

**Peer on Peer abuse Policy**

**2017**

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| School Staff were consulted on this document and it was accepted by the standards and performance committee on : |  |
| It was ratified by the Governing Body on : |  |

**SHENFIELD HIGH SCHOOL**

**BEHAVIOUR FOR LEARNING – PEER ON PEER ABUSE POLICY**

**Statement of intent**

Shenfield High School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students, so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Peer on peer abuse of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If peer on peer abuse does occur, all students can talk to someone, secure in the knowledge that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

**What is peer on peer abuse?**

Peer on peer abuse is the consistent and deliberate actions of a person, or group of people, which are designed to hurt the person at whom they are directed.

**What does peer on peer abuse look like, feel like, sound like?**

* It is any behaviour by an individual or group that is meant to hurt the person.
* The individual or group doing the abusing know what they are doing and mean to do it.
* It happens more than once – there will be a pattern of behaviour, not just a ‘one-off’ incident.
* Involves an imbalance of power – the person being abused will usually find it very hard to defend themselves.

Peer on peer abuse can take the form of verbal, cyber or physical behaviour and may incorporate one or more of the following:

Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding and tormenting

Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or the threatening of violence

Racist: racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, comments or jokes

Sexual: unwanted physical contact or sexual comments

Homophobic: gestures, comments, graffiti or jokes focusing on the issue of sexuality

Verbal: name calling, taunting, sarcasm, teasing, spreading rumours

Cyber: the abusive use of any form of social network or electronic communication

Appearance: nasty comments about the way someone looks

Gender: nasty comments, taunts, behaviours towards transgender, and other gender type identities that students may have.

**Why is it important to respond to peer on peer abuse?**

No one deserves to be a victim of peer on peer abuse. Everybody has the right to come to school, feel safe, enjoy their learning and be treated with respect. Schools have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of peer on peer abuse.

**Objectives of this Policy**

* As a school we take peer on peer abuse seriously. Students and parents should be assured that they will be supported when peer on peer abuse is reported.
* All students and parents should know what the school policy is on peer on peer abuse, and what to do if peer on peer abuse arises.
* All governors, teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents should have an understanding of what peer on peer abuse is.
* All governors, teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the school policy is on peer on peer abuse, and follow it when bullying is reported.

**Signs and symptoms**

A student who is a victim of peer on peer abuse, may exhibit behaviours which are unusual. This could be seen in terms of their motivation to come to school; they may want to be escorted to or from school or could start truanting. It may become apparent through their property being damaged, an unwillingness to eat at school or they may want to bring extra money to school to pay the bullies. A victim of peer on peer abuse could become solitary or show traits of anxiety, have difficulty in getting to sleep, be frightened to talk or start stammering.

These indicators could suggest other problems but peer on peer abuse should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

**Procedures**

1. All peer on peer incidents should be reported and recorded on an incident report form, by the students concerned, to any member of staff.
2. All peer on peer allegations and/or threats of peer on peer abuse will be promptly investigated by the most appropriate member of the Pastoral Team.
3. All proven cases of peer on peer abuse will be recorded and kept on the files of both the bully and the victim and parents of both will be notified. This will then be recorded centrally via the Pastoral Secretary.
4. All proven incidents will result in sanctions for the perpetrator, together with appropriate support and/or counselling for both the victim and the perpetrator.
5. Via guidance, monitoring and support, an attempt will be made to help the perpetrator/s modify their behaviour. Parents may be asked into school to discuss the school’s concerns and help work together towards a more positive way forward.
6. If necessary, in extreme or persistent cases, the police will be informed.

**Outcomes**

1. Wherever possible, the students will be reconciled and, if appropriate, restorative approaches used.
2. The perpetrator will be asked to apologise and make assurances regarding future behaviour.
3. All proven incidents of peer on peer abuse will result in some form of sanction for the perpetrator. (Dependant on each specific incident, this may range from a warning or detention to the possibility of exclusion). All parties involved will be made aware of the sanction taken, which will vary depending on the severity of the incident and the perpetrator’s previous history.
4. In serious cases, suspension or even Permanent Exclusion will be considered. If necessary and appropriate, the police will be involved.
5. After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, the students in each case will be monitored to help ensure repeated peer on peer abuse does not take place.
6. Once peer on peer abuse has been proven and resolved, all parties will be made aware that communication, preferably with a specifically named member of staff is vital to help avoid repetition, retaliation or further incidents, including those involving “third parties”.

**Parents**

Most concerns about peer on peer abuse will be resolved and discussed between home and school. However, where a parent feels their concerns have not been resolved, they are encouraged to use the formal Complaints Procedure.

Where a pupil is involved in peer on peer abuse with others outside school, i.e. in the street or through the use of internet at home, parents will be asked to work with the school in addressing their child’s behaviour, for example, restricting/monitoring their use of the internet or mobile phone

Referral of the family to external support agencies will be made where appropriate.

**Preventative measures**

The school will:

* Raise awareness of the nature of peer on peer abuse through inclusion in PSHE, tutorial time, assemblies, subject areas and informal discussion, as appropriate, in an attempt to eradicate such behaviour.
* Give care and support to create and maintain a safe learning environment where all pupils feel safe, secure and valued and know they will be listened to and taken seriously in line with the school ethos.
* Participate in local and national initiatives such as Anti-bullying Week
* Consider the use of specific strategies, e.g. implement peer mentoring on a regular basis and empower students as Anti-bullying ambassadors subject to available resources.

**The law and statutory guidance with respect to peer on peer abuse**

THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

Under the Equality Act 2010, new duties on schools and other public bodies came into force from April 2011. The Act strengthens and simplifies existing equality legislation. The Act brings together existing duties not to discriminate on grounds of race, disability and gender which schools are already bound to comply with, and it extends these to include duties not to discriminate on the grounds of age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or gender re-assignment. It places a requirement on governing bodies and proprietors of schools to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Under the Children Act 1989 a peer on peer abuse incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is ‘reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm’. Where this is the case, the school staff should report their concerns to their local authority children’s social care. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, schools may need to draw on a range of external services to support the student who is experiencing peer on peer abuse, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child doing the peer on peer abuse.

CRIMINAL LAW

Although peer on peer abuse in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986. If school staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communication Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

PEER ON PEER ABUSE OUTSIDE SCHOOL PREMISES

Head teachers have a specific statutory power to discipline students for poor behaviour outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives head teachers the power to regulate students conduct when they are not on school premises and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff. This can relate to any peer abuse incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, in a town or village centre, cyber abuse or via social networking sites.

Where peer on peer abuse outside school is reported to school staff, it should be investigated and acted on. The head teacher should also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or anti-social behaviour coordinator in their local authority of the actions taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed.