MBIS Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

Rationale

Maadi British International School Mission Statement

'Learning for Life…'

Maadi British International School (MBIS) provides children with the knowledge, skills and understanding that will empower them to be well-rounded, successful members of an ever changing, culturally diverse world community.

At MBIS we are committed to providing a happy, positive learning environment where children, teenagers and adults are:

- *Successful, independent and collaborative learners*
- *Confident, cooperative team players and responsible leaders*
- *Flexible, resourceful and resilient*
- *Reflective, honest and trustworthy*
- *Responsible, caring global citizens*

Introduction

The Board of Governors, Senior Leadership Team, and all staff at MBIS are committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of child- on-child abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the School.

In particular, we:

believe that in order to protect children, all schools should:

a) be aware of the nature and level of risk to which their students are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context;

b) take a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse, regard the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure.

We:

(a) do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to child-on-child abuse in response to alleged incidents of it;

(b) believe that in order to tackle child-on-child abuse proactively, it is necessary to focus on all four of the following areas:

(i) systems and structures;

(ii) prevention;

(iii) identification; and

(iv) response/intervention

We recognise international and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to mitigate harmful attitudes and child-on-child abuse in the school setting, and encourage parents to hold us to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers, they should inform the School so that it can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

This policy is the school's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute child-on- child abuse.

It relates to, and should be read alongside:

• the School's Safeguarding policy and any other relevant policies including, but not limited to, the anti-bullying and the positive-behaviour policies

• It sets out our strategy for improving prevention, and identifying and appropriately managing child-on-child abuse.

It applies to all (governors, the Senior Leadership Team, and staff).

It is reviewed annually, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which students are or may be exposed a number of staff are involved in each annual review which involves, and is informed by, an assessment of the impact and effectiveness of this policy over the previous year, recognises that abuse is abuse, and should never be passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', or 'part of growing up'.

It is compliant with the statutory guidance on child-on-child abuse as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026), does not use the term 'victim' and/or 'perpetrator'. This is because our School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in concerns or allegations about child-on-child abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused, and those who are alleged to have abused other children, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter.

Research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by other children, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers,

- uses the terms 'child' and 'children', which is defined for the purposes of this policy as a person aged under 18.

We have nonetheless chosen not to restrict our approach to child-on-child abuse under this policy to children but instead to adopt a wider interpretation of our safeguarding responsibilities so that they apply to all students, regardless of age.

Although the starting point is that the School's response to child-on-child abuse should be the same for all students, regardless of age, there may be some different considerations in relation to, for example, a child aged under 10.

Similarly, the School's response to incidents involving the exchange of youth involved sexual imagery will need to differ depending on the age of the students involved.

- should, if relevant, according to the concern(s) or allegation(s) raised, be read in conjunction with the DfE's advice on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges (DfE's Advice) (May 2018),33 and any other advice and guidance referred to within it, as appropriate, and

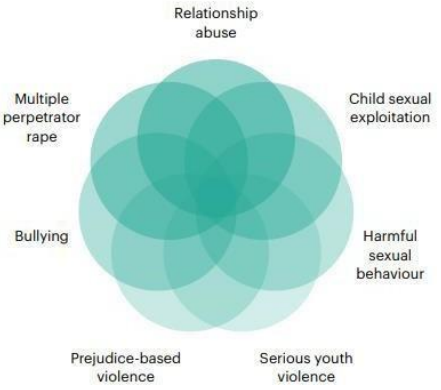
- should be read in conjunction with the School Safeguarding Policy/Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 and any Practice Guidance issued by it.

Understanding child-on-child abuse.

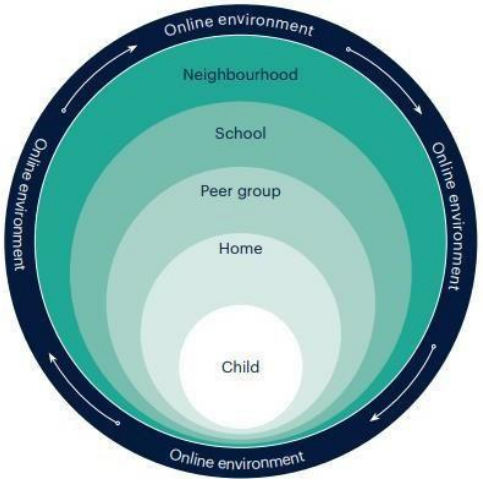
What is child-on-child abuse? For these purposes, child-on-child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children, and within children's relationships (both intimate and non intimate), friendships and wider peer associations.

Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to): serious bullying (including cyberbullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence and abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or prejudice- based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence. Examples of online child-on-child abuse would include sexting, online abuse, child-on-child grooming, the distribution of youth involved sexualised content, and harassment.

Holistic account of peer-on-peer abuse [45]



Contextual circles of adolescent vulnerability [46]



Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) outlines that:

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying),
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse'),
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse),
- serious physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon,
- sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence),
- sexual harassment such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse,
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party,
- consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes
- upskirting which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm, and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

What is Contextual Safeguarding?

This policy: (a) encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which is about changing the way that professionals approach child protection when risks occur outside of the family, thereby requiring all those within the school to consider how they work alongside, rather than just refer into, the child's wider support network, to create safe spaces in which children may have encountered child-on-child abuse.

b) adopts a whole-school community Contextual Safeguarding approach, which means:

• being aware of and seeking to understand the impact that these wider social contexts may be having on the School's students,

• creating a safe culture in the School by, for example, implementing policies and procedures that address child-on-child abuse and harmful attitudes; promoting healthy relationships and attitudes to gender/ sexuality; hotspot mapping to identify risky areas in the School; training on potential bias and stereotyped assumptions,

• being alert to and monitoring changes in students' behaviour and/or attendance, and

How prevalent is child-on-child abuse?

Research suggests that child-on-child abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse affecting children in the UK. For example, [more than four in ten teenage schoolgirls aged between 13 and 17 in England have experienced sexual coercion. Two thirds of contact sexual abuse experienced by children aged 17 or under was committed by someone who was also aged 17 or under].

When does behaviour become problematic or abusive:

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

Sexual behaviours: Simon Hackett has proposed the following continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children, which may be helpful when seeking to understand a student's sexual behaviour and deciding how to respond to it.

Sexual behaviours continuum model

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
• Developmentally expected • Socially acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Problematic and concerning behaviour • Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected • No overt elements of victimisation • Consent issues may be unclear • May lack reciprocity or equal power • May include levels of compulsivity	• Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given • May include elements of expressive violence	• Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is psychologically and/or sexually arousing to the child responsible for the behaviour • Sadism

Hackett's continuum relates exclusively to sexual behaviours and is not exhaustive. The Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool can help professionals working with children to distinguish between three levels of sexual behaviour – green, amber and red, and to respond according to the level of concern.

Other behaviour

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on aspects of Hackett's continuum to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, whether it:

- is socially acceptable,
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time,
- is socially acceptable within the peer group,
- is problematic and concerning,
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability,
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning,
- involves a power imbalance between the child/ children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power, and
- involves a misuse of power.

How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?

All staff should be alert to the well-being of students and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on- child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ

The School's safeguarding team should regularly review behaviour incident logs which can help to identify any changes in behaviour and/or concerning patterns or trends at an early stage. This takes place as part of our Safeguarding Supervision. Are some children particularly vulnerable to abusing or being abused by their peers? Any child can be vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to the strength of peer influence during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children.

Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers. For

example, an image of a child could be shared, following which they could become more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse due to how others now perceive them, regardless of any characteristics which may be inherent in them and/or their family. Peer group dynamics can also play an important role in determining a child's vulnerability to such abuse. For example, children who are more likely to follow others and/or who are socially isolated from their peers may be more vulnerable to child-on-child abuse. Children who are questioning or exploring their sexuality may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their peers.

School environment

The School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of child-on-child abuse by:

• educating all governors, its senior leadership team, staff, students, and parents about this issue. This includes: training all governors, the senior leadership team, and staff on the nature, prevalence and effect of child-on-child abuse, and how to prevent, identify, and respond to it. This includes (i) Contextual Safeguarding, (ii) the identification and classification of specific behaviours, including digital behaviours, (iii) the importance of taking seriously all forms of child-on-child abuse (no matter how 'low level' they may appear) and ensuring that no form of child-on-child abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing, and (iv) social media and online safety, including how to encourage children to use social media in a positive, responsible and safe way, and how to enable them to identify and manage abusive behaviour online. This takes place as part of safeguarding training.

• educating children about the nature and prevalence of child-on-child abuse, positive, responsible and safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts about consent, via PSHE and the wider curriculum. For example, by addressing gender inequality in a statistics class, or by reviewing literature in an English class which addresses bullying and its effect on mental health. Students are frequently told what to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse.

They are regularly informed about the School's approach to such issues, including its zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse. Educating students about consent includes teaching them basic facts such as (i) a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity; (ii) the age of consent is 16; and (iii) sexual intercourse without consent is rape, and engaging parents on these issues by: − talking about them with parents, both in groups and one to one, − asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the School address those risks, − involving parents in the review of School policies and lesson plans, and − encouraging parents to hold the School to account on this issue, in part as a result of visibility of this policy.

