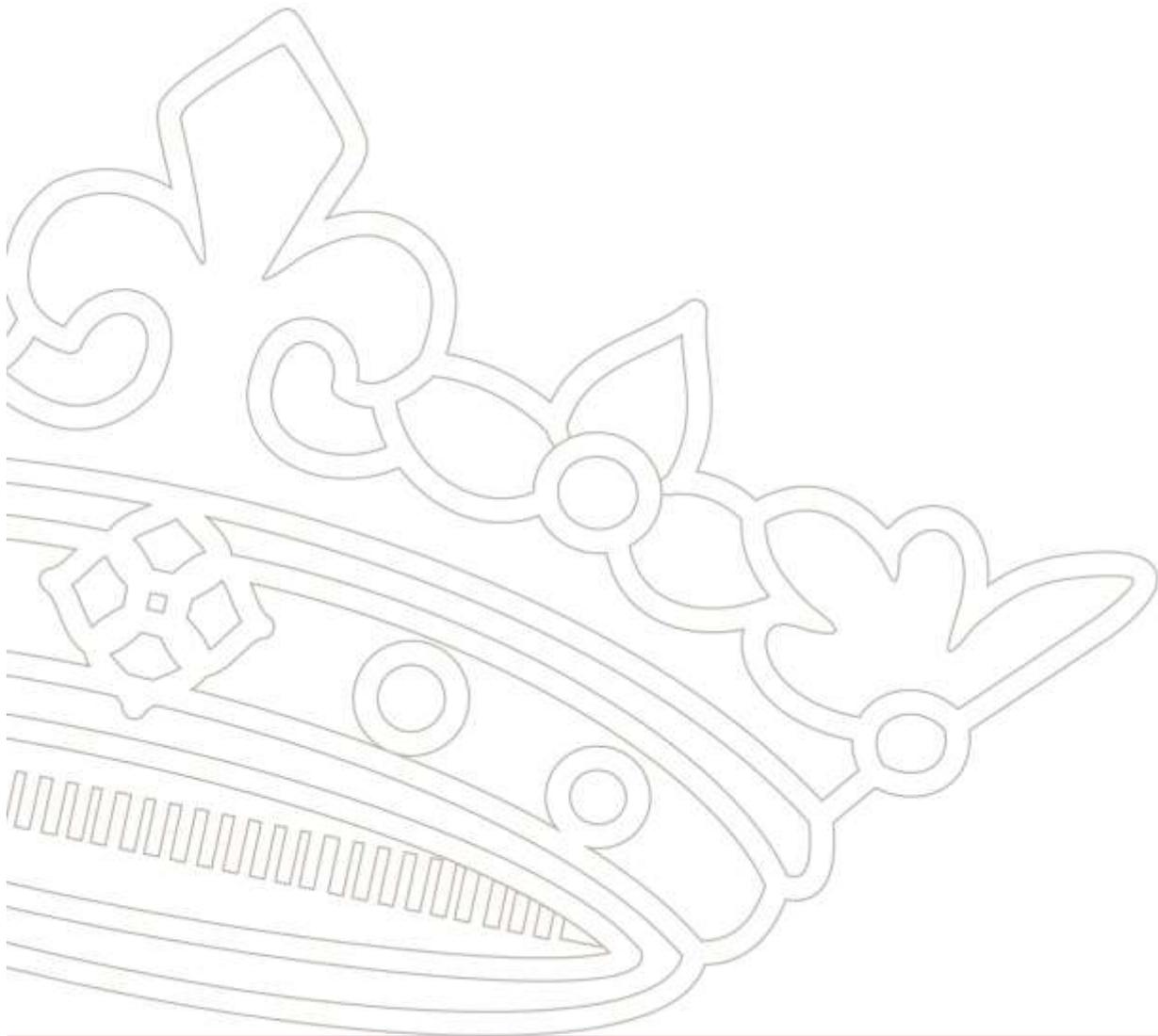




PRINCE'S MEAD SCHOOL

Managing Allegations about Pupils Policy





Managing allegations against other pupils

DfE guidance Keeping Pupils Safe in Education (2016) says that ‘governing bodies should ensure that there are procedures in place to handle allegations against other pupils’. The guidance also states the importance of minimising the risks of peer-on-peer abuse. In most instances, the conduct of pupils 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 pupils and their behaviour towards younger pupils or those who are vulnerable.

The safeguarding implications of sexual activity between young people¹

The intervention of child protection agencies in situations involving sexual activity between pupils 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 pupils and young people below the age of legal consent (16 years) comes to notice. In our society generally the age at which pupils become sexually active has steadily dropped. It is important to distinguish between consensual sexual activity between pupils 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 pupils’ 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 pupils
- Any disability or special needs of the pupils
- Their social and family circumstance
- Any evidence in the behaviour or presentation of the pupils 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 Prince's Mead we believe that all pupils have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Pupils should be free from harm by adults in the school and other pupils.

We recognise that some pupils will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under the school's behaviour policy.

Prevention

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

- Providing a developmentally appropriate PSHEE syllabus which develops pupils understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe
- Having systems in place for any pupils 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 pupils identified as being at risk
- Developing robust risk assessments & providing targeted work for pupils identified as being a potential risk to other pupils

Allegations against other pupils which are safeguarding issues

Occasionally, allegations may be made against pupils by others in the 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 pupil, some of the following features will be found.

If the allegation:-

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



Examples of safeguarding issues against a student 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 pupils to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour (For example - having an older boyfriend/girlfriend, associating with unknown adults or other sexually exploited pupils, staying out overnight)
- Photographing or videoing other pupils performing indecent acts



Procedure:-

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another student, 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 pupils' reception team (CRT) 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, CRT will refer the case to the multi-agency safeguarding hub where the police will become involved.

Parents, of both the student 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 pupils' files.

It may be appropriate to exclude the pupil 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 school investigation should take place into the matter using the school's usual disciplinary procedures.

In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan.

¹ Taken from The safeguarding implications of events leading to the closure of Stanbridge Earls School – A Serious Case Review (2015)