



## **Starlings Preschool Peer on peer abuse policy and procedures**

### **Introduction**

DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2016) says that ‘governing bodies should ensure that there are procedures in place to handle allegations against other children’. The guidance also states the importance of minimising the risks of peer-on- peer abuse. In most instances, the conduct of students towards each other will be covered by the school’s behaviour policy. Some allegations may be of such a serious nature that they may raise safeguarding concerns. These allegations are most likely to include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. It is also likely that incidents dealt with under this policy will involve older students and their behaviour towards younger students or those who are vulnerable.

### **The safeguarding implications of sexual activity between young people<sup>1</sup>**

The intervention of child protection agencies in situations involving sexual activity between children can require difficult professional judgments. Some situations are statutorily clear – for example, a child under the age of 13 cannot consent to sexual activity. But it will not necessarily be appropriate to initiate safeguarding procedures where sexual activity involving children and young people below the age of legal consent (16 years) comes to notice. In our society generally the age at which children become sexually active has steadily dropped. It is important to distinguish between consensual sexual activity between children of a similar age (where at least one is below the age of consent), and sexual activity involving a power imbalance, or some form of coercion or exploitation. It may also be difficult to be sure that what has or has been alleged to have taken place definitely does have a sexual component.

As usual, important decisions should be made on a case by case basis, on the basis of an assessment of the children’s best interests. Referral under safeguarding arrangements may be necessary, guided by an assessment of the extent to which a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

Key specific considerations will include:

- The age, maturity and understanding of the children;
- Any disability or special needs of the children;
- Their social and family circumstance;
- Any evidence in the behaviour or presentation of the children that might suggest they have been harmed;
- Any evidence of pressure to engage in sexual activity;
- Any indication of sexual exploitation.

There are also contextual factors. Gender, sexuality, race and levels of sexual knowledge can all be used to exert power. A sexual predator may sometimes be a woman or girl and the victim a boy

### **Policy:-**

At Starlings Pre-school we believe that all children have a right to attend our setting and learn in a

safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the pre-school and other students. We recognise that some children will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under the pre-school's behaviour policy.

### **Prevention**

As a setting we will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by:-

- Providing a developmentally appropriate PSHE syllabus which develops children's understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe
- Having systems in place for any child to raise concerns with staff, knowing that they will be listened to, believed and valued
- Delivering targeted work on assertiveness and keeping safe to those children identified as being at risk
- Developing robust risk assessments & providing targeted work for children identified as being a potential risk to other children.

### **Allegations against other pupils which are safeguarding issues**

Occasionally, allegations may be made against children by others in the pre-school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. It is likely that, to be considered a safeguarding allegation against a child, some of the following features will be found.

If the allegation:-

- Is made against an older child and refers to their behaviour towards a younger child or a more vulnerable child
- Is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence
- Raises risk factors for other children in the pre-school
- Indicates that other children may have been affected by this child
- Indicates that young people outside the pre-school may be affected by this child

Examples of safeguarding issues against a child could include:

#### **Physical Abuse**

- Violence, particularly pre-planned
- Forcing others to use drugs or alcohol

#### **Emotional Abuse**

- Blackmail or extortion
- Threats and intimidation

#### **Sexual Abuse**

- Indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assaults
- Forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting

#### **Sexual Exploitation**

- Encouraging other children to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour (For example - having an older boyfriend/girlfriend, associating with unknown adults or other sexually exploited children, staying out overnight)
- Photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts

#### **Procedure:-**

- When an allegation is made by a child against another child, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern. If there is a safeguarding concern the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be informed.

- A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances.
- The DSL should contact the Manager to discuss the case. The DSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a referral where appropriate.
- If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place, the Manager will refer the case to the multi-agency agency safeguarding hub where the police will become involved.
- Parents, of both the child being complained about and the alleged victim, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral.
- The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy in the files of both children's files.
- It may be appropriate to exclude the child being complained about for a period of time according to the school's behaviour policy and procedures.
- Where neither social services nor the police accept the complaint, a thorough pre-school investigation should take place into the matter using the pre-school's usual disciplinary procedures.
- In situations where the pre-school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan.
- The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Starlings Pre-school (name of provider)

- Held on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)
- Date to be reviewed \_\_\_\_\_ (date)
- Signed on behalf of the provider \_\_\_\_\_
- Name of signatory \_\_\_\_\_

Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_