometimes described as "deepfakes" or "deep nudes".

All incidents involving the making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes require a safeguarding response, whether the image sharing appears consensual or non-consensual. The response will be proportionate and will take account of the children's age and development, the circumstances, and any indicators of coercion, exploitation or vulnerability.

Staff must not view, copy, print, forward or save an image unless specifically required and advised as part of an authorised safeguarding process. The DSL will follow current UKCIS guidance and the school's safeguarding and online safety procedures.

Upskirting and other image-based abuse

Upskirting is a criminal offence and involves taking an image under a person's clothing without their consent for sexual gratification or to cause humiliation, distress or alarm. Other forms of image-based abuse, including cyberflashing or the non-consensual creation or sharing of sexualised imagery, will be treated as safeguarding concerns and, where relevant, potential criminal matters.

5. Harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual violence

Part Five of KCSIE 2026 addresses child-on-child harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), sexual harassment and sexual violence. HSB can occur online, face-to-face or through a combination of both. It should always be considered within a child protection context.

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a continuum from normal and developmentally expected behaviour to inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent behaviour. Behaviour that is problematic, abusive or violent is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental harm. The child's age and developmental stage, any age or power difference, disability, coercion, intent and the impact on the other child are critical considerations.

HSB can progress on a continuum. Early intervention in inappropriate or harmful behaviour, including misogynistic behaviour, can help prevent escalation into more serious sexual harassment or sexual violence. Children who display HSB may themselves have experienced abuse or trauma and should be offered appropriate safeguarding support.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. It can occur online or offline, inside or outside school, and may violate a child's dignity, make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated, or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

- sexual comments, sexual stories, lewd remarks or sexualised name-calling
- sexual "jokes" or taunting

- comments about clothing, appearance or bodies of a sexual nature
- deliberately brushing against someone or interfering with clothing
- displaying sexual images or drawings
- upskirting
- online sexual harassment, sexualised bullying or sharing unwanted explicit content
- making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes, including AI-generated images

Sexual violence

Sexual violence includes sexual offences such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault. It can also include causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, for example forcing a child to strip, touch themselves sexually or take part in sexual activity with another person.

Any sexual violence or harassment must be taken seriously. It must never be normalised, tolerated or dismissed as part of growing up.

Consent

Consent means having the freedom and capacity to choose. Staff should understand that:

- a child under 13 can never consent to sexual activity;
- the age of consent is 16;
- consent can be withdrawn at any time;
- sexual activity without consent may constitute a criminal offence;
- an apparent agreement does not amount to genuine consent where there is coercion, exploitation, intimidation or a significant power imbalance.

6. Prevention

The school will minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse through a whole-school safeguarding approach. This includes:

- maintaining a clear zero-tolerance approach to abuse, harassment, violence and discriminatory behaviour;
- challenging misogyny, misandry, racism and other prejudicial or derogatory behaviour at the earliest opportunity;
- providing a developmentally appropriate PSHE and RSHE curriculum that teaches healthy relationships, boundaries, consent, respect, online safety and how to seek help;
- teaching children that harmful behaviour is not normal or inevitable and that they can report concerns for themselves or for another child;
- providing clear, well-promoted, easily understood and accessible reporting routes;
- ensuring children know they will be listened to and their concerns will be taken seriously;
- maintaining appropriate filtering and monitoring arrangements and reviewing their effectiveness at least annually;
- considering online harms associated with generative AI and emerging technology as part of the school's safeguarding and online safety approach;
- using targeted work, safety planning and risk assessment for children who may be vulnerable to abuse or who may pose a risk to others;
- working with parents and carers so they understand the school's expectations, language and safeguarding approach;
- working with safeguarding partners and specialist agencies where appropriate;
- monitoring patterns, locations, times and groups associated with concerns so preventive action can be taken.

7. Reporting concerns

All children should feel confident to report child-on-child abuse. Reporting systems will be well promoted, easy to understand and accessible. Children may report directly to any trusted member of staff and do not need to use safeguarding terminology or provide a complete account before the school acts.

Staff must remain professionally curious. A child may not feel ready or know how to tell someone about abuse, may not recognise the experience as harmful, or may be prevented from speaking because of fear, shame, threats, disability, communication needs, language barriers or other vulnerabilities.

