

APPENDIX B

ADDENDUM TO TRUST POLICY SAFEGARDING STATEMENT

Peer on Peer Sexual Abuse

Peer on peer sexual abuse occurs between children who are of a similar age and/or stage of development. It can take place between two children or amongst a group.

It is normal for children and young people to display certain types of sexual behaviour as part of a healthy development, and it is the role of adults who work with children to identify any sexualised behaviour that is harmful or abusive and respond proportionally.

Abuse can take place in any setting either supervised or unsupervised for example: online, in classroom settings, toilets, outside settings and corridors (NSPCC April 2021).

Abusive behaviour can take many forms but may consist of:

- Unwanted touching
- Pressure or coercing others to perform or take part in sexual acts or to share nude or sexualised imagery
- Sharing or taking sexual images without consent (for example upskirting)
- Using sexual language

Children may not always understand that their behaviour is inappropriate and may demonstrate abusive behaviours because of abuse they have experienced and did not know it was wrong. A child might not understand if consent has been given or believe communications shared online do not have the same repercussions as in person.

It is important that all staff work to create a safe environment that provides children with an opportunity to share their experiences and concerns. Staff need to challenge language which is inappropriate or demonstrates societal stereotypes and biases. Through RSHE children should access age/stage appropriate materials covering topics of consent, healthy and respectful relationships, gender stereotypes and online content and sexual imagery.

Research has shown that mass communications regarding peer-on-peer abuse can have a negative impact on engagement and the more effective approach is to work with small groups and challenge any behaviour including references to being a 'snitch' (Contextual Safeguarding Network June 2020).

If staff are concerned about peer-on-peer abuse, they should report their concerns to a member of the safeguarding team in line with usual safeguarding procedures. Each case and child will be reviewed, and risk assessed, considering the individual experiences of the children, their understanding and what support is required for both the child receiving the abuse and the child who has displayed harmful behaviours (KCSIE January 2021).