

Safeguarding Bulletin: November 2021

Harmful Sexual Behaviour ('HSB')

One of the main developments in this year's Department for Education safeguarding guidance (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021) is a renewed focus on Peer on Peer Abuse and, in particular, Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB). In part, this relates to the debate and issues highlighted by the 'me too' movement. One of the School's responsibilities is to raise awareness of safeguarding issues and we hope that the following information and resources will serve that purpose. As with all safeguarding matters, we take the approach that 'it could happen here'.

If you have any safeguarding concerns, they should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Miss Reid).

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) may also be referred to as 'Peer on Peer sexual assault/violence/harassment' or 'Teen Sexual Harm', terms of which describe:

"Any behaviour of a sexual nature between under 18's, of any gender, which causes assault or harassment to a child or group of children".

The term 'HSB', can include actions which are unintentional, mistaken or excused by young people as 'a joke' or 'banter', which can have a detrimental effect on those involved.

Harmful sexual behaviour is characterised by a range of behaviours that may include:

- Sexual name-calling.
- Sexual harassment.
- Online sexual bullying.
- Sexual image sharing (online or offline)
- Sexual assault.
- Rape.

There are a number of reasons why young people may engage in HSB and the list below is not exhaustive:

- Alcohol or drug use;
- Seeing or being the target of aggression (sexual, physical or psychological) at home, at school, or in the community;
- A lack of knowledge about sexual boundaries;
- Experiencing negative feelings and not knowing how to address them;
- The behaviour being met with positive and/or little or no negative consequences (for example, adults turn a blind eye and peers offer respect)

Harmful sexual behaviour can exist on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. **HSB can occur online and/or face to face and can also occur simultaneously between the two.**

Should you require any further confidential specialist support on HSB, the following services are available:

StopItNow - Preventing harmful sexual behaviour in children - Stop It Now provides a guide for parents, carers and professionals to help everyone do their part in keeping children safe, they also run a free confidential helpline

- Rape Crisis (England & Wales) or The Survivors Trust -information, advice, and details of local specialist sexual violence organisations.
- NICE guidance contains information on, amongst other things: developing interventions; working with families and carers; and multi-agency working.
- The Lucy Faithfull Foundation has developed a HSB toolkit, which amongst other things, provides support, advice and information on how to prevent it, links to organisations and helplines, resources about HSB by children, internet safety, sexual development and preventing child sexual abuse.
- The NSPCC provides free and independent advice about HSB: NSPCC Learning: Protecting children from harmful sexual behaviour and NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework.

In summary, schools have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. More House School operates under the culture that '*this can happen anywhere*' and thus we treat any issues, concerns, allegations or reports very seriously, taking a zero tolerance approach.