



Dear Parents and Carers

Safeguarding Reminders

Considering recent media reports relating to the 'Everyone's Invited' website, I thought it would be helpful and reassuring to remind parents and carers of the safeguarding procedures that the school has in place. This includes the ways in which students, staff, parents, carers and the wider community can report any concerns.

Testbourne School has an open safeguarding culture and we actively encourage reporting so that issues can be dealt with swiftly and appropriately. The following information is available on our school website for reference:

We have a trained team of Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs). They are:

- Dr Hall (Senior DSL)
- Mr Lovegrove
- Ms Jenkins
- Mr Tiley
- Mrs Harper
- Miss Yacoby
- Mr Alderman
- Mrs Wheeler
- Ms Bateman

Concerns can be raised via the DSL team or indeed any colleague in the school that a student feels comfortable to talk to. All staff receive annual safeguarding training, including how to support when disclosures are made.

If a student does not want to speak directly to a member of staff, then there are also students trained in anti-bullying and/or mental health support who can be approached. As well as providing immediate peer support, they will also ensure that the DSL team are informed.

We also have our Stay Safe (staysafe@testbourne.school) and No to Bullying (ntb@testbourne.school) alerts that can be used to raise concerns with our DSL Team.

Our Child Protection Policy is available on our school website [HERE](#)

If you wish to know more about how the school addresses the specific issue of sexual violence and harassment, then please read the supplementary section of this letter for further guidance.

Yours sincerely

Dr Hall

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Mr Jon Beck BSc (Hons), NPQH, Headteacher, Testbourne Community School
01256 892061 • admin@testbourne.school • www.testbourne.school





Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) Supplementary Information

Annex 5 of our Child Protection policy relates specifically to Peer on Peer abuse. I should like to draw attention to key information.

Research has shown that teenagers do not often understand what constitutes abusive behaviours and controlling behaviours which could escalate to physical abuse, e.g. checking someone's 'phone, telling them what to wear, who they can/can't see or speak to; or that this abuse is prevalent within teenage relationships.

Further research shows that teenagers are likely not to understand what consent means within their relationships. They often hold the common misconception that rape could only be committed by a stranger down a dark alley and do not understand or recognise that it could happen within their own relationships.

This can lead to these abusive behaviours feeling 'normal' and therefore left unchallenged as they are not recognised as being abusive.

In response to these research findings the school provides education to help prevent teenagers from becoming victims and perpetrators of abusive relationships, by encouraging them to rethink their views of violence, abuse and controlling behaviours, and understand what consent means within their relationships.

What is meant by 'peer on peer' abuse?

Peer on Peer abuse relates to any act of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment that occurs between two children of any age and gender. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, likely, adversely affect their educational attainment as well as their emotional well-being. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) **and are never acceptable.**

Examples of 'peer on peer' abuse

It can be difficult to work out if a child is displaying appropriate, inappropriate, problematic or abusive sexual behaviour.

Examples of sexually abusive behaviour may include:

- inappropriate or unwanted sexualised touching



- pressurising, forcing or coercing others to perform or take part in sexual acts
- pressuring, forcing or coercing someone to share nude images (sexting)
- sharing sexual images of a person without their consent
- taking a picture under a person's clothing, without their consent ('upskirting')
- sexual harassment - unwanted sexual attention or pestering.
- sexual or sexist name calling - this includes homophobic or transgender phobic language.

How do we address peer on peer abuse at Testbourne?

We recognise that students do not always feel able to speak out about their experiences. They may be afraid of:

- being considered a 'snitch'
- getting in trouble themselves
- how they will be perceived by others
- teachers or other adults not being discreet
- their parents being informed.

In addition, we recognise that students may not always understand that they have been the victim of peer on peer abuse. This may be because:

- they don't understand what constitutes appropriate, inappropriate, problematic or abusive sexualised behaviour
- they have experienced sexual abuse themselves and don't realise that what happened to them was wrong
- they don't know whether consent was given
- the abuse happened between friends or partners
- the abuse took place online
- they blame themselves for the abuse they received

To address these issues, we provide learning opportunities in relationships and sexual health education through our PSHCE curriculum and through the work of the pastoral care team.