• [supporting the on-going welfare of the student body by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise student mental health, and by providing in-school counselling and therapy to address underlying mental health needs. These interventions can be 'de-clinicised' and brokered through a positive relationship with the School and its staff. All staff are trained to meet low-level mental health

difficulties within the students],

• working with governors, senior leadership team, and all staff, students and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the School community,

• creating conditions in which our students can aspire to, and realise, safe and healthy relationships fostering a whole-school culture: − which is founded on the idea that every member of our School community is responsible for building and maintaining safe and positive relationships, and helping to create a safe School environment in which violence and abuse are never acceptable, [and in which certain behaviour such as the carrying of weapons is not tolerated], − in which students are able to develop trusting relationships with staff, and in which staff understand, through regular discussion and training, the importance of these relationships in providing students with a sense of belonging, which could otherwise be sought in problematic contexts, − in which students feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to, − which (i) proactively identifies positive qualities in students; (ii) nurtures these qualities; (iii) teaches and encourages students to think about positive hopes for the future; and (vi) supports students in developing small-scale goals that enable realistic ambitions, and − which provides supervised activities to students that give them the experience of having their needs met that might otherwise apparently be met in abusive circumstances. These can include experiencing (i) status; (ii) excitement; and (iii) a degree of risk,

• responding to cases of child-on-child abuse promptly and appropriately, and

• ensuring that all child-on-child abuse issues are fed back to the School's Safeguarding [team/lead] so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who may be in need of additional support. [This is done by way of a weekly staff meeting at which all concerns about students (including child-on-child abuse issues) are discussed as the top priority]; challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom).

Multi-agency working: The School acknowledges that there is a scarcity of local Safeguarding Partnerships in relation to child-on-child abuse in Egypt and works within this limitation by ensuring all training for staff is up-to-date and best practice examples from the UK are followed where possible.

Responding to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse:

General principles

It is essential that all concerns and allegations of child-on-child abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on the MBIS environment.

Any response should:

• include a thorough investigation of the concern(s) or allegation(s), and the wider context in which

it/they may have occurred (as appropriate) – depending on the nature and seriousness of the alleged incident(s),

• treat all children involved as being at potential risk – while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. The School should ensure that a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter,

• take into account: − that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved, and consider and address the effect of wider sociocultural contexts – such as the child's/ children's peer group (both within and outside the School); family; the School environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence.

• Consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child/ children's needs and to mitigate risk, and − the potential complexity of child-on-child abuse and of children´s experiences, and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent.

While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited they are not consenting, − the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/ children and their parents, and obtain consent to any referral before it is made. The School should manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so. It is particularly important to take into account the wishes of any child who has allegedly been abused, and to give that child as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and how they will be supported.

What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s)?

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the relevant DSL (Primary or Secondary) without delay (in accordance with the child protection policy) so that a course of action can be agreed. Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that the Head of School is informed immediately so that appropriate next steps can take place.

Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made. If a child speaks to a member of staff about peer-on peer abuse that they have witnessed or are a part of, the member of staff should listen to the child

and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement. For further details please see the procedures set out in the child protection policy.

How will the School respond to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse?

The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the member of staff who has reported it/them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected. Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a child or children may have been shared online, the DSL should consider what urgent action can be taken in addition to the actions and referral duties set out in this policy, to seek specialist help in preventing the images spreading further and removing the images from the internet.

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), for example, has a trained team that can evaluate and remove illegal images from the internet when the images are reported to them quickly.

DSLs should always use their professional judgement to: (a) assess the nature and seriousness of the alleged behaviour,and (b) determine the appropriate course of action for the alleged behaviour

Where the DSL considers or suspects that the alleged behaviour in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum or where the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question might otherwise require it, the DSL should contact the Head of School immediately and, in any event, within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of the alleged behaviour.

Safety plans

The School will always carry out a safety plan in respect of:

- any child who is alleged to have behaved in a way that is considered to be abusive or violent,

- any child who has reportedly been abused or affected by the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child, or

- any child who may be at risk due to the alleged abusive or violent behaviour by another child as deemed appropriate by the DSL. Where it is alleged that a child has behaved in a way that is considered to be inappropriate or problematic (as opposed to abusive or violent), the DSL will use their professional judgment – based on the particular concern(s) and/or allegation(s) raised, and the needs and circumstances of the individual child/children in question – to determine whether (as explained above) it would be appropriate to contact the children's parent, and to carry out a safety plan.