A child who reports abuse must be reassured that they are being taken seriously, will be supported and kept safe, and have not created a problem by speaking up.

Immediate staff response

1. Listen carefully and remain calm. Do not ask leading or investigative questions.
2. Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that the information must be shared with the DSL or Deputy DSL so that the child can be kept safe.
3. Make a factual record of what the child has said, using the child's own words where appropriate.
4. Report the concern to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.
5. Do not confront the child alleged to have caused harm and do not attempt to investigate the allegation yourself.
6. If there is an immediate risk of serious harm, take urgent safeguarding action, including contacting emergency services where necessary.

8. DSL response and decision-making

The DSL or Deputy DSL will take the lead on the safeguarding response. The school will not delay necessary safeguarding action while trying to establish every fact.

The DSL will consider:

- the wishes and feelings of the child who has experienced harm;
- the nature, severity and context of the alleged behaviour;
- the ages and developmental stages of the children involved;
- any power imbalance, coercion, exploitation, intimidation or threat;
- whether the behaviour is part of a pattern or appears to be escalating;
- the risk of further harm to the child, the alleged perpetrator, other pupils or staff;
- SEND, disability, communication, mental health or other vulnerability factors;
- whether the incident took place online, off-site or involved other children or adults;
- whether a crime may have been committed;
- what immediate safety arrangements are required;
- whether support can be managed internally, whether community-based early help or the targeted early-help level of Family Help is appropriate, or whether referral to children's social care and/or the police is required.

The DSL may seek advice from Cornwall's Multi-Agency Referral Unit (MARU) or other appropriate safeguarding partners when unsure how to proceed. Where a potential criminal offence has occurred, the police may need to be involved. Referrals to children's social care and the police may run in parallel.

Parents and carers

Parents or carers of the child who has experienced harm and the child alleged to have caused harm should normally be informed and kept appropriately updated, unless doing so would increase risk, prejudice a safeguarding or criminal investigation, or be contrary to professional advice from children's social care or the police. Confidential information about other children will not be shared.

9. Recording, investigation and information sharing

All concerns, reports, discussions, decisions and outcomes will be recorded securely in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures. Records must distinguish fact from professional opinion and should include the rationale for decisions, including decisions not to make an external referral.

The school will share information where it is necessary and proportionate to protect a child. Data protection law does not prevent the lawful sharing of safeguarding information.

Where a child transfers school, relevant safeguarding information will be shared securely and in accordance with the school's child protection procedures.

10. Risk and needs assessment / safety planning

Following a report of sexual violence, the DSL should make an immediate risk and needs assessment. A risk and needs assessment should also be considered for other forms of abuse where there is a risk of continuing harm. The assessment should be kept under review.

The assessment and any resulting safety plan should consider:

- the child who has experienced harm, especially their protection and support;
- the child alleged to have caused harm, including their own safeguarding and support needs;
- other children and staff who may be at risk;
- the location and timing of potential contact;
- classrooms, break/lunchtime, toilets, clubs, transport, visits and online contact;
- supervision, staffing and practical arrangements;
- the child's wishes and feelings, without allowing these to override action needed to protect others;
- review dates and clear responsibility for monitoring.

Safety arrangements are protective, not punitive, and must not be presented as a judgement about guilt. Wherever possible, the burden of practical change should not fall on the child who has experienced harm.

11. Children sharing classes or spaces

While the school establishes the facts and liaises with safeguarding partners, it will consider how to keep the children involved at a reasonable distance on the school site and during transport or activities. Where necessary, this may include temporary changes to classes, groups, supervision, break times, clubs or other arrangements.

Any such arrangements will be proportionate, regularly reviewed and informed by the risk and needs assessment. The school will seek to minimise disruption to the education and wellbeing of the child who has experienced harm.

12. Possible outcomes

Manage internally

Some incidents may be managed internally where the DSL is satisfied that this is a safe and proportionate response. The school may use its Anti-Bullying Policy alongside safeguarding support. The incident and the rationale for the response must still be recorded.

Community-based early help or Family Help

Where a child or family would benefit from additional support, the school will consider universal services and community-based early help, or referral to the targeted early-help level of Family Help, in line with current local arrangements and Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Children's social care

Where a child has suffered, is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, or otherwise meets the local threshold for statutory assessment or support, the DSL will make an appropriate referral to children's social care.

