

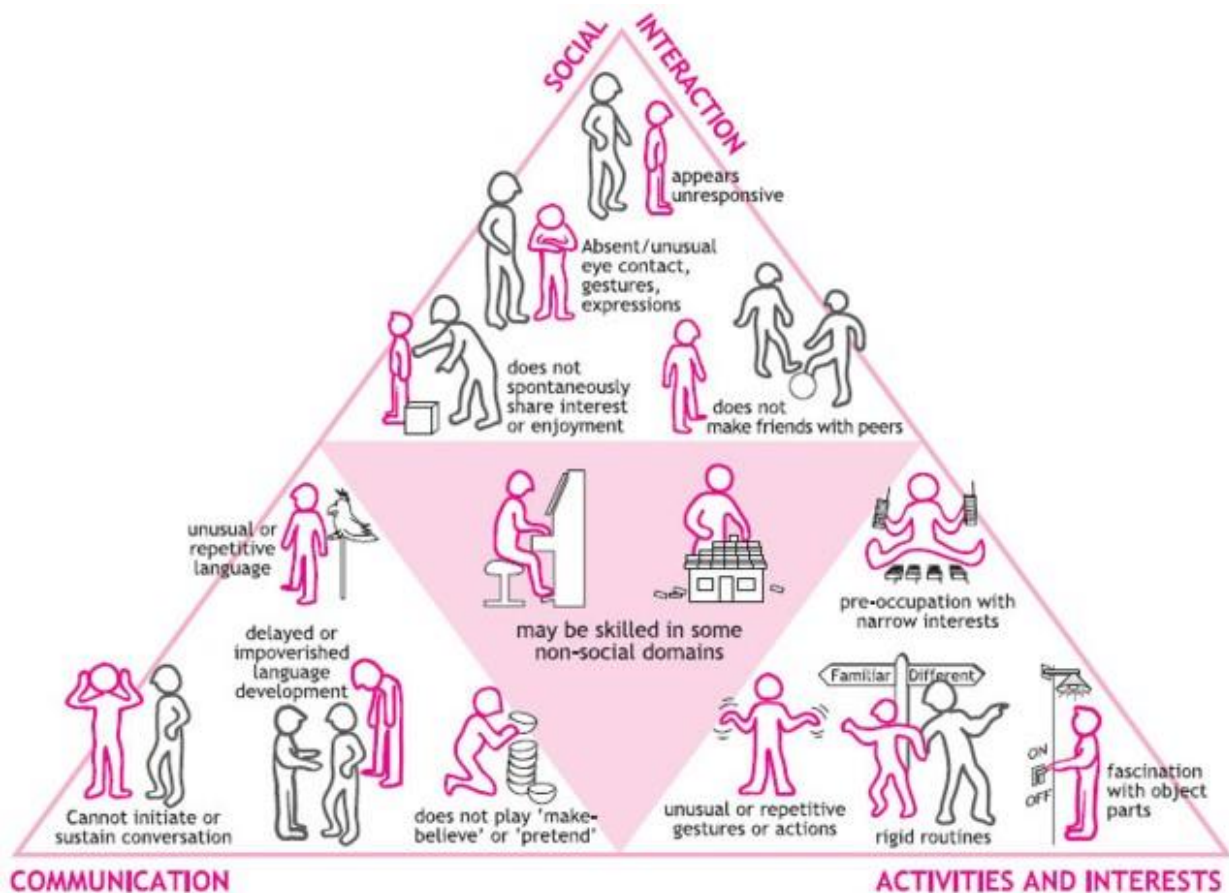
Brown's School

Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

Philosophy of the school

Brown's School believes that all students have the right to be taught in a safe environment to enable them to optimise their learning and achievement. We expect all students to develop self-discipline and respect for others and to feel valued and supported. The school promotes the values of honesty, tolerance and fairness within a caring and nurturing environment.

Students at the school have a variety of complex needs and the school provides a high level of pastoral care for all students in order to encourage appropriate and cooperative behaviour. As a result of this ongoing support, students are expected to take responsibility for their own behaviour but as a staff group we understand that we need to utilise numerous strategies to achieve this.



The triad of impairment (Figure 1, above, originally devised in 1979 by Lorna Wing and Judy Gould) is a useful tool to refer to when educating pupils with complex needs (especially those with an ASD diagnosis). It is important to identify behaviours that may be perceived as “rude” but are actually a symptom of a pupils diagnosed difficulties. Brown's School aims to work with pupils to modify undesirable behaviour through therapeutic intervention and staff recognise that behaviour associated with ASD/ADHD/ODD take time to change.

Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Huitt (2007)

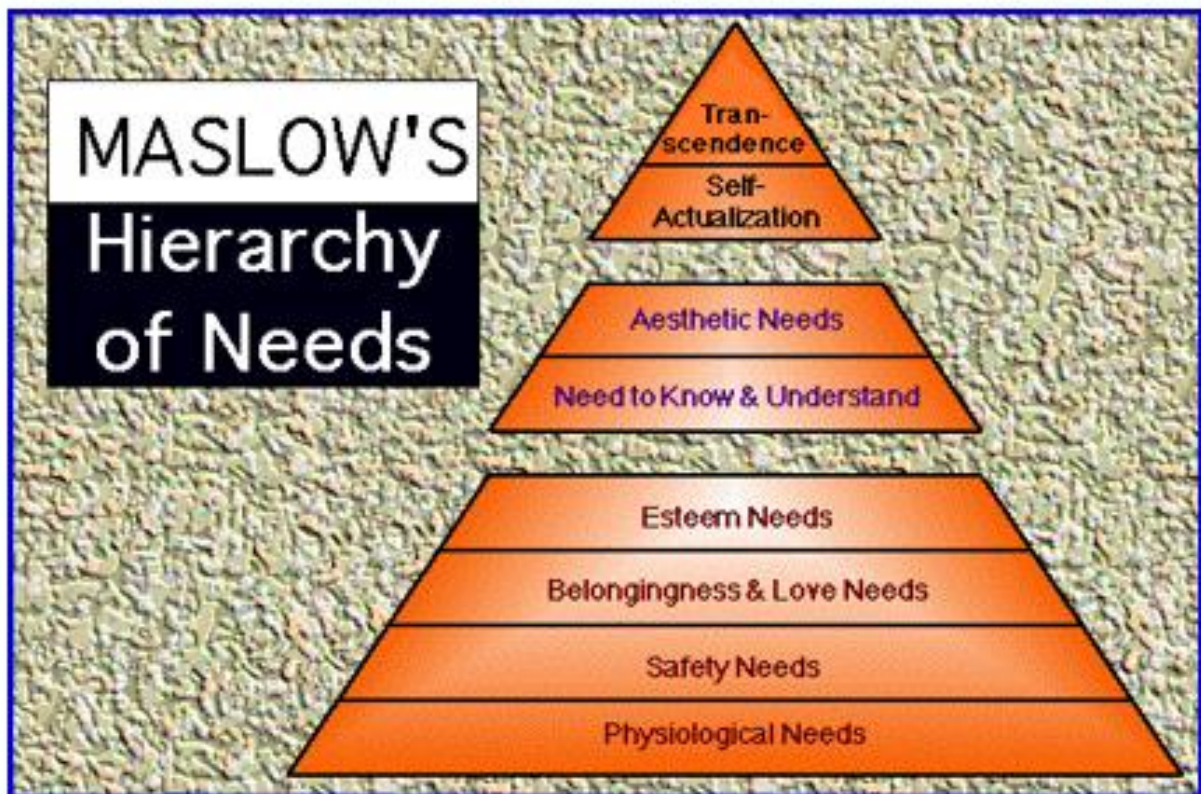


Figure 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Huitt (2007)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is another useful tool for educators. Many of the pupils at Brown's have a diagnosis of complex, co-occurring difficulties. Often behaviours displayed by our pupils are consistent with their individual diagnosis and make achieving learning difficult. For example, one of the common behaviours displayed by a pupil with ADHD is impulsivity. This behaviour could lead to a pupil not feeling safe in a classroom and therefore mean he is not able to access the learning of the lesson. In addition to this, pupils with difficulties in the classroom are well documented to struggle with "fitting in" and identifying with others, these are important factors to remember when a pupil exhibits undesired behaviour.

Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2016 states that '*Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with*'. The document also states it is most important to ensure opportunities of seeking the voice of the child are heard, '*Governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, any system and processes should operate with the **best** interests of the child at their heart.*'

While it is recommended that Peer on Peer abuse is part of the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, due to the sensitive nature and specific issues involved with peer on peer abuse we have decided to separate it from the main Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

At Brown's School, we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the child or young person, with full consideration to the impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the Children's Act 1989, Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016 and the Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in educational settings 2015.

Definition

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as peer on peer abuse and incidents that would be considered as bullying, sexual experimentation, etc. Staff should use their professional judgement in these matters. However, we would consider a child or young person's behaviour as being abusive if:

- there is a large difference in power between the young people concerned (e.g. age, size, ability, development); or
- the perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- there are concerns about the intention of the alleged perpetrator.

If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse which may occur between peers. Staff need to be aware of the following;

- Physical abuse which causes physical harm to another person.
- Sexual abuse/sexually harmful behaviour which includes inappropriate sexual language and touching.
- Bullying, including aggressive verbal and physical behaviour which is repetitive and where there is an imbalance of power.
- Cyber bullying which is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to threaten or intimidate.
- Sexting which is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. Making, possessing and distributing sexual imagery of someone under 18 which is 'indecent' is **illegal**. This includes imagery of the young person themselves if they are under 18.
- Teenage relationship abuse which is defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. The perpetrator uses a pattern of violent and coercive behaviour in order to gain power and maintain control over the victim.
- Prejudiced behaviour, which refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical, emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society. This particularly refers to prejudices due to disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life and sexual identity.

