

# **Cyberbullying**

## **Policy Statement**

The possibilities of the Internet and mobile phones are endless. Young people benefit from having opportunity to access one another and communicate in a variety of different forms. However, not all aspects of ICT are positive and it can enable additional routes for those intent on bullying.

### **Definition of Cyberbullying**

Safe to Learn: Embedding Anti-bullying Work in Schools — Cyberbullying (DCSF, 2007) provides the following definition: “Cyberbullying can be defined as the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the Internet, deliberately to upset someone else”.

### **The College of Teachers has agreed to adopt this definition**

Cyberbullying includes:

- text message bullying
- picture/video-clip bullying via mobile phone cameras
- phone call bullying via mobile phones
- email bullying
- chat room bullying
- bullying through instant messaging
- bullying via websites

Although similar in many respects to other forms of bullying, cyberbullying also has some very specific features.

- It invades both home and personal space.
- The size of the audience can be vast.
- Electronically circulated messages can be difficult to control.
- The bully can feel relatively anonymous.
- It can have a large number of “bystanders” or “accessories”.
- Much (if not all) of the bullying may take place out of school.

### **The Aims of the Policy**

Through this policy we aim to:

- raise awareness among pupils and staff about cyberbullying
- provide a safe learning environment in which preventative measures are in place to deter cyberbullying
- ensure systems are in place to deal with cyberbullying should it occur.

## Procedure:

### Prevention

In order that these aims can be fulfilled, a number of preventative measures will be taken.

### Awareness-raising — Pupils

A number of opportunities have been highlighted as part of the curriculum to help children “stay safe”. **A unit is included in our Life Skills Curriculum.** At the beginning of the school year, all classes will discuss safe use of the computers. They will be reminded about the **Protocol** and a copy of this will be sent out to parents.

If an issue relating to cyberbullying has arisen, the subject may be discussed during circle time or forum. If this is in relation to a particular individual, consideration will be given to how the issue is raised. Pupils will be made aware of the importance of telling an adult, and which adults they can approach in school.

### Awareness-raising — Parents

**Information on Cyberbullying is included in the Parent Handbook and updated annually via the weekly newsletter, outlining the school's approach to cyberbullying and providing information about websites that offer additional support and advice.** In addition, parents are invited to discuss any concerns or questions they may have with the Class Teacher or Guardian. Parents are encouraged to take notice of their children's online activities and to discuss the risks with them.

### Raising Awareness — School Staff

Staff have a duty to ensure that the children in their care stay safe, and also that they themselves are alert to the dangers of cyberbullying. This can be particularly difficult for members of staff who have children and relatives in the school. All members of school staff can be affected and staff should inform Chair of College or the Administrator at the first opportunity should any incident occur.

In service day sessions are periodically devoted to the issue of bullying, and cyberbullying is discussed as an agenda item. It enables new developments of potential sources of bullying to be raised and possible ways of challenging these to be discussed. New terminology used by the pupils is also shared at this session. Staff need to be aware of what the risks are and the potential for implications of misuse. On occasions an outside speaker may be invited to update staff on latest developments.

### Dealing with Cyberbullying Incidents

There is usually some visual evidence after cyberbullying has taken place. Pupils should be encouraged to pass this on to a member of staff or their parents. In some cases, it will be necessary to contact mobile phone companies, Internet service providers or social networking sites.

The following advice should be given to those experiencing cyberbullying.

- Do not retaliate or reply.
- Block or remove offenders from buddy lists.
- Review the information you are giving out.
- Make sure you tell an adult.
- Try to keep calm and do not let the bully see a reaction.

If the person responsible for the bullying is identified, sanctions will be applied under the school's behaviour policy. In addition, the following sanctions might be implemented, depending upon the nature and severity of the bullying:

- confiscating equipment such as mobile phones
- withdrawing access to the Internet for a set period of time
- limiting use of the Internet for a set period of time
- contacting the police, where the cyberbullying is sufficiently severe
- informing external agencies such as social networking or email member sites.

Support will be provided for the victim. This may include meeting the bully to discuss what has happened and agree a way forward.

It is important that all children and staff recognise that when an incident of cyberbullying takes place it is dealt with swiftly. Parents should be told, in the early stages of any bullying, what actions have been taken to remedy it.

### **Use of the Internet in School**

This school has its own **Protocol** that clearly identifies how computers and Internet should be used. Children and parents are reminded of this policy annually. Some of the main features are as follows:

- Children should not allowed unsupervised access to the Internet.
- Children should be made aware of their own responsibility in reporting anything they identify that causes them concern.
- Permission must be given from parents for pupils to use the Internet and pupils must also agree to follow Internet usage rules.

The Librarian and US Teachers are responsible for reviewing how the school network is monitored.