Police

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a criminal offence has been committed, the DSL will consider the need for police involvement, taking account of KCSIE and local safeguarding arrangements. If police attend school to interview a child, the child must have access to an appropriate adult in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and current PACE Code C.

13. Support for children

Support for the child who has experienced harm

The school will take account of the child's age, developmental stage, communication needs, wishes and feelings and the risk of further harm. Support may include a trusted adult, pastoral support, curriculum adjustments, safety planning, specialist services and liaison with parents/carers and external agencies.

The school will seek to maintain the child's access to education. If a move to another setting is requested or becomes necessary, the DSL will support safe information sharing and continuity of safeguarding support.

Support for the child alleged to have caused harm

The school will consider the safeguarding and support needs of the child alleged to have caused harm, including whether their behaviour may indicate that they have experienced abuse, trauma, exploitation or other unmet needs. Support does not reduce the seriousness of the reported behaviour or the school's responsibility to protect others.

Where the child remains at the school, risk assessment and safety planning will be reviewed regularly and informed by any advice from children's social care, police or specialist services.

Support for other children and staff

The school will consider whether witnesses, friends, siblings, staff or other children have been affected and whether they require support, reassurance, additional supervision or safeguarding action.

14. Child-on-child abuse outside school

Where alleged harm has taken place outside school and one or more children involved attend Boscastle School, the school still has a safeguarding responsibility. The DSL will consider the potential impact in school, the need for a safety plan and the need to share information or liaise with statutory agencies.

The school will also consider intra-familial harm and whether siblings or other family members may require safeguarding support.

15. Monitoring and governance

The Headteacher/ DSL will monitor child-on-child abuse concerns for patterns, themes, locations, times, groups, online trends and repeat concerns. This analysis will inform staff training, curriculum provision, supervision, online safety, risk management and school improvement activity.

The Governing Body will receive appropriate safeguarding information and assurance that the school's child-on-child abuse procedures are effective, while preserving individual children's confidentiality.

Governors will ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements are reviewed at least annually and when statutory guidance changes.

16. Staff training

All staff will receive safeguarding and child protection training at induction and regular updates thereafter, including child-on-child abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and violence, online safety and the school's reporting procedures.

From September 2026, all staff - including those who do not work directly with children - are expected to read KCSIE Part One in full. The school will keep appropriate records of staff safeguarding training and KCSIE confirmation.

17. Recommended resources and guidance

Resource	Use
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026	Department for Education statutory guidance, in force from 1 September 2026.
Working Together to Safeguard Children	Current statutory guidance on multi-agency working, including community-based early help and Family Help.
Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people	UKCIS Education Group guidance on responding to incidents.
Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education	Current Department for Education statutory guidance.
Behaviour in Schools	Current Department for Education guidance.
Preventing bullying	Current Department for Education guidance.
Searching, Screening and Confiscation	Current Department for Education advice for schools.
NSPCC Learning: sexual development and behaviour in children	Information to support understanding of developmentally expected and harmful sexual behaviour.
PACE Code C	Current code governing detention, treatment and questioning by police, including appropriate adult arrangements.

18. Review and approval

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there is a change to statutory guidance, legislation, local safeguarding arrangements or identified school need.

September 2026 review: principal changes

- Updated throughout from KCSIE 2025 to KCSIE 2026.
- Retitled to reflect KCSIE 2026 wording: “Child-on-child abuse (including harassment and violence)”.
- Added explicit recognition that child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for both victim and alleged perpetrator and is preventable.
- Added serious physical assault/harm and threats involving weapons.
- Strengthened discriminatory and prejudice-based abuse, including racism and faith-targeted abuse, and references to misogyny/misandry.
- Expanded nude/semi-nude imagery to include digitally altered and AI-generated material, including deepfakes/deep nudes.
- Clarified that all incidents involving nudes/semi-nudes require a safeguarding response.
- Strengthened harmful sexual behaviour continuum and early-intervention wording.
- Updated early-help terminology to distinguish community-based early help and the targeted early-help level of Family Help.
- Added heightened-risk times around the school day, including immediately after school.
- Added confirmation that all staff must read KCSIE Part One in full.