



Child on Child Abuse Policy

**This policy was adopted by the Governing Body in October 2025.
It is reviewed annually.**

This policy is due for review October 2026

Introduction:

For the purpose of this policy, 'child on child abuse' is defined as abuse between children.

- Liscard Primary has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, including child-on-child abuse,
- All staff will be aware that child-on-child abuse can occur between pupils of any age and gender, both inside and outside of school, as well as online risk and harm. All staff will be aware of the indicators of child-on-child abuse, how to identify it, and how to respond to reports. All staff will also recognise that even if no cases have been reported, this is not an indicator that child-on-child abuse is not occurring.
- All staff will speak to the DSL if they have any concerns about child-on-child abuse.
- All staff will understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviour between peers, and will not tolerate abuse as “banter” or “part of growing up”.

We are committed to a whole school approach to ensure the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child on child abuse within our school and beyond.

In cases where child on child abuse is identified we will follow our safeguarding procedures, taking a contextual approach to support all children and young people who have been affected by the situation.

We recognise that child on child abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

- Bullying, including cyberbullying and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying.
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers – sometimes known as ‘teenage relationship abuse’.
- Physical abuse – this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse.
- Sexual violence – this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence.
- Sexual harassment, including online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent.
- The consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos. / Upskirting.
- Initiation- and hazing-type violence and rituals, which can include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group, and may also include an online element.

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school such as the behaviour policy, anti- bullying policy, safeguarding policy and online safety policy.

This policy concentrates on child on child abuse in the context of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child on child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and should be read in conjunction with Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership's (WSCP) Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

This policy links to the Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Anti-bullying/ Prejudice policy and Internet Safety policy.

Aims:

The policy will: -

- Set out our strategies for preventing, identifying and managing child on child abuse
- Take a contextual approach to safeguarding all children and young people involved.

Acknowledging that children who have allegedly abused their peers or displayed harmful sexual behaviour are themselves vulnerable and may have been abused by peers, parents or adults in the community.

Understanding Child on Child abuse:

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex or a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

The impact of this behaviour on children can be very distressing and have an impact on academic achievement and emotional health and wellbeing.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence may also occur online and offline.

All staff recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers and are aware of safeguarding issues from peer abuse including:

- bullying (including online bullying)
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence and sexual harassment
- sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery); and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

This abuse can:

- Be motivated by perceived differences e.g. on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other differences
- Result in significant, long lasting and traumatic isolation, intimidation or violence to the victim; vulnerable adults are at particular risk of harm

Children or young people who harm others may have additional or complex needs e.g.:

- Significant disruption in their own lives
- Exposure to domestic abuse or witnessing or suffering abuse
- Educational underachievement
- Involved in crime

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the first priority, but emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical. All staff, alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy, have to make their own judgements about each specific case and should use this policy guidance to help.

The Context

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

In this policy we recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour (Harmful Sexual Behaviour HSB).

We are adopting the NSPCC definition of HSB as: -

"Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive"

Vulnerable groups:

We recognise that all children can be at risk however we acknowledge that some groups are more vulnerable. This can include: experience of abuse within their family; living with domestic violence; young people in care; children who go missing; children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities); children who identify or are perceived as LGBT and/or have other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

Whist research tells us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers and, girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools this is not confined to girls.

Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse and may display other behaviour such as antisocial behaviour. Boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs. We recognise that both boys and girls experience child on child abuse, but they do so in gendered ways.

All staff need to be aware of indicators, which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

Responding to Alleged Incidents:

All reports of child-on-child abuse will be made on a case by case basis with the designated safeguarding lead or their deputy taking a leading role using their professional judgement and supported by other agencies such as social care or the police as required.

The immediate response to a report:

- The school will take all reports seriously and will reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe.
- All staff will be trained to manage a report.
- Staff will not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead or social care) staff will, however, only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it.
- A written report on CPOMs will be made as soon after the interview as possible recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later.
- Where the report includes an online element the school or college will follow advice on searching, screening and confiscation. The staff will not view or forward images unless unavoidable and only if another member of staff (preferably the DSL) is present.
- The DSL will be informed as soon as possible.

Risk Assessment:

When there is a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs assessment should consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support;
- The alleged perpetrator; and
- All the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school or college, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them;

Risk assessments will be recorded (written or electronic – kept in the staff drive and shared with the Headteacher) and be kept under review. The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will ensure they are engaging with the Integrated Front Door.

Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment:

Following an incident, we will consider

- The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including: whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;
- The ages of the children involved;
- The developmental stages of the children involved;
- Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse;
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff; and other related issues and wider context?

Follow up Actions:

Children sharing a classroom:

Whilst the school establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police:

- The perpetrator will be removed from any classes they share with the victim.
- We will consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises.

These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator.

Options to manage the report:

Manage internally:

1. In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, we may decide that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising the behaviour and bullying policies and by providing pastoral support.

This decision will be made based on the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All decisions and discussions around making these decisions will be recorded and stored on CPOMs.

2. In line with 1 above, we may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early

help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.

3. Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to the IFD following Wirral agreed protocols.

Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy will be working alongside, and cooperating with, the relevant lead social worker.

Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.

Reporting to the Police:

Any report to the police will generally be made through the IFD as above. The designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) will follow local processes for referrals.

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is this will be passed on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains.

The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach. Where a report has been made to the police, the school will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the relevant agencies to support all children involved (especially potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought in order to help us.

Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator, we will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the school takes does not jeopardise the police investigation.

The end of the criminal process:

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the school will update its risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all children. We will consider any suitable action following our behaviour policy. If the perpetrator remains in school, we will be very clear as to our expectations regarding the perpetrator now they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions we think are reasonable and proportionate about the perpetrator's timetable.

Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other pupils or students in the school.

We will ensure all children involved are protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online).

Where cases are classified as “no further action” (NFA’d) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, we will continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. We will continue to support all parties in this instance.

Support for Children Affected by Sexual-Assault:

Support for victims of sexual assault is available from a variety of agencies (see Appendix 2).

We will support the victim of sexual assault to remain in school but if they are unable to do so we will enable them to continue their education elsewhere. This decision will be made only at the request of the child and their family.

If they are moved, we will ensure the new school is aware of the ongoing support they may need. The DSL will support this move.

Where there is a criminal investigation the alleged perpetrator will be removed from any shared classes with the victim, and we will also consider how best to keep them a reasonable distance apart on the school premises. This is in the best interest of the children concerned and should not be perceived as being a judgement of guilt before any legal proceedings. We will work closely with the police.

Where a criminal investigation into a sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, we may take suitable action, if we have not already done so. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other pupils or students). We may, if we have not already done so, consider any suitable sanctions using our behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion.

Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the school, the principle would be to continue keeping the victim and perpetrator in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school premises. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.

All the above will be considered with the needs and wishes of the victim at the heart of the process (supported by parents and carers as required). Any arrangements should be kept under review.

Physical Abuse:

While a clear focus of child on child abuse is around sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be abusive.

These are equally not tolerated and if it is believed that a crime has been committed, will be reported to the police.

The principles from the anti-bullying policy will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any police investigation will need to take priority.

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on aspects of Hackett's continuum (Appendix 1) to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, whether it:

- is socially acceptable
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time
- is socially acceptable within the peer group
- is problematic and concerning
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning
- involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour
- involves a misuse of power

Online Behaviour:

Many forms of child on child abuse have an element of online behaviour including behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting.

Policies and procedures concerning this type of behaviour can be found (in anti-bullying policy, online safety policy, and safeguarding policy)

Prevention:

Liscard Primary School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child on child abuse by:

- Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, children and parents about this issue. This will include developing awareness of all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of child on child abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes
 - (a) Contextual Safeguarding;
 - (b) The identification and classification of specific behaviours; and
 - (c) The importance of taking seriously all forms of child on child abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child on child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing.
- Educating children about the nature and prevalence of child on child abuse via PSHE and the wider curriculum.
- Children are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse.
- They are regularly informed about the school's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child on child abuse.
- Engaging parents on this issue by:
 - (a) Communicating about it with parents.
 - (b) Asking parents for their views in annual surveys.
- Ensuring that all child on child abuse issues are fed back to the School's safeguarding team so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify children who maybe in need of additional support. [This is done by way of all staff being aware of the need to share any concerns with members of the safeguarding team].

- Challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom);
- Working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, children and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the school community;
- Creating conditions in which our children can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships;
- Creating a culture in which our children feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to; and
- Responding to cases of child on child abuse promptly and appropriately.