Careful judgment and consideration are required as to whether alleged behaviour which might be

judged to be inappropriate by an adult might actually be harmful to another child.

Careful consideration should also be given to a range of factors including the context, severity of the alleged behaviour, impact of the alleged behaviour on others, risk to others, and whether there are any patterns of behaviour occurring. Where other children have been identified as witnesses to alleged abuse or violence, consideration should also be given by the DSL to whether there might be any risks to those children, and whether a safety plan would be appropriate in relation to any risks presenting to them. Information sharing, data protection and record keeping When responding to concern(s) or allegation(s) of child-on-child abuse, the School will:

- always consider carefully, how to share information about the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the student(s) affected, their parents, staff, and other students and individuals,
- record the information that is necessary for the School to respond to the concern(s) or allegation(s) and safeguard everyone involved,
- keep a record of the legal purpose for sharing the information with any third party, including relevant authorities, and ensure that the third party has agreed to handle the information securely and to only use it for the agreed legal purpose, and
- be mindful of and act in accordance with its safeguarding and data protection duties, including those set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018)74 and the HM Government advice on Information Sharing (updated in July 2018).

Disciplinary action

The School may wish to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved. The School will need to consider what is the most appropriate action to take to ensure positive behaviour management. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including to: (a) ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour; (b) demonstrate to the child/children and others that child- on-child abuse can never be tolerated; and (c) ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

However, these considerations must be balanced against the child's/children's own potential unmet needs, and any action or intervention planned regarding safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on appropriate action the School will always consider its duty to safeguard all children in its care from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the child-on-child abuse and the causes of it.

The School will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed moves or exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognizing that even if this is ultimately deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this policy may still be required. For example, action may still need to be taken by the School in relation to other students

who have been involved with and/or affected by child-on-child abuse. Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the School, as well as the possible involvement of local police. In extreme circumstances it may be deeemed appropriate to involve the police and this decision will be made by the Head of School. The school may also contact the relevant Embassy/Embassies regarding a specific safeguarding case, and this may be used in emergency situations/where the child is at risk of significant harm or if the case is complex in extremis.

Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of child-on-child abuse, and the School will always consider the wider actions that may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards, as set out above and below.

School Response

The School's response to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse should be part of on-going proactive work by the School to embed best practice and in taking a whole-school community

Contextual Safeguarding approach (defined above) to such abuse. As such the School's response can become part of its wider prevention work.

The response could also include the School asking itself a series of questions about the context in which an incident of child-on-child abuse occurred in the School, the local community in which the School is based, and the wider physical and online environment – such as:

- What protective factors and influences exist within the School (such as positive peer influences, examples where child-on-child abuse has been challenged, etc.) and how can the School bolster these?

- How (if at all) did the School's physical environment or the students' routes to and from the School contribute to the abuse, and how can the School address this going forwards, for example by improving the School's safety, security and supervision, to mitigate the risks to students' safety whilst travelling to and from the School?

- How (if at all) did the online environment contribute to the abuse, and how can the School address this going forwards, for example by strengthening the way in which the School encourages positive and safe use of the internet by students?

- Did wider gender norms, equality issues, and/or societal attitudes contribute to the abuse?

- What was the relationship between the abuse and the cultural norms between staff and students, and how can these be addressed going forward?

- Does the abuse indicate a need for staff training on, for example, underlying attitudes, a particular

issue or the handling of particular types of abuse, or to address any victim- blaming narratives from staff?

- How have similar cases been managed in the past and what effect has this had?

- Does the case or any identified trends highlight areas for development in the way in which the School works with children to raise their awareness of and/or prevent child-on- child abuse, including by way of the School's PSHE curriculum and lessons that address underlying attitudes or behaviour such as gender and equalities work, respect, boundaries, consent, children's rights and critical thinking and/or avoiding victim-blaming narratives?
- Are there any lessons to be learnt about the way in which the School engages with parents to address child-on-child abuse issues?

- Does this case highlight a need to work with certain children to build their confidence, and teach them how to identify and manage abusive behaviour?

- Were there opportunities to intervene earlier or differently and/or to address common themes amongst the behaviour of other children in the School?

Answers to these questions can be developed into an action plan that is reviewed on a regular basis by the School's leadership and the DSLs. The School will, where possible and appropriate, work with the local authority and wider partners to deliver on this plan, possibly as part of a wider Contextual Safeguarding school assessment.

Date of Creation: 13.03.23

To be reviewed annually.

Reviewed: September 2026

Date of next review: September 2027 (aligned with publication of KCSIE)