

The Palmer Catholic Academy – Addendum to Safeguarding Policy

24th May 2021

Responding to Peer on Peer Sexual Violence, Sexual Harassment and Harmful Sexual Behaviour

The Palmer Catholic Academy is committed to promoting a nurturing environment where thoughts, behaviours, & attitudes are sex positive. Normalising and trivialising sexual violence, misogyny, slut shaming, victim blaming, and sexual harassment are not tolerated.

The Palmer Catholic Academy is aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up;
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”;
- challenging behaviour (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia and flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them; and
- understanding that all the above can be driven by wider societal factors beyond the school and college, such as everyday sexist stereotypes and everyday sexist language

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

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This is likely to adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers.

Sexual violence

The Palmer Catholic Academy is aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way. When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual violence offences under the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#) as described below:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;

- sexual "jokes" or taunting;

physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence - it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature; and

- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:

- non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos.

- sexualised online bullying;

- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media; and

- sexual exploitation; coercion and threats.

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB): is an umbrella term that describes a range of sexual behaviours.

Hackett et al. (2016) define HSB as "sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, that may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult".

This definition captures a range of behaviours, both offline and online, such as sexualised, gendered or sexist name calling, sexual image sharing without consent, unwanted sexual touching, sexual assault and rape. Sexual behaviours are seen across a continuum ranging from normal and appropriate sexual behaviours that are expected from people of a certain developmental age through to sexual behaviours that are inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent.

Normal	Developmentally expected Socially acceptable Consensual, mutual, reciprocal Shared decision making
Inappropriate	Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group Context for behaviour may be inappropriate Generally consensual and reciprocal
Problematic	Problematic and concerning behaviours Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected No overt elements of victimisation Consent issues may be unclear

	May lack reciprocity or equal power May include levels of compulsivity
Abusive	Victimising intent or outcome Includes misuse of power Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance Intrusive Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given by victim May include elements of expressive violence Violent Physically violent sexual abuse Highly intrusive Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator Sadism

Managing reports relating to current students

Part 5 of [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020](#) sets out how schools and colleges should manage reports of child-on-child sexual violence and harassment. The needs and wishes of the victim are central. Considerations should include how the investigation proceeds and what support the victim requires (see paragraph 278 of the guidance). The guidance also links through to a further Department for Education (DfE) advice document from May 2018: '[Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges](#)'. The DfE advice set out the steps you should take to manage the students involved, including risk assessments, separating the students in lessons, investigating the report, and supporting the victim and alleged perpetrator.

The Palmer Catholic Academy ensures that staff have received training on how to hear disclosures, especially those of around sexual abuse, reporting to the DSL, and evidence that staff do understand how to manage reports.

Reports of child-on-child sexual abuse or sexual harassment can be complex to manage, and multiagency support (particularly children's social care and the police) can often help. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, children's social care and the police should be informed. Before doing so, it is important to discuss this with the victim, explaining why it is important for other agencies to know and how these agencies will be able to support the victim.

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should make an immediate risk and needs assessment. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that a Risk Assessment is carried out for any child that is SEND and is non-verbal. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Other allegations can be managed within the school and/or with support from children's social care providers.

Support for victims

It is essential that victims are protected, offered appropriate support and every effort is made to ensure their education is not disrupted. It is also important that other children, adult students and school and college staff are supported and protected as appropriate.

The NSPCC have set up a dedicated helpline. Young people and adults can contact the [NSPCC](#) helpline, Report Abuse in Education on 0800 136 663 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

[Project deSHAME](#) provides useful research, advice and resources regarding online sexual harassment.

Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChISVAs) provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence. Police and social care agencies can signpost to ChISVA services (where available) or referrals can be made directly to the ChISVA service by the young person or school or college. Contact details for ChISVAs can be found at [Rape Crisis](#), who can provide therapeutic support for children who have experienced sexual violence and [The Survivors Trust](#). If the abuse was online [Internet Watch Foundation](#) can remove images that have been posted online.

Support for the alleged perpetrator

An alleged perpetrator may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviours in young children may be (and often are) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and or materials. Consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator and nature of the allegations. Advice should be taken, as appropriate, from children's social care, specialist sexual violence services and the police.

Support for staff

The NSPCC estimates that 1 in 20 people were sexually abused as children, hearing disclosures may bring up difficult feelings and memories for staff. It is important that staff are supported and encouraged to talk about their experiences via appropriate mechanisms such as supervision, counselling or psychotherapy. [Education Support](#) would be a good starting point for staff.