

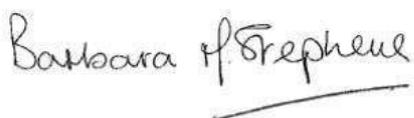


ENERGY COAST UTC

MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STUDENTS' POLICY

2023-2026

Approved: Barbara Stephens, Chair of Governors

Signed: 

Date: March 2023

Date for Review: March 2026

Revision History:

Revision	Date	Owner	Summary of Changes
0	March 2018	CT	New
1	March 2020	CBT	Review and update
2	March 2023	RDP	Review and update
3			
4			
5			

The Energy Coast UTC has a zero tolerance approach to any form of harassment and will take all complaints of this nature extremely seriously. Should you experience any behaviour that you feel amounts to any form of harassment either towards yourself or another, we strongly encourage you to report it to us as soon as you can.

DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) says that ‘governing bodies should ensure that there are procedures in place to handle allegations against other children’. The guidance also states the importance of minimising the risks of child-on-child abuse. In most instances, the conduct of students towards each other will be covered by the school’s behaviour policy however 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 possible that incidents dealt with under this policy will involve older students and their behaviour towards younger students or those who are vulnerable.

The safeguarding implications of sexual activity between young people

The intervention of child protection agencies in situations involving sexual activity between children 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 children and young people below the age of legal consent (16 years) comes to notice. In our society generally the age at which children become sexually active has steadily dropped. It is important to distinguish between consensual sexual activity between children 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 will be made on a case by case basis, on the basis of an assessment of the children’s best interests and following advice from relevant external agencies. 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 children
- Any disability or special needs of the children
- Their social and family circumstance
- Any evidence in the behaviour or presentation of the children that might suggest they have been harmed
- Any evidence of pressure to engage in sexual or exploitative activity
- Any indication of exploitation or 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 The Energy Coast UTC we believe that all children have a right to attend the college and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the school and other students.

We recognise that some students will sometimes attempt to 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 students by: -

- Providing a developmentally appropriate Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) syllabus which develops students understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe
- Having systems in place for any student 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 and providing targeted work for students identified as being a potential risk to other students

Allegations against other students which are safeguarding issues

Occasionally, allegations may be made against students 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 student, some of the following features will be found.

If the allegation: -

- Is made against an older students and refers to their behaviour towards a younger student or a more vulnerable student
- Is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence
- Raises risk factors for other students in the school
- Indicates that other students 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 / Harassment

- Indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assaults
- Forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting
- Unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature, this may be either physical or verbal,
- Inappropriate or suggestive remarks or verbal sexual advances,
- Indecent comments, jokes or innuendos relating to a person's looks or private life,
- Unwanted physical contact such as hugging, kissing or inappropriate touching.
- Requests for sexual favours,
- The display or circulation of pornography or indecent images.

Sexual Exploitation

- Encouraging other children to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour (for example - having an older boyfriend/girlfriend, associating with unknown adults or other sexually exploited children, staying out overnight)
- Photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts

Procedure

- When an allegation is made by a student 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 (staff are advised that if they have any doubts or concerns they should inform the safeguarding lead anyway).
- A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances. This process will form the preliminary investigation to establish the matters of fact from both sides. All statements will be anonymised, so the names of the individuals involved in the case will not be shared until a decision to take further action is agreed.
- Witnesses may also be invited to attend an interview
- The DSL should liaise with the Principal to discuss the case. The DSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make a referral where appropriate.
- Should either the complainant or respondent wish to submit requests for questions to be put to the other party as part of their interview, they will be invited to do so ahead of the meetings.
- If the allegation indicates that a potential criminal offence has taken place, the DSL will refer the case to the Cumbria safeguarding hub and a referral to Cumbria Constabulary will be made by either the DSL or a representative of the Cumbria safeguarding hub after the initial consultation.
- Parents, of both the student being complained about and the alleged victim, should be informed and kept updated on the progress of the referral. This can only be done in accordance with current legislation.
- 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. Other strategies to be considered may include affecting a part time timetable or ensuring students are not present in lessons together during the normal running of the school day.
- 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.
- The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.

