

# Peer on Peer Abuse and Sexting Policy

*Little Thurrock Primary School*



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## Peer on Peer abuse policy

### Statement of intent:

**All staff and Governors have a vital role in fulfilling their safeguarding duty, and are expected to remain vigilant at all times to ensure that children's welfare is actively promoted with timely safeguarding action taken where needed. Through providing a caring, safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social, physical, moral and spiritual development of all our pupils, we aim to foster a culture of trust, respect and security.**

At Little Thurrock all staff recognise that harmful sexual behaviour can happen via peer-on-peer abuse. This is most likely to include, but not limited to: bullying (including cyber-bullying), gender-based violence/sexual assaults and sexting.

Here at Little Thurrock we teach our children to respect physical boundaries and how to say 'no' to unwanted or unwelcome behaviour. Our children know how to share concerns, ask for help or tell an adult if they are worried on another person's behalf.

We also cascade information regarding all aspects of safeguarding to our parent body via newsletter, online training and parentmail.

### What is harmful sexual behaviour?

All children pass through different stages of development as they grow and their awareness and curiosity about sexual matters also changes. There is a generally accepted range of behaviour linked to a child's age and stage of development although some children will develop at different rates, and there may be occasions when we need to speak with a child about a particular behaviour. Children with disabilities may also develop at different rates depending on their disability, and these children are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

Harmful sexual behaviour can include children for whom sexual experimentation goes too far to serious sexual assault. It can involve children as young as five, and the victim is usually, but not exclusively, younger than the perpetrator.

### Age-appropriate sexual behaviour

Pre-school children (0-5 years)
<b>Commonly:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use 'childish' sexual language to talk about body parts</li></ul>

- Ask how babies are made and where they come from
- Touch or rub their own genitals
- Show and look at private body parts

**They rarely:**

- Discuss sexual acts or use sexually explicit language
- Have physical sexual contact with other children
- Show adult-like sexual behaviour or knowledge

School-age children (6-12 years)

**Commonly:**

- Ask questions about menstruation, pregnancy and sexual behaviour
- Experiment with other children, often during games, kissing, touching, showing and role-playing e.g mums and dads or doctors and nurses
- Masturbate in private
- Older children in this age range are also more likely than pre-school children to use sexual words and discuss sexual acts, particularly with their friends

**They rarely:**

- Masturbate in public
- Show adult-like sexual behaviour or knowledge

Adolescents (13-16 years)

**Commonly:**

- Ask questions about relationships and sexual behaviour
- Use sexual language and talk about sexual acts between themselves
- Masturbate in private
- Experiment sexually with adolescents of a similar age

**They rarely:**

- Masturbate in public
- Have sexual contact with much younger children or adults



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**Youth produced sexual imagery (Sexting) policy**

Sharing photos and videos online is a daily part of life for many people, as is the ease and availability of access to social media. The ease and speed of sharing photos and videos, particularly sexual

images, could lead to young people putting themselves at risk of bullying, vulnerability to child sexual exploitation, and embarrassment.

**This policy defines youth produced sexual imagery as:**

- A person under 18 creating and sharing sexual imagery of themselves with a peer under the age of 18
- A person under the age of 18 sharing sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18 with a peer under the age of 18 or An adult
- A person under the age of 18 is in possession of sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18.

**The sharing of sexual imagery of people under the age of 18 by adults constitutes child sexual abuse and the police will be informed immediately.**

**Procedures for dealing with disclosures**

The school has robust child protection procedures for handling and responding to any safeguarding disclosures. At Little Thurrock all staff take any disclosure seriously and operate under the belief that 'it could happen here'.

In the first instance a disclosure is passed onto one of the DSL in the school. Adults should not view youth produced sexual imagery as part of a disclosure. The decision to view imagery should be based on the professional judgement of the DSL and only if;

- It is necessary to be able to make a decision on whether to involve other agencies ( it would be impossible to establish facts otherwise)
- It is unavoidable as the imagery has already been shown to staff or shared on school devices

**If an initial review of the disclosure shows that;**

- An adult is involved
- There is reason to believe the young person has been coerced, blackmailed or that grooming is taking place
- There is a belief that the imagery suggests content not appropriate for the child's developmental age
- The image may depict sexual acts
- It is believed that the young person is at risk of harm due to the sharing of the imagery, e.g suicidal or likely to self-harm.

**If the disclosure meets any of these criteria then a referral must be made to the police and social care**

A decision to respond to the incident without involving the police or social care may be made by the DSL if she/he is confident that they have enough information to assess the risks to the young person/people involved and that school procedures can manage the situation using in house pastoral and/or disciplinary policies. The decision will be recorded in line with school policy.

The decision not to refer at this stage must take the following into account:

- Why was the imagery shared? Was the young person coerced or put under pressure to produce the imagery?

- Who has shared the imagery? Where has it been shared? Was it shared with the knowledge of the pupil in the imagery?
- Are there any adults involved in the sharing of the imagery?
- What is the impact on the pupils involved?
- Do the pupils involved have additional vulnerabilities?
- Does the young person understand consent?
- Has the young person taken part in this kind of activity before?

**If the decision has been taken to not inform outside agencies then the DSL has a responsibility to:**

- Recognise the pressure that the young person may have been under to take part
- Support parents with understanding the wider issues and possible motivations
- Remain solution-focussed and non-judgemental
- Reassure the young person
- Help the young person to understand what has happened
- Discuss issues of consent and trust with healthy relationships
- Identify (without looking) what the imagery contains and who else may be involved
- Find out who may have seen the image and how further dissemination may be prevented

Any disclosures and decisions will be recorded according to the agreed record keeping procedures within the school.