THE HAVEN

Operated by the Autistic Girls Network charity — 1196655 (England and Wales), SC054837 (Scotland)

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy (Summary for parents)

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Policy Statement and Purpose

At The Haven, we recognise that children can and do abuse other children. This behaviour is harmful, unacceptable, and a safeguarding concern. We are committed to creating a culture where child-on-child abuse is never tolerated, minimised, or dismissed as "banter" or "part of growing up." Our purpose is to protect all learners, support those affected, and ensure a safe, respectful community across both online and in-person settings.

This policy outlines The Haven's approach to prevention, identification, response, and monitoring of child-on-child abuse in line with statutory guidance.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All The Haven staff, governors, contractors, and volunteers.
- All learners engaging with The Haven, whether online, hybrid, or through physical settings.
- All contexts in which The Haven learners may interact, including digital platforms, social media, in-person sessions, and third-party venues.

This policy should be read alongside The Haven's:

- **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy v10.26**
- **Behaviour and Regulation Policy v10.26**

- **Attendance & Engagement v01.26**
- **Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use v10.26**
- **RSHE Policy v10.26**
- **Prevent Duty Policy v10.26**
- **Staff Conduct Policy v10.26**

Statutory Guidance

This policy has due regard to:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026*, in particular Part five, *Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment*, which was substantially rewritten in the 2026 edition.
- DfE *Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people*. The Haven uses the term *nudes and semi-nudes*, which includes images that have been digitally altered or wholly generated using AI. A young person who tells us an image of them has been shared will be supported, not blamed.
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026*.
- *Sexual Offences Act 2003*.
- *Children Acts 1989 and 2004*.
- *Equality Act 2010*.
- Independent School Standards (Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended) — adopted as a voluntary benchmark; The Haven is not a DfE-registered independent school and these Standards do not apply to it as a matter of law.
- Online Safety Act 2023 (in force in stages 2024–2025; user-to-user service duties on content harmful to children).

Definitions

Child-on-child abuse: Any form of physical, sexual, emotional, or financial abuse, coercive control, exploitation, or bullying committed by one child against another. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
- Physical abuse (e.g., hitting, kicking, shaking, biting).
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), including where it falls short of sexual violence or sexual harassment (see the section below).
- Making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes, including images that have been digitally altered or generated using AI.
- Upskirting (as defined in the Voyeurism Offences Act 2019).
- Initiation/hazing-type violence and rituals.
- Emotional abuse, coercion, or online harassment.

Harmful sexual behaviour, sexual violence and nudes and semi-nudes

KCSIE 2026 describes harmful sexual behaviour as a continuum. At one end is behaviour that is a normal part of growing up. Further along are behaviours that are inappropriate, then problematic, then abusive, and at the far end are sexual violence and sexual harassment. Children's sexual behaviour exists on this continuum, and behaviour can move along it. The guidance is also clear that failing to take sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour seriously risks a culture in which misogyny and abuse are normalised.

What this means at The Haven:

- **Every concern about harmful sexual behaviour is a safeguarding concern** and goes to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, including behaviour that seems minor, that happens online, that happens between learners outside Haven sessions, or that a learner reports about another setting. Staff do not decide for themselves that something is "just banter" or "just teenagers".
- **Sexual violence and sexual harassment** are never passed off as part of growing up. The DSL assesses the risk, keeps the children involved safe, and refers to children's social care and the police where the behaviour may be a criminal offence. The learner who has been harmed and the learner who has caused harm are both supported, with their safety and needs considered separately.
- **Nudes and semi-nudes.** KCSIE 2026 states that all incidents involving the making or sharing of nude or semi-nude images of children are safeguarding concerns and need a safeguarding response, **whether or not the child consented** to the image being taken or shared. This includes images that have been digitally altered or wholly generated by AI, and it includes images a learner has made of themselves. The DSL's response is proportionate and takes account of the children's ages, whether there was any coercion or pressure, and any vulnerability. A young person who tells The Haven that an image of them exists or has been shared is supported, not blamed, and is not asked to show or send the image. Staff never view, copy, print, share or save such images and do not ask a learner to do so.
- **Online and AI-enabled harm.** Because The Haven is an online provision, staff are alert to harmful sexual behaviour that takes place through chat, direct messages, shared documents, images and AI tools, as well as in live sessions. Online sexual harassment is addressed with the same seriousness as it would be in a physical classroom.
- **Working with parents and carers.** Parents and carers of all children involved are informed and involved unless doing so would put a child at greater risk, and they are given clear information about what has happened, what The Haven is doing, and where to get support.

Aims

- To prevent child-on-child abuse through education, awareness, and culture.
- To ensure staff are confident in recognising and responding to signs of child-on-child abuse.
- To provide safe reporting routes for learners, both online and in person.
- To support victims and address harmful behaviour proportionally and restoratively.
- To work with parents/carers, safeguarding partners, and external agencies where required.

Objectives

- **Prevention**
    - Embed safeguarding and respectful relationships teaching across the curriculum.

- Promote inclusion, empathy, and digital citizenship.
- Encourage learners to speak up, knowing disclosures will be taken seriously.

- **Recognition**
  - Train staff to identify indicators, including changes in online behaviour, language, or engagement.
  - Ensure staff are alert to hidden forms of abuse such as coercion in digital spaces.
- **Response**
  - Any disclosure or concern is treated as a safeguarding matter.
  - DSL assesses risk, ensures immediate safety, and records incidents.
  - Responses will balance support for the victim, accountability for the perpetrator, and restorative opportunities where safe.
  - Serious incidents, including sexual violence and any incident involving nudes and semi-nudes that indicates coercion, exploitation or an adult's involvement, will be referred to statutory agencies.
- **Support**
  - Victims will be listened to, believed, and supported with tailored interventions.
  - Perpetrators will also receive support to address underlying issues, recognising behaviour as communication.
- **Partnership**
  - Parents/carers will be engaged, unless doing so would place a child at further risk.
  - The Haven will liaise with children's social care, the police, or other external partners as appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Governing Board**: Ensure policy oversight, monitor compliance, and support safe culture.
- **Principal/Proprietor**: Ensure resources and systems are in place to implement this policy.
- **DSL**: Lead on child-on-child abuse concerns, coordinate responses, ensure training, and maintain records.
- **All Staff and Volunteers**: Remain vigilant, follow procedures, and embed preventative culture in daily practice.
- **Learners**: Encouraged to uphold a culture of respect, report concerns, and support peers.

Monitoring and Review

- **Termly DSL-led checks**: Review reported cases, ensure proportional responses, and spot patterns.
- **Annual review**: Carried out by DSL and Governing Board, ensuring consistency with KCSIE updates and statutory requirements.
- **Immediate interim review**: Triggered by significant safeguarding incidents or legislative changes.

This PDF was generated from the published policy at policies.thehavenonline.school on 20 November 2026. The website is the authoritative, most current version of this policy.