Expectations of staff

- Staff recognise that peer on peer abuse can occur despite the robust policies and procedures put in place by the School.
- Staff understand that it is important to deal with a situation of peer on peer abuse immediately and sensitively.
- Staff are trained in dealing with incidents of peer on peer abuse and have an understanding of what constitutes, for example, cyber bullying, sexting and physical and verbal abuse.
- Staff understand that all allegations of peer on peer abuse are treated as safeguarding concerns and that outside agencies may need to be involved.
- Staff understand the School's procedures on reporting safeguarding concerns .
- Staff acknowledge that they should not be prejudiced, judgemental or dismissive when dealing with such sensitive issues, but should offer immediate support in a calm and consistent manner.
- Staff are aware of the added vulnerability of children and young people who have themselves been abused and the risk that they may respond to this by abusing their peers, particularly those who are weaker or younger.

Preventative Strategies

- The School has an open environment where pupils feel safe. The school conducts regular pupil surveys to ensure that this is the case.
- All pupils have an identified listening ear in order to discuss concerns and worries.
- The School has a dedicated Pastoral care team, including a manager who is also the School's Safeguarding Officer, a Deputy Safeguarding Officer and a Student Support Worker.
- The School's Therapy team and Clinical Psychologist are in-house and support pupils on a regular basis.
- The School has separate weekly PSHE and Social Skills lessons which give pupils a forum to talk openly about any difficulties they may have and discuss issues which may affect them.
- The School Nursing Service visits regularly to teach pupils about Healthy Relationships and can offer 1:1 bespoke sessions when a particular need is identified.
- The School has an active peer mentoring group which is supervised by the Deputy Head Teacher.
- There is a clear behaviour management system in the school to support pupils, which includes rewards and sanctions.
- There is a worry box for pupils who wish to report concerns without speaking to staff.

Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Peer on Peer Abuse

- When an allegation is made by a pupil against another, members of staff should treat it as a safeguarding concern. As such, it should be recorded on the appropriate safeguarding concern sheet and the Lead Safeguarding Officer (LSO) or Deputy Safeguarding Officer (DSO) should be informed. It is important that staff do not attempt to investigate the circumstances at this stage.
- The LSO should gather information from the young person making the allegation and consider whether they are at risk of significant harm.
- The LSO will then contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to seek advice. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a referral to Children's Social Care if the young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

- If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place, the LSO will inform the police.
- Once advice has been taken from the LADO and/or Children's Social Care and/or the police, the school will begin its investigation. The LSO will speak separately to the young people involved to gain a statement of facts from them, using consistent language and open questions for each account.
- Any written evidence or images will be gathered.
- If the allegation regards sexting, devices containing images should be confiscated, turned off and placed under lock and key until they can be handed over to the police.
- Parents, of both the alleged perpetrator and the alleged victim, will be informed at an early stage and kept updated on the progress of the referral. If the police/social care are involved we will wait for their agreement before informing parents.
- The LSO will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a secure copy on the pupils' safeguarding files.
- If the allegation highlights a potential risk to the school and the pupil, the school will follow the school's behaviour policy and procedures and take appropriate action.
- In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment will be completed, together with a support plan.
- The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up review with everyone concerned.
- In some cases the school may find it necessary to call an urgent review with the local authority to plan a way forward.
- If there is a criminal investigation ongoing, the school may consider that the young person is unable to be educated on site until the investigation is concluded. The young person will then be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Support for the child or young person who has been harmed

The support the young person requires will depend on the individual but the school can offer support to the young person in a number of ways:

- A support plan in the form of an anxiety management plan will be put in place for the child or young person, naming someone who they can talk to and listing support strategies for managing issues.
- The child or young person can speak to his/her trusted adult in school.
- The child or young person may require support from the School's in-house therapy team, to improve peer relationships if the incident was of a bullying nature.
- The child or young person may require counselling from the School's clinical psychologist.
- Support is available from the School's pastoral care team.
- The School may consider a referral to outside agencies including CAMHS, the Bromley Wellbeing Service, or the local authority's mentoring service.
- The child or young person may be supported by his/her peer mentor.
- Parents may also need support from the school's clinical psychologist.

Support for the child or young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

It is important to find out why the child or young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that they may have been harmed themselves in a similar way or may be experiencing their own difficulties. The School acknowledges its responsibility to offer support and will consider the following:

- A risk assessment and support plan will be put into place.
- The child or young person can speak to his/her trusted adult.
- The School will identify whether the young person needs support from the School's Therapy Team, including the Clinical Psychologist.
- The School may complete a CAF to ensure that outside services are made available to the child or young person.
- A referral to outside agencies, including CAMHS or the Child Sexual Exploitation Team may be a requirement in the case of sexually harmful behaviour.
- In cases of bullying, the School will ensure that there is a consequence for this behaviour, including restorative justice, if appropriate.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies including: Safeguarding and Child Protection, Behaviour and Anti-bullying.

Policy written: March 2017

Policy Update: March 2018