Multi-agency work:

Liscard Primary school actively engages with its local partners in relation to child on child abuse, and works closely with, Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP), IFD, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies, and other schools.

The relationships the School has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that the School is able to prevent, identify early and appropriately handle cases of child on child abuse. They help the School:

- (a) To develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in its local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist;
- (b) To ensure that our children can access the range of services and support they need quickly;
- (c) To support and help inform our local community's response to child on child abuse;
- (d) To increase our awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in our local area to enable us to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by our children.

The School actively refers concerns/allegations of child on child abuse where necessary Wirral Safeguarding IFD, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies.

In cases involving children who are subject to risk, harm and abuse and who have LAC status, the children's social worker must be informed and a coordinated approach to address any incidents or concerns will be required.

Filtering and Monitoring

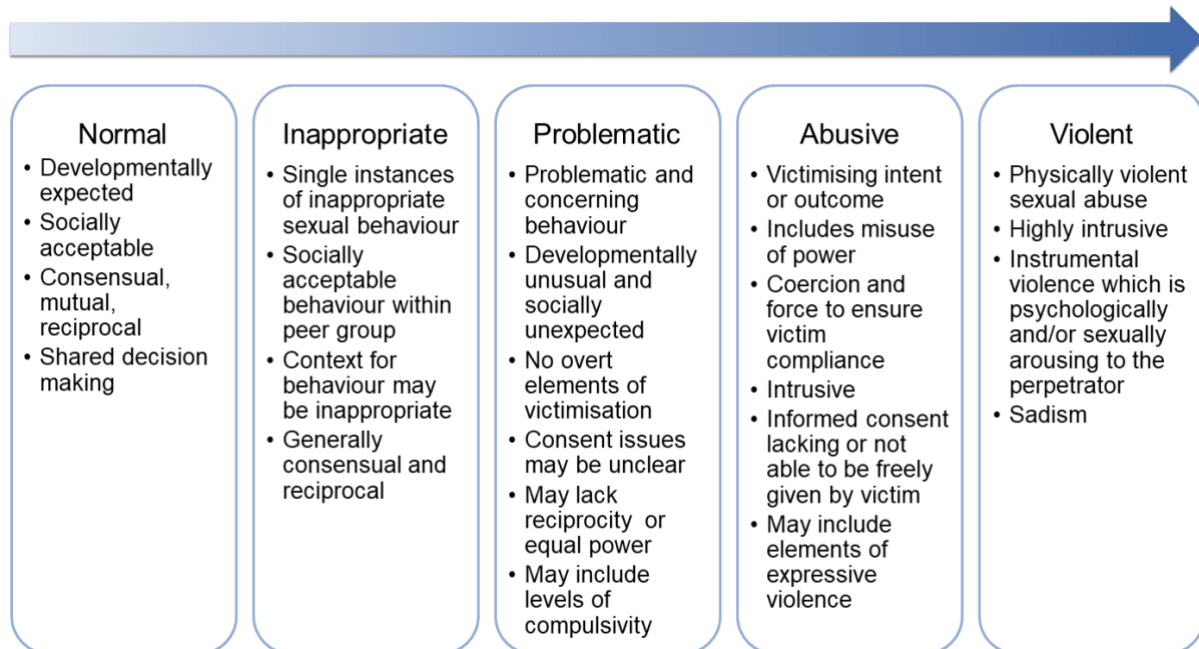
The DfE has emphasised that school schools should have implemented the Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges guidance. Schools and colleges should provide a safe environment to learn and work, including when online. Filtering and monitoring are both important parts of safeguarding pupils and staff from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material.

Clear roles, responsibilities and strategies are vital for delivering and maintaining effective filtering and monitoring systems. It is important that the right people work together and using their professional expertise to make informed decisions. The school IT provider, Designated Safeguarding Lead, governors and staff must ensure the safe and appropriate use of technology. The Headteacher and deputy headteacher ensure that the standards are met through the regular monitoring of technology use. Securus is the network monitoring programmes used that identifies high risk users and the top 20 words/phrases. It provides

screen captures identifying the user and programmes used. Any inappropriate use/access is challenged immediately. All staff are expected to report any inappropriate use of IT to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Appendix 1:

Simon Hackett (2010) has proposed a continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant



(Hackett, 2011)

1. What is Peer Sexual Abuse?

It's normal for children to display a range of sexual behaviours as they grow up, but sometimes their behaviour can be harmful to themselves and others. Around a third of child sexual abuse is committed by other children and young people (Hackett, 2014). We call this peer sexual abuse.