### **Use of Mobile Phones in School by Children**

- Except in emergency situations, no mobile phones are to be used on the school premises.
- We request that all phones are switched off on the premises, or at the very least on silent.
- Phones are to be brought into school only when absolutely necessary.
- Pupils of Classes 5 to 10 will hand in any phones to their teacher at the beginning of the day. These will be placed in a lockable box. Class 5 to 8 boxes

will be kept in their classrooms, and Class 9 and 10 in the reception safe, until the end of the day when they will be available for collection.

- There will be two keys to each of the boxes. The Class Teacher will be responsible for one, and Sara will keep all the others.
- If parents of children younger than Class 5 consider that it is necessary for their child to bring a mobile phone into school, they will be asked to write a letter of request to the Class Teacher in advance. The phone must be clearly labelled with the child's name. It will then be stored in reception until the end of the day.
- Any phone found during school time will be confiscated, stored in the appropriate box or in reception and will only be available for collection at the end of the school day.
- If it is absolutely necessary for a staff member to lend a pupil a mobile phone, they should use a school mobile rather than one owned by an individual staff member. If this is not possible, the staff member should supervise the call and delete any numbers used afterwards. If being able to contact pupils by their mobile becomes necessary — for example on a school trip — school employees should use school-owned mobiles wherever possible to store numbers and contact pupils. Numbers can be deleted following the event, and pupils will not have access to a staff member's personal number.
- Any staff member that needs to borrow a school mobile must ensure that it is secure at all times. Please report any loss to the administrator as soon as possible. It is important that reception is aware which mobile phone has been borrowed so that they know the number to contact.
- School owned mobiles should not have saved any personal numbers of either staff members or students, or any text or other messaging or photographs. The receptionist will ensure that only the school's main telephone number is contained in the memory.
- Still photographs or video must only be taken with a school camera.

## **Use of Mobile Phones in School by Adults**

Although parents will bring mobile phones onto the premises, it must be understood that these should not be used for the purpose of taking photographs and they should be switched off while on school premises.

## **E-mailing and Instant Messaging**

No member of staff should carry a phone around school with them, except for Christoph Von Kurthy, emergency 1<sup>st</sup> aid officer and staff first responder, and any member of staff who is taking children out on a school field or on a trip, when they will be supplied with a school mobile phone.

All members of staff must be careful about giving out their mobile number. Wherever possible, the school's mobile phone should be used for school trips and visits. However, there may be times when more than one phone is necessary. Where this is the case, a member of staff may use their personal phone but access to this should be restricted to a senior member of school staff. If any situation arises where this needs to be extended, permission should be secured first.

No member of staff may give a pupil their personal email address or mobile phone number.. Children and staff should never reply to unpleasant or unwanted emails or open files from people they don't know.

When writing emails or instant messages, think carefully about the content. When angry or distressed, you might send something likely to cause further anguish. Leave the computer and discuss the issue with someone else.

## **Bystanders**

The issue of being a bystander or accessory is addressed with all children regularly, and the School Council has compiled some bystander guidelines. Pupils are encouraged to respect other people on- and offline and to recognise how sharing a secret and passing on numbers and passwords can cause harm and distress to others.

Being a bystander can include:

- forwarding messages
- contributing to discussions
- taking part in an online poll.

## **Recording and Reporting**

The whole school community is made aware of ways of reporting incidents of bullying. Bullying is reported to a member of school staff who will then report it to his or her line manager, and the appropriate action will be taken. All incidents of cyberbullying are logged as part of the school's anti-bullying policy and this information is shared annually with the governing body.

## **Special Needs**

Children with special needs are particularly vulnerable to all forms of bullying. Members of school staff are alert to changes in behaviour and ensure that there are opportunities and established methods for children with SEN to communicate should the need arise.

## **Equal Opportunities**

As with other forms of bullying, cyberbullying is prone to being driven by prejudice. Staff are alert to the possibilities of sexist, racist and homophobic cyberbullying. Although all victims of bullying can be reluctant to discuss their experiences, victims of homophobic bullying may be particularly so.

This Policy

A copy of this policy is stored in each year group and a copy is also held in the staffroom. Its formation was discussed by Rosie Harrison and Jacqui Firth

Has It Been Successful?

The following questions will be asked by the reviewing group to ascertain the success of the policy.

- How many incidents of cyberbullying have been recorded in the past 12 months?
- Is there evidence of actions resulting from pupils reporting incidents of cyberbullying?
- Have the actions been effective, ie has the behaviour desisted?
- When talking to pupils in the school, is there an awareness of what cyberbullying is and what to do if they encounter it?

Pupil, parent and staff surveys will also include questions about the effectiveness of this policy.

Linked Policies

Other policies which should be referred to include

- **Anti-bullying**
- **Behaviour**
- **ITC Protocol**
- **Mobile Phone**
- **Equal Opportunities**
- **Safeguarding**