Durham Trinity School & Sports College

Nurture, Believe, Thrive, Succeed

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy (Including Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment) September 2026

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Date: September 2026

Signed & Adopted by the Governing Body:

Chair of Governors: Michelle Mulholland

Date: 4.11.2026

Date to be reviewed: September 2027 or as legislation dictates

STATEMENT OF POLICY

At Durham Trinity School and Sports College we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

CONTEXT AND DEFINITION

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online. All staff should be clear as to the school or college's policy and procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse and the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it. (KCSIE September 2026 Para 31)

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature. Examples of which are listed below. 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 behaviour, misogyny, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it. (KCSIE September 2026 Para 34)

Durham Trinity School and Sports College School staff who work with children are advised to maintain an attitude of **'it could happen here'** where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff should always act in the **best** interests of the child.

Child-on-child abuse is behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally hurt others.

All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing other children (including online).

All staff should be aware of safeguarding issues from child on child abuse including but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying),
- discriminatory behaviour, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other prejudice--based incidents,
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse'),
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse),
- serious physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon,
- sexual violence7 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,
- consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and seminudes,
- upskirting 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, and
- 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, sexualorientation, disability or other differences
- Result in significant, long lasting and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to thevictim; vulnerable adults are at particular risk of harm

Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs e.g.:

- 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 first priority of any education setting, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical. School staff, alongside their Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy, have to make their own judgementsabout each specific case and should use this policy guidance to help.

RESPONSIBILITY

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2026 states that:

> '*Schools and colleges should have processes and procedures in place to manage any safeguarding concern or allegation (no matter how small) about staff members (including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers, and contractors) … and sets out how allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with' (para 77 and 193) .*

It also emphasises that the voice of the child must be heard

> '*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*. *(para 120)*

Child on Child abuse is referenced in the school Safeguarding Policy. The sensitive nature and specific issues involved with child on child necessitate separate policy guidance.

At Durham Trinity School and Sports College we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to the impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

PURPOSE AND AIM

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as child on child abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child on child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

At Durham Trinity School and Sports College we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:
Anti-Bullying Policy
DTS Safeguarding School Policy 2026
Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2026 (KCSIE)
Online Safety Policy 2026
Relationship, Sex Education Policy

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 that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2026, highlighting that every assessment of a child, '*must be informed by the views of the child'* (pg 55) This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2026 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

ABUSE AND HARMFUL BEHAVIOUR

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between children and this list is not exhaustive (KCSIE, 2026). Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

1. PHYSICAL ABUSE E.G. (BITING, HITTING, KICKING, HAIR PULLING ETC.)

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

2. SEXUALLY HARMFUL BEHAVIOUR/SEXUAL ABUSE E.G. (INAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL LANGUAGE, TOUCHING, SEXUAL ASSAULT ETC.)

This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL will follow the KCSIE 2026 Part Five: Child-on-child sexual harassment and sexual violence

with consideration of

- The immediate response - page 132

- Managing internally - page 138
- Universal services and community based Early Help assessment - page 132
- Referrals to Family Help – including targeted Early Help and local authority children's social care – page 140
- Reporting to the police – page 142

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

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 well as 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
- **Upskirting:** 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. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.

3. BULLYING (INCLUSIVE OF ALL TYPES)

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power

can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour.

4. CYBER BULLYING

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 under section 1 which states that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

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 children to send sexual messages or engaging in sexual conversations

5. SEXTING / SHARING NUDE OR INDECENT IMAGERY

Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference.

However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Upskirting: 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. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.
This must always be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

DSL will follow the UKCIS: Sexting in schools and colleges 2024 guidance.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551575/6.2439_KG_NCA_Sexting_in_Schools_WEB 1_.PDF

6. INITIATION/HAZING

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies.

The idea behind this practice is that it 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.

7. 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 – in particular, prejudices to do with 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 (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

8. TEENAGE RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

Teenage relationship abuse is defined as 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, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner. This abuse may be child sexual exploitation.

EXPECTED ACTION TAKEN FROM ALL STAFF

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and initiator of the harm, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm.

