Gillespie Primary School



Child on child abuse policy

September 2026

GILLESPIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY

September 2026 – September 2027

School	Gillespie Primary School
Address	Gillespie Road, Highbury, London, N5 1LH
Status	Community primary school – London Borough of Islington
Policy owner	Designated Safeguarding Lead
DSL	Mr Mark Owen BEd Hon NPQH, Headteacher
Deputy DSLs	Lyn Jones, Assistant Head/SENDCO
Approved by	Governing Body
Approval date	September 2026
Review date	September 2027
Related policies	Child Protection & Safeguarding; Behaviour; Anti-Bullying; Online Safety; Relationships & Health Education; SEND; Attendance; Staff Code of Conduct

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1. Purpose and policy statement

Gillespie Primary School is committed to providing a safe, caring and inclusive environment in which every child is respected and protected from harm. The school recognises that children can abuse other children and that such behaviour may occur in school, outside school or online.

Child-on-child abuse will not be dismissed as “banter”, “just playing”, “part of growing up” or “children being children”. Concerns will be taken seriously, acted on promptly and considered as safeguarding matters where appropriate.

This policy should be read with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the other related policies listed above. It reflects Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE 2026), Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and relevant Islington safeguarding arrangements.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all pupils, including nursery and primary-aged children, and to all staff, governors, volunteers, visitors, contractors and other adults working with or on behalf of the school.

It applies to incidents occurring on school premises, on school trips and activities, during travel connected with school, online, and outside school where the behaviour has safeguarding implications for pupils or the school community.

3. Definition of child-on-child abuse

Child-on-child abuse occurs when a child or group of children causes harm to another child. It may be a single incident or repeated behaviour. It may involve children of the same or different ages.

The school recognises that a child who has caused harm may also have safeguarding needs. The needs and welfare of every child involved will therefore be considered without labelling a child solely by their behaviour.

4. Forms of child-on-child abuse

Child-on-child abuse can include bullying and cyberbullying; physical assault or violence; threats and intimidation; emotional or psychological abuse; coercive or controlling behaviour; discriminatory abuse; sexual harassment; sexual violence; inappropriate sexualised behaviour; unwanted touching; sexualised bullying; sharing or requesting nude or semi-nude images; harmful online behaviour; initiation or hazing-type behaviour; exploitation; and other conduct which causes harm.

The school will consider the age, developmental stage and individual circumstances of the children involved. Sexualised behaviour by primary-aged children will be considered carefully and will not automatically be dismissed as normal childhood behaviour.

5. Prevention and curriculum

Prevention is embedded through Relationships Education, Health Education, safeguarding education, online-safety teaching, assemblies, pastoral provision and the wider curriculum.

Children will be taught, in an age-appropriate way, about respectful relationships, personal boundaries, consent and bodily autonomy, kindness, bullying, discrimination, online safety, how to seek help and how to report concerns about themselves or another child.

The school will provide accessible routes for pupils to speak to a trusted adult.

6. Recognising concerns

Staff should be alert to changes in behaviour, distress, withdrawal, anxiety, reluctance to attend school, changes in friendships, unexplained injuries, sexualised language or behaviour, inappropriate sexual knowledge, online concerns, repeated incidents, bullying, harassment or reports made by pupils, parents or others.

A child may not describe an experience using safeguarding terminology. Staff must therefore listen to the substance of what is communicated rather than waiting for a child to call something “abuse”.

7. Responding to a disclosure or concern

Staff must listen calmly, take the child seriously, reassure them that they were right to speak to an adult, explain that information may need to be shared to keep people safe, avoid leading or investigative questions, record the child's words as accurately as possible and report the concern to the DSL or deputy DSL without delay.

Staff must not promise confidentiality, investigate the matter themselves, confront another child, attempt to mediate, or dismiss the concern because the children are young.

8. DSL assessment and safeguarding response

The DSL will assess the concern and determine the appropriate response. Consideration will include immediate risk; the ages and developmental stages of the children; nature and seriousness of the behaviour; power imbalance; coercion or threats; repetition; injury; sexual or online elements; additional vulnerabilities; wider patterns; and whether any child may themselves be experiencing abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Protective measures may include increased supervision, separation or adjusted arrangements, safe adults/spaces, safety planning, parental communication where appropriate, and referral to children's social care, police or other services.

Safeguarding action will not be replaced by a behaviour or disciplinary response.

9. Sexual violence and sexual harassment

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children are safeguarding concerns. Examples include sexual comments or jokes, sexualised name-calling, unwanted touching, pressuring a child to engage in sexual behaviour, sexual assault, and sharing or requesting sexualised images.

All reports will be taken seriously. The DSL will consider the appropriate response and seek advice from children's social care and/or the police where required. The school will not conduct its own criminal investigation.

10. Online abuse and nude/semi-nude images

Child-on-child abuse may occur through messaging services, social media, gaming, group chats, video-sharing platforms and other technologies.

Where a concern involves nude or semi-nude images of a child, staff must report the concern to the DSL immediately and must not forward, copy, print or unnecessarily view images. The DSL will follow safeguarding procedures and seek specialist advice where necessary.

The school will consider whether harmful material is circulating, whether other children are affected, whether evidence needs preserving, and whether external agencies need to be involved.