At Testbourne, all reported incidents are taken seriously, managed sensitively, and victims will be offered appropriate support.

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment can be extremely complex to manage. We ensure that victims are protected, offered appropriate support and every effort is made to ensure their education is not disrupted. Additionally, students, staff and families are supported and protected, as appropriate.

We believe that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the school and other children.

We recognise that children can abuse their peers, and this will be dealt with under our child protection policy and in line with the statutory framework - Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (2020)

We are clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.

Prevention

We minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse through the following prevention methods.

- Taking a whole school approach to safeguarding & child protection
- Providing training to all staff.
- Providing a clear set of values and standards, underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, and by a planned programme of evidence-based content delivered through the curriculum.
- Engaging with specialist support and interventions.

Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment:

- Students should be reassured that if they make a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment that it will be taken seriously, that they will be kept safe and be well supported.
- Any member of staff taking a report will inform the DSL Team as soon as practicably possible but no longer than within 24 hours.
- Staff taking a report will never promise confidentiality. This is in order that we can effectively safeguard.
- Parents or carers will normally be informed (unless we feel this would put the child at greater risk).
- If a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral will be made to Children's Social Care. If necessary, we will also contact the police in tandem with this referral.



- Following a report, the DSL will make an immediate risk and needs assessment on a case-by-case basis. This will consider the victim, alleged perpetrators, and other students in the school. It is a written record that will be kept under review. The DSL will also refer to a recognised support toolkit known as the 'Brooks Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light' (refer to Annex 6 of our Child Protection policy). A template for our risk assessment can be found in Annex 7 of our Child Protection Policy.
- Where there has been other professional intervention and/or other specialist risk assessments, these professional assessments will be used to inform the school's approach to supporting and protecting students.

Action:

DSLs consider a range of factors (referred to in Annex 5 of the Child Protection Policy) in deciding the most appropriate course of action to take following an investigation.

Commonly, the following options will be considered as appropriate:

- The situation is managed internally within the school through our safeguarding and behaviour policies.
- Early Help Hub support is engaged.
- A referral is made to Childrens' Services
- The incident is reported to the police. This will generally be in parallel with a referral to Childrens' Services.

In addition, as part of our on-going review:

- The DSL will monitor any risk assessment in place.
- Where there is a criminal investigation, the alleged perpetrator will be removed from any classes they share with the victim.
- Where a criminal investigation leads to a conviction or caution, the school will take suitable action. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, this is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and the school will consider suitable consequences, including permanent exclusion. The nature of any conviction or caution and the wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how we proceed.
- The school recognises that taking disciplinary action and providing appropriate support are not mutually exclusive actions and will occur at the same time if necessary. We have a responsibility to support students who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours.
- The victim, alleged perpetrator and other witnesses (student or adult) will receive appropriate support and safeguards on a case-by-case basis.



Additional resources

We have links to guidance and information from respected organisations e.g., the NSPCC via our school website (Parental Resources section).

The following links are pertinent:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sex-relationships/sexual-behaviour-children/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/sexting-sending-nudes/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation has produced a detailed toolkit to support parents and carers with discussing these issues, what to look out for, how to report and further contact details for support.

[Lucy Faithfull Foundation Harmful Sexual Behaviour Prevention Toolkit](#)

Parents Protect (a project of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation) has developed an online child sexual abuse and exploitation awareness learning programme for parents, carers, and professionals to help:

- Understand potential risks
- Recognise the signs of possible abuse in children
- Be aware of inappropriate behaviour in adults
- Know where to go for help if you have concerns and would like to talk about them

You can find the programme here: <https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/sexual-abuse-learning-programme.htm>

The NSPCC has set up a dedicated helpline for people who have experienced incidents of sexual harassment and abuse in education.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2021/sexual-abuse-victims-schools-helpline/>

We are, of course, keen that concerns are always reported to us so that we can deal with them directly and in a timely way, signposting to relevant support.