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-school actions

It is important to deal with a situation of child-on-child abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred as soon after the child(ren) may have forgotten. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. For example; do not use the word perpetrator, this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

In all cases of child on child abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

TAKING ACTION

- Always take complaints seriously
- Gain a statement of facts from the pupil(s)
- Assess needs of victim and alleged perpetrator
- Consider referral to Police or Social Care
- Contribute to multi-agency assessments
- Convene a risk management meeting
- Record all incidents and all action taken

RECORDING SEXAULISED BEHAVIOUR

- Be clear, explicit and non-avoidant, and avoid vague statements or euphemisms
- Record as soon as possible, as you can quickly forget or confuse detail
- Follow the prompts on your safeguarding and child protection recording form
- Use proper names for body parts but record exactly any language or vocabulary usedby the child. Use the child's exact words in quotation marks.
- Note where and when the incident happened and whether anyone else was around.

GATHER THE FACTS

Speak to all the young people involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use **consistent language** and **open questions** for each account. The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the young people to tell you what happened.

Only interrupt the young person from this to gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?)

CONSIDER THE INTENT (BEGIN TO RISK ASSESS)

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?

DECIDE ON YOUR NEXT COURSE OF ACTION

If from the information that you gather you believe any young person to be at risk of significant harm you must make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately via First Contact (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also). If this is the case, once social care has been contacted and made a decision on what will happen next then you will be informed on your next steps. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed of this information in the early stages of information gathering.

If social care and the police intend to pursue this further they may ask to interview the young people in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to also. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

It may also be that social care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case you may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, you agree with the decision, you may then be left to inform parents.

INFORMING PARENTS

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care you have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then you need to inform the parents as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents.
In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then the school should encourage the young person to share the information with their parent or even with them (they may be scared to tell parents that they are being harmed in any way). Where school can evidence they are acting in the best interests of the young person they would not be criticised, however this would be the case if they actively breached the rights and choices of the young person.

The best way to inform parents is face to face. Although this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

POINTS TO CONSIDER:

What is the age of the children involved?

How old are the young people involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? (In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following)

Where did the incident or incidents take place?
Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?

What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?
Can each of the young people give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one young person different from another and why?

What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?
Do the young people know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the young person's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the young person have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If you are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, please seek advice from Children's Services Social Care via First Contact.

Repetition
Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

NEXT STEPS

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

For the young person who has been harmed
What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends. In which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of RSE, PHSE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.
If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour
In this circumstance, it is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through a TAF/strengthening families/early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation, the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

The school may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as exclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

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). In which case, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS

For all schools and settings, it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of child on child abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way.

Firstly, and most importantly for schools and settings is recognition that child on child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting young people to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff.
This can be supported by ensuring that each school/setting has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This can be strengthened through a strong and positive RSE/PHSE/SMSC curriculum

that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another.

To enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure the whole workforce feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is necessary for whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to young people in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice. It is incredibly important that staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a young person seeking no further help or advice.

It is important that signposting is available to young people in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. It is useful to have a resource board with support services on a wide range of issues so young people can seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of child on child abuse.

Young people at Durham Trinity School and Sports College take an active part in changing their circumstances and that of the procedures within this school. At Durham Trinity School and Sports College we have a school council and support pupil voice which encourages young people to support changes and to develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour'. This helps to create a positive ethos in our school and one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.