11. Supporting children

The school will support the child affected, the child who has caused harm, witnesses and other children affected by an incident, according to individual need. Support may include a trusted adult, pastoral check-ins, a safety plan, environmental adjustments, friendship support, attendance support, specialist services and appropriate communication with parents/carers.

The child’s views will be sought and taken into account, subject to age, understanding and safeguarding considerations.

12. SEND and vulnerability

Children with SEND or other vulnerabilities may face additional barriers to recognising, communicating or reporting harm. Staff will consider communication, developmental, sensory and other individual needs and make reasonable adjustments.

SEND must never be used to dismiss or minimise a safeguarding concern. Behaviour that may communicate distress will be considered alongside the safeguarding context.

13. Behaviour and disciplinary action

Where appropriate, incidents may also be addressed under the Behaviour Policy. However, disciplinary action does not replace safeguarding action.

The school will consider accountability, safety, proportionality, age, development and the needs of all children. Where an incident may constitute a criminal offence, the school will seek appropriate professional advice rather than conducting its own criminal investigation.

14. Parents and carers

The school will normally communicate with parents/carers where appropriate, but this will be considered case by case. Parents/carers may not be contacted immediately where doing so could increase risk, compromise a safeguarding investigation, interfere with a police investigation, or be contrary to professional advice.

Where external agencies are involved, the school will follow their advice on information sharing.

15. Recording and information sharing

Safeguarding concerns will be recorded in accordance with school procedures. Records should include the concern, date/time, source, the child's words where relevant, action taken, advice received, referrals, decisions, rationale, outcomes and follow-up.

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with safeguarding and information-sharing requirements. Data protection law will not be treated as a barrier to sharing information where this is necessary to protect a child.

16. Multi-agency working

The DSL will work with Islington Children's Social Care, police, health services and other safeguarding partners where appropriate. Gillespie Primary School will follow Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures and local thresholds and referral arrangements.

Islington Children's Social Care contact: 020 7527 7400; CSCTReferrals@islington.gov.uk.

Where there is immediate danger, emergency services will be contacted.

17. Confidentiality

Information about safeguarding concerns will be handled sensitively. Staff must not discuss cases casually, share information with uninvolved parents or pupils, or post information on social media. Information must be shared through the school's safeguarding procedures and only with those who need it to protect children or fulfil their professional responsibilities.

18. Staff training and responsibilities

All staff will receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role. Training will cover child-on-child abuse, bullying, sexual violence and harassment, online harms, recognising indicators, responding to disclosures and reporting procedures.

All staff are responsible for safeguarding. The DSL is responsible for coordinating the safeguarding response. The Headteacher supports implementation and ensures appropriate action. Governors provide oversight and challenge.

19. Monitoring and review

The DSL and senior leaders will monitor incidents and patterns, including locations, times, repeat concerns, groups affected, online patterns, supervision gaps and curriculum or pastoral needs. Anonymised information will be used to review safeguarding effectiveness and inform prevention.

The Governing Body will receive appropriate safeguarding assurance.

20. Equality and inclusion

The school will respond to child-on-child abuse without discrimination and will consider protected characteristics and individual circumstances. Racist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, disability-related, sexist or other discriminatory abuse will be treated seriously and addressed through safeguarding, behaviour and equality procedures as appropriate.

21. Review and statutory references

This policy is reviewed annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, local procedures or school circumstances require.

Key references:

• Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (DfE)

• Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 (DfE)

• Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements 2026–2028

• Relevant local Islington safeguarding procedures

• Gillespie Primary School Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

• Gillespie Primary School Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Online Safety and Relationships/Health Education policies

Appendix 1 – Staff response flowchart

1. 1. Concern or disclosure received.
2. 2. Is there immediate danger? YES → take immediate protective action and contact emergency services where necessary. Inform the DSL/deputy DSL.
3. 3. NO immediate danger → report to the DSL/deputy DSL without delay.
4. 4. DSL assesses safeguarding risk, age/development, seriousness, power imbalance, repetition, sexual/online elements and wider vulnerabilities.
5. 5. Decide response: internal safeguarding/support; parents/carers where appropriate; children's social care; police; health or other agency.
6. 6. Consider behaviour response where appropriate, but never instead of safeguarding action.
7. 7. Record concern, decisions, rationale, actions and outcomes.
8. 8. Provide support, monitor, review and identify patterns/prevention needs.

Appendix 2 – Child-on-child abuse incident / concern record

Date/time of concern:

_____

Name(s) of child/children affected:

_____

Name(s) of child/children alleged to have caused harm:

_____

Class/year group:

_____

Person reporting concern:

_____

How concern was received (disclosure / observation / parent / pupil / online / other):

_____

Factual account – use the child's words where possible:

_____

Immediate safety concerns:

_____

Actions taken immediately:

_____

DSL/deputy DSL informed (name/date/time):

_____

DSL assessment and safeguarding decision:

_____

Parents/carers contacted? By whom/date/time? If not, rationale:

_____

External advice/referral (agency/date/time/reference):

_____

Behaviour response, if applicable:

_____

Support offered to affected child:

_____

Support offered to other child/children:

_____

Follow-up / review date:

_____

Outcome:

_____

DSL signature/date:

_____

Document control

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