Peer Sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- physical and sexual abuse / sexual harassment and violence / emotional harm / on and offline bullying / teenage relationship abuse

7. Further Reading

[Peer on peer abuse | Safeguarding Network - confidence in safe-guarding](#)

[Protecting children from peer-on-peer sexual abuse | NSPCC Learning](#)

Department for Education advice: [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[What is peer-on-peer abuse? - schools, early years, further education and skills](#)

6. What should you do?

It's important that adults who work or volunteer with children can identify if sexualised behaviour becomes harmful or abusive, and respond proportionally to keep all the children involved safe. This also includes knowing how to proactively:

- Respond to disclosure or a concern raised
- Initiate a discussion with your safeguarding lead
- Take immediate action
- Make a referral when appropriate (for the victim and also perpetrator who may be a child in need).

2. What is the context?

Peer sexual abuse can happen in a range of settings, including: at school / at home / in public spaces / at parties / at a friend's house / online. It can take place in spaces which are supervised or unsupervised. Within a school context, for example, peer-on-peer sexual abuse might take place in spaces such as toilets, the playground and outdoor areas, corridors and when children are travelling to and from school (*Contextual Safeguarding Network, 2020*).

It should be recognised that the behaviour in question is harmful to both the perpetrator (who is a child) and the victim. Behaviour may be intimate or non-intimate.

3. Why is it important?

Young people can be confused about whether or not they have experienced peer sexual abuse. Reasons for this include:

Confusion about what constitutes 'normal' sexual activity / they don't know whether they gave consent (N.B no-one can consent to being abused) / they were using substances when the abuse took place / the abuse was carried out by a friend or partner / the abuse took place online; and/or they blame themselves for what happened.

Parents & professionals don't always know the most appropriate way to respond to children who display harmful sexual behaviour and/or who have experienced peer sexual abuse.

4. What is the impact?

Experiencing peer sexual abuse can have a long-lasting negative impact on a child's wellbeing that can reach into adulthood. Effects can include:

- mental health issues – such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, self-harming
- challenging behaviour – such as substance misuse, sexualised behaviour, offending
- relationship problems – for example intimacy issues, having unstable relationships, unable to form or sustain friendships

5. Spotting the signs and symptoms

- absence from school or disengagement from school activities
- physical injuries / mental or emotional health issues
- becoming withdrawn – lack of self esteem / lack of sleep / alcohol or substance misuse
- changes in behaviour / inappropriate behaviour for age / abusive towards others

Go to Settings to activate Windows Defender
As with all safeguarding issues, peer on peer abuse can impact on children and young people without these characteristics.



For more local partnership information:

[Harmful Sexual Behaviour - Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[Child Abuse Campaign - Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Appendix 2:

Support for Young People:

www.iwf.org.uk (internet watch foundation to potentially remove illegal images)

<https://www.cwp.nhs.uk/services-and-locations/services/wirral-0-18-camhs/>

(Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS))

Government Publications:

Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership Toolkit

<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/harmful-sexual-behaviour/#:~:text=Report%20a%20child%20at%20risk,an%20emergency%20always%20dial%20999>

Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools

www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges

Keeping Children safe in Education (2025)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education

Preventing youth violence and gang involvement

www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-schools-and-colleges-on-gangs-and-youth-violence

Preventing and tackling bullying in schools

www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying

Other useful documents:

Sexting in schools-

Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/609874/6_2939_SP_NCA_Sexting_In_Schools_FINAL_Update_Jan17.pdf

What is Age appropriate?

<http://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/what-is-age-appropriate>

NSPCC- Harmful sexual behaviour

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour/>

NSPCC – Is this sexual abuse?

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/nspcc-helplines-report-peer-sexual-abuse.pdf>

Online sexual harassment

Project deSHAME- Digital Exploitation and Sexual Harassment Amongst Minors in Europe
Understanding, Preventing, Responding

<https://www.childnet.com/our-projects/project-desname>

Sexism It's Just Everywhere- a study on sexism in schools –and how we tackle it

<https://ukfeminista.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Report-Its-just-everywhere.pdf>