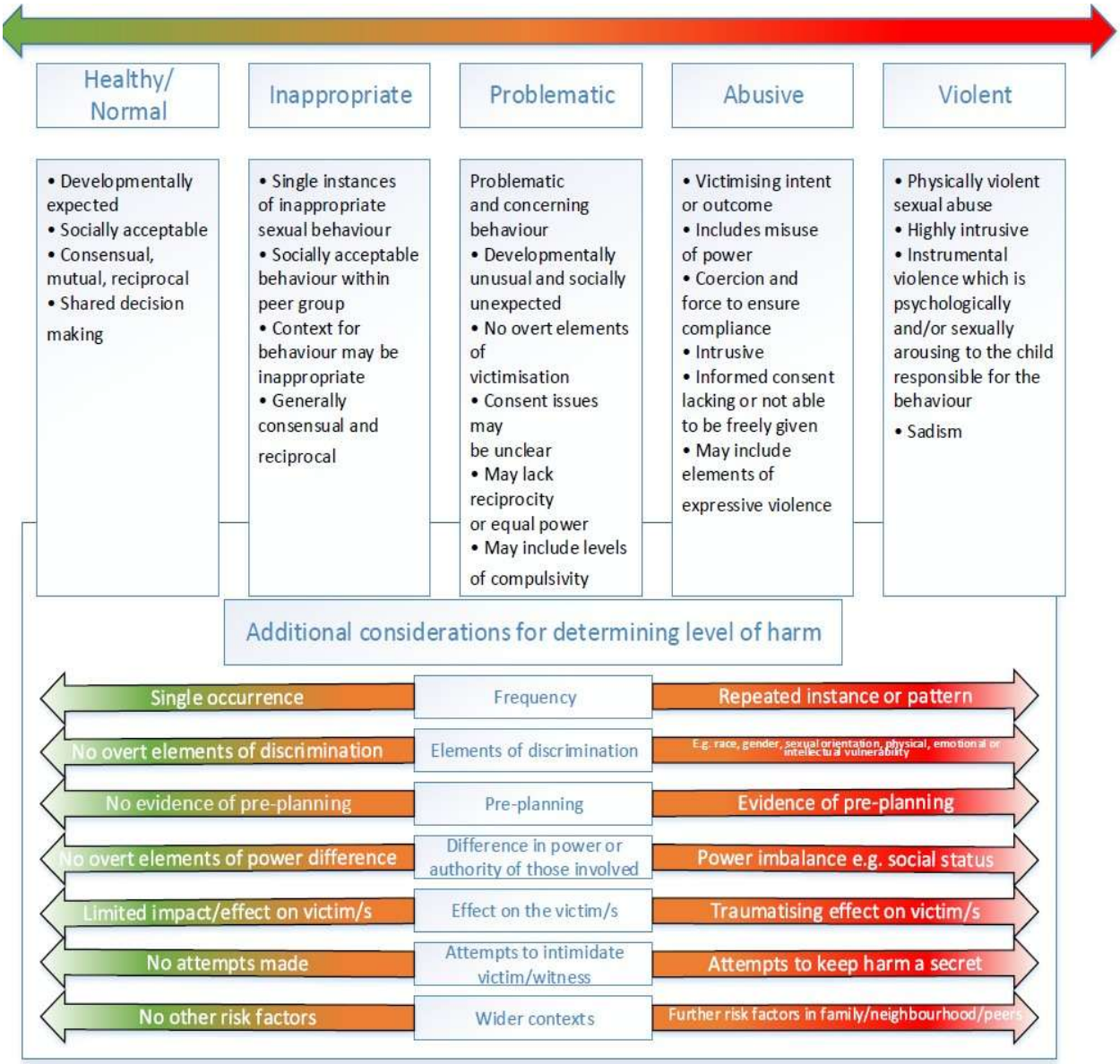
In Durham Trinity School and Sports College we have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. That culture extends beyond the classroom to the corridors, the dining hall, the playground, and beyond the school gates including travel to and from school. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest. (Preventing and tackling bullying, 2017).

