

St Ann's Heath Junior School: Guidance on Cyber-bullying

Introduction

Today's children and young people are growing up in a world that is very different from that of most adults. Many young people experience the internet and mobile phones as a positive, productive and creative part of their activities and development of their identities; always on and always there. Above all, information communication technologies support social activity that allows young people to feel connected to their peers.

Unfortunately, technologies are also being used negatively. When children are the target of bullying via mobiles phones or the internet, they can feel alone and very misunderstood. They may not be able to identify that what is happening to them is a form of bullying, or be confident that the adults around them will understand it that way either. Previously safe and enjoyable environments and activities can become threatening and a source of anxiety.

As mobile phone and internet use has become increasingly common, so has the misuse of this technology to bully. Current research in this area indicates that cyberbullying is a feature of many young people's lives. One study carried out for the Anti-Bullying Alliance in 2014 found that 22% of young people reported being the target of cyberbullying.

What is Cyber bullying?

Cyberbullying is the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, to deliberately upset someone else.

What's different about cyberbullying?

Bullying is not new, but some features of cyberbullying are different from other forms of bullying:

24/7 and the invasion of home/personal space: Cyberbullying can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe or personal.

The audience can be very large and reached rapidly: The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages means the scale and scope of cyberbullying can be greater than for other forms of bullying. Electronically forwarded content is hard to control, and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for victims to move on.

People who cyberbully may attempt to remain anonymous: This can be extremely distressing for those being bullied. The person cyberbullying may never be in the same physical space as their target.

The profile of the bully and target: Cyberbullying can take place both between peers and across generations; teachers have also been targets for example. Age or size are not important. 'Bystanders' can also become accessories to the bullying; for example, by passing on a humiliating image.

Some instances of cyberbullying are known to be unintentional: It can be the result of not thinking (something sent as a joke may be deeply upsetting or offensive to the recipient) or a lack of awareness of the consequences – for example saying something negative online about another pupil, or friend that they don't expect to be forwarded or viewed outside their immediate group.

Cyber bullying and the law

Education law: Bullying is never acceptable. The school community has a duty to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment. A range of Education Acts and government initiatives highlight these obligations.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) outlines some legal powers which relate more directly to cyberbullying. Head teachers have the power 'to such an extent as is reasonable' to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off site. The EIA also provides a defence for school staff in confiscating items such as mobile phones from pupils.

Civil and criminal law: Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence in UK law, there are laws that can apply in terms of harassing or threatening behaviour, for example, or indeed menacing and threatening communications. In fact, some cyberbullying activities could be criminal offences under a range of different laws, including the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, which has both criminal and civil provision, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, section 127 of the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986.

Preventing Cyberbullying

To combat the potential for cyber-bullying at St Ann's Heath Junior School we feel the best way is to prevent it happening in the first place. The headteacher will have responsibility for the coordination and implementation of cyber bullying prevention and response strategies. There is no single solution to the problem of cyber bullying. These are the five key areas that we have put in place as a comprehensive and effective prevention plan:

1. Understanding and talking about cyberbullying

The whole school community needs a shared, agreed definition of cyberbullying. Everyone needs to be aware of the impact of cyberbullying and the ways in which it differs from other forms of bullying. Young people and their parents should be made aware of pupils' responsibilities in their use of ICT, and what the sanctions are for misuse. Children and parents should know that the school can provide them with support if cyberbullying takes place out of school.

2. Updating existing policies and practices

We will review and update the school's anti-bullying policy plus other relevant policies – for example, policies on behaviour, pastoral care and use of technologies. If necessary, we will conduct searches of internet use records at school. Knowing that the school is taking such steps may act as a disincentive for bullies to misuse school equipment and systems.

3. Making reporting cyberbullying easier

No one should feel that they have to deal with cyberbullying alone, but reporting any incident of bullying can be really hard for the person being bullied and for bystanders. We aim to have a climate where pupils and parents feel comfortable to approach school staff, and are willing to provide information about contacting e safety websites and service providers directly.

4. Promoting the positive use of technology

Technology is successfully being used to support engaging, positive and effective learning, and to realise and increase the potential of personalised learning by making learning more flexible, creative and accessible. At St

Ann's Heath we promote safe ways of using technology with learners to support self-esteem, assertiveness, participation and to develop friendships.

5. Evaluating the impact of prevention activities

Regular reviews are vital to make sure that antibullying policies are working and are up-to-date. It is especially important to be aware of developments in technology and ensure that cyberbullying is a live issue.

Responding to Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying, and therefore all schools should already be equipped to deal with the majority of cases through their existing anti-bullying policies and procedures. At St Ann's Heath the following steps will be followed:

1. Supporting the person being bullied

- Give reassurance that the pupil has done the right thing by telling someone, refer to any existing pastoral support/procedures and inform parents.

Advise on next steps:

- Make sure they know not to retaliate or return the message.
- Ask them to think about what information they have in the public domain.
- Help them and their parents to keep relevant evidence for any investigation (e.g. by not deleting messages they've received, and by taking screen capture shots and noting web addresses of online cyberbullying instances).
- Check the pupil understands simple ways to prevent it from happening again, e.g. by changing contact details, blocking contacts or leaving a chatroom
- Take action to contain the incident when content has been circulated: If you know who the person responsible is, ask them and their parents to remove the content;
- Contact the host (e.g. the social networking site) to make a report to get the content taken down. Use disciplinary powers to confiscate phones that are being used to cyberbully. Ask the pupil to tell you who they have sent messages on to.
- In cases of illegal content, contact the police, who can determine what needs to be kept for evidential purposes.

2. Investigating incidents

- All bullying incidents should be properly recorded and investigated. Cyberbullying can be a very serious matter and can constitute a criminal offence. In UK law, there are criminal laws that can apply in terms of harassment or threatening and menacing communications.
- Advise pupils and staff to try and keep a record of the bullying as evidence. It can be useful to show parents, teachers, pastoral care staff and the police, if necessary, what has happened.
- Take steps to identify the bully, including looking at the school systems, identifying and interviewing possible witnesses, and contacting the service provider and the police, if necessary. The police will need to be involved to enable the service provider to look into the data of another user.

3. Working with the bully and sanctions

Once the person bullying is identified, steps should be taken to change their attitude and behaviour as well as ensuring access to any support that is required. Factors to consider when determining the appropriate sanctions include:

- The impact on the victim: was the bully acting anonymously, was the material widely circulated

and humiliating, how difficult was controlling the spread of the material?

- The motivation of the bully: was the incident unintentional or retaliation to bullying behaviour from others?
- Technology-specific sanctions for pupils engaged in cyberbullying behaviour could include limiting internet access for a period of time.

How is Technology Used to Bully?

Technology:	Great For:	Examples of misuse:
Mobile phones	Keeping in touch by voice or text, taking and sending pictures and film, listening to music, playing games, going online and sending emails. Useful in emergency situations and for allowing children a greater sense of independence.	Sending nasty calls or text messages, including threats, intimidation, and harassment. Taking and sharing humiliating images. Videoing other people being harassed and sending these to other phones or internet sites.
Instant Messenger	Text or voice chatting live with friends online. A quick and effective way of keeping in touch even while working on other things.	Sending nasty messages or content. Using someone else's account to forward rude or mean messages via their contacts list.
Chatrooms and message boards	Groups of people around the world can text or voice chat live about common interests. For young people, this can be an easy way to meet new people and explore issues which they are too shy to talk about in person.	Sending nasty or threatening anonymous messages. Groups of people deciding to pick on or ignore individuals. Making friends under false pretences – people pretending to be someone they're not in order to get personal information that they can misuse in a range of ways – e.g. by spreading secrets or blackmailing.
Email	Sending electronic letters, pictures and other files quickly and cheaply anywhere in the world.	Sending nasty or threatening messages. Forwarding unsuitable content including images and video clips, or sending computer viruses. Accessing someone else's account, e.g. to forward personal emails or delete emails.
Webcams	Taking pictures or recording messages. Being able to see and talk to someone live on your computer screen. Bringing far-off places to life or video conferencing.	Making and sending inappropriate content. Persuading or threatening young people to act in inappropriate ways. Using inappropriate recordings to manipulate young people.
Social network sites	Socialising with your friends and making new ones within online communities. Allowing young people to be creative online, even publishing online music. Personalising homepages and profiles, creating and uploading content.	Posting nasty comments, humiliating images / video. Accessing another person's account details and sending unpleasant messages, deleting information or making private information public. Groups of people picking on individuals by excluding them. Creating fake profiles to pretend to be someone else, e.g. to bully, harass or get the person into trouble.
Video hosting sites	Accessing useful educational, entertaining and original. Creative	Posting embarrassing, humiliating film

	video content and uploading your own.	of someone.
Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)	School site, usually available from home and school, set up for tracking and recording student assignments, tests and activities, with message boards, chat and IM.	Posting inappropriate messages or images. Hacking into someone else's account to post inappropriate comments or delete schoolwork.
Gaming sites, consoles and virtual worlds	Live text or voice chat during online gaming between players across the world, or on handheld consoles with people in the same local area. Virtual worlds let users design their own avatars – a figure that represent them in the virtual world.	Name-calling, making abusive / derogatory remarks. Players may pick on weaker or less experienced users, repeatedly killing their characters. Forwarding unwanted messages to other devices in the immediate vicinity.

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