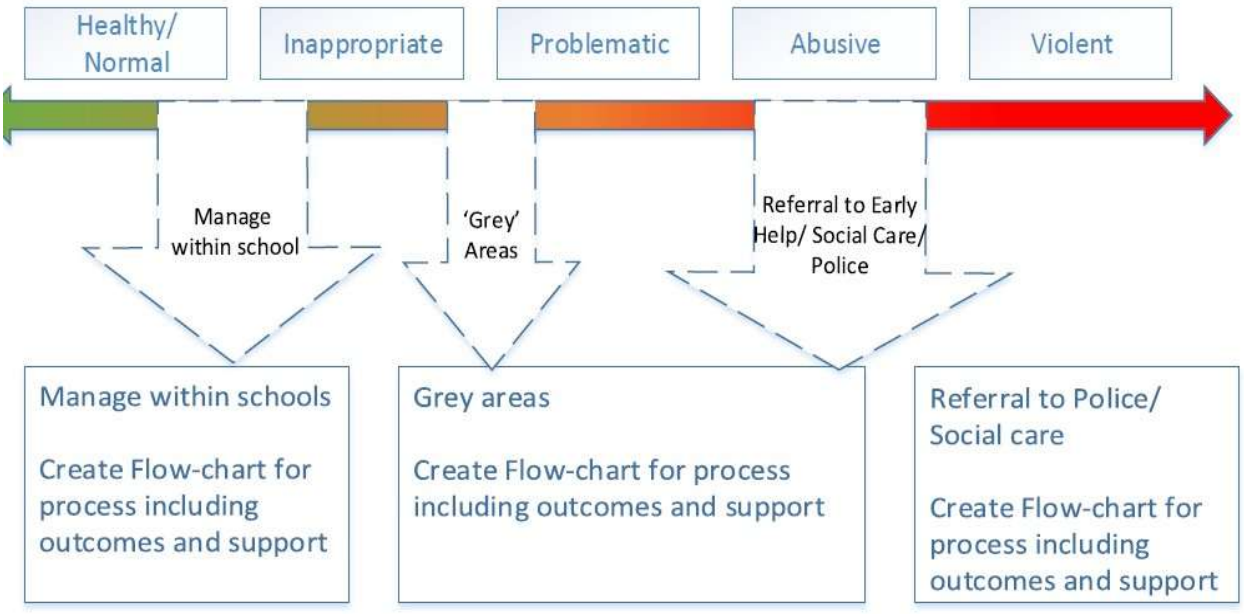
Additional Information

Durham Trinity School & Sports College will make reference to Durham County Council document '**Harmful Sexual Behaviour: Initial Assessment and Identification for Professionals'** and will seek advice from named LA representative, Tracy Tait.

https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1657/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework.pdf
Hackett's Contiunuum of Harmful Sexual Behaviour (2010)

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
Developmentally expected Socially acceptable Consensual, mutual, reciprocal Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Problematic and concerning behaviours • Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected • No overt elements of victimisation • Consent issues may be unclear • May lack reciprocity or equal power • May include levels of compulsivity	• Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim • May include elements of expressive violence	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator • Sadism


Healthy/ Normal
Inappropriate
Problematic
Abusive
Violent
• Developmentally expected
• Socially acceptable
• Consensual, mutual, reciprocal
• Shared decision making
• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour
• Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group
• Context for behaviour may be inappropriate
• Generally consensual and reciprocal
Problematic and concerning behaviour
• Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected
• No overt elements of victimisation
• Consent issues may be unclear
• May lack reciprocity or equal power
• May include levels of compulsivity
• Victimising intent or outcome
• Includes misuse of power
• Coercion and force to ensure compliance
• Intrusive
• Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given
• May include elements of expressive violence
• Physically violent sexual abuse
• Highly intrusive
• Instrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour
• Sadism
Additional considerations for determining level of harm
Single occurrence
Frequency
Repeated instance or pattern
No overt elements of discrimination
Elements of discrimination
E.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional or intellectual vulnerability
No evidence of pre-planning
Pre-planning
Evidence of pre-planning
No overt elements of power difference
Difference in power or authority of those involved
Power imbalance e.g. social status
Limited impact/effect on victim/s
Effect on the victim/s
Traumatising effect on victim/s
No attempts made
Attempts to intimidate victim/witness
Attempts to keep harm a secret
No other risk factors
Wider contexts
Further risk factors in family/neighbourhood/peers


Healthy/ Normal
Inappropriate
Problematic
Abusive
Violent
Manage within school
'Grey' Areas
Referral to Early Help/ Social Care/ Police
Manage within schools
Create Flow-chart for process including outcomes and support
Grey areas
Create Flow-chart for process including outcomes and support
Referral to Police/ Social care
Create Flow-chart for process including outcomes and support

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

- DfE: Statutory guidance: Working together to safeguard children, July 2026 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2
- DfE: Statutory guidance: Keeping children safe in education, September 2026 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2
- DfE: Searching, screening and confiscation at school, July 2023 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation
- DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying, July 2016 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying
- DfE: Statutory guidance School exclusion, July 2026 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion
- DfE: Teaching Online Safety in Schools, July 2023 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools
- DfE: Relationship Education and Relationship and Sex Education, September 2026 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education
- DfE: Behaviour and discipline in schools, February 2024 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-and-discipline-in-schools
- DfE: Mental health and behaviour in schools, November 2018 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2
- DfE: Children Missing Education, September 2025 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education
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