

Cyber-Bullying Policy

Tackling cyber-bullying

Mobile, Internet and wireless technologies have increased the pace of communication and brought benefits to users worldwide. But their popularity provides increasing opportunities for misuse through 'cyber-bullying'. It's crucial that children and young people, who are particularly skilful at adapting to new technology, use their mobiles and the Internet safely and positively, and that they are aware of the consequences of misuse. School staff, parents and pupils of St Philomena's School have to be constantly vigilant and work together to prevent this form of bullying and tackle it wherever it appears.

The advent of cyber-bullying adds new dimensions to the problem of bullying. Unlike other forms of bullying, cyber-bullying can follow children and young people into their private spaces and outside school hours; there is no safe haven for the person being bullied. Cyber-bullies can communicate their messages to a wide audience with remarkable speed, and can often remain unseen and unidentifiable.

What is cyber-bullying?

- **Text message bullying** involves sending unwelcome texts that are threatening or cause discomfort.
- **Picture/video-clip bullying via mobile phone cameras** is used to make the person being bullied feel threatened or embarrassed, with images usually sent to other people. 'Happy slapping' involves filming and sharing physical attacks.
- **Phone call bullying via mobile phone** uses silent calls or abusive messages. Sometimes the bullied person's phone is stolen and used to harass others, who then think the phone owner is responsible. As with all mobile phone bullying, the perpetrators often disguise their numbers, sometimes using someone else's phone to avoid being identified.
- **Email bullying** uses email to send bullying or threatening messages, often using a pseudonym for anonymity or using someone else's name to pin the blame on them.
- **Chat room bullying** involves sending menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
- **Bullying through instant messaging (IM)** is an Internet-based form of bullying where children and young people are sent unpleasant messages as they conduct real-time conversations online.
- **Bullying via websites** includes the use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal polling sites. There has also been a significant increase in social networking sites for young people, which can provide new opportunities for cyber-bullying.

School staff, parents and pupils of St Philomena's School need to work together to prevent this and to tackle it whenever it occurs.

The School has a duty to ensure that:

- teachers have sufficient knowledge to deal with cyber bullying in school.
- the curriculum teaches pupils about the risks of new communications technologies, the consequences of their misuse, and how to use them safely.
- all e-communications used on the school site or as part of school activities off-site are monitored.
- Internet blocking technologies are continually updated and harmful sites blocked.

- they work with pupils and parents to make sure new communications technologies are used safely, taking account of local and national guidance and good practice.
- security systems are in place to prevent images and information about pupils and staff being accessed improperly from outside school.
- they work with police and other partners on managing cyber-bullying.

Staff:

Have responsibilities in:

- teaching children safe Internet etiquette
- applying school policy in monitoring electronic messages and images
- giving pupils key guidance on:
 - personal privacy rights
 - material posted on any electronic platform
 - photographic images
- taking action if a pupil is being cyber bullied or is bullying someone else
- teaching pupils the value of e-communications and the risks and consequences of improper use, including the legal implications

Parents of St Philomena's School are encouraged to share these guidelines:

- Don't wait for something to happen before you act. Make sure your child understands how to use these technologies safely and knows about the risks and consequences of misusing them.
- Make sure their child knows what to do if they or someone they know are being cyber bullied.
- Encourage your child to talk to you if they have any problems with cyber bullying. If they do have a problem, contact the school, the mobile network or the Internet Service Provider (ISP) to do something about it.
- Parental control software can limit who your child sends emails to and who he or she receives them from. It can also block access to some chat rooms.
- Moderated chat rooms are supervised by trained adults. Your Internet service provider will tell you whether they provide moderated chat services.
- Visit www.nch.org.uk for more information on Internet safety.

St. Philomena's School can help parents by:

- Provide information for parents on:
 - e-communication standards and practices in school
 - what to do if problems arise
 - what's being taught in the curriculum
- Support for parents and pupils if cyber bullying occurs by:
 - assessing the harm caused
 - identifying those involved
 - taking steps to repair harm and to prevent recurrence

Advice for pupils of St. Philomena's School:

If you're being bullied by phone or the Internet

Remember, bullying is never your fault. It can be stopped and it can usually be traced.

- Don't ignore the bullying. Tell someone you trust, such as a teacher or parent, or call an advice line.
- Try to keep calm. If you are frightened, try to show it as little as possible. Don't get angry, it will only make the person bullying you more likely to continue.

There's plenty of online advice on how to react to cyber bullying. For example, www.kidscape.org and www.wiredsafety.org have some useful tips:

Text/video messaging

You can easily stop receiving text messages for a while by turning off incoming messages for a couple of days. This might stop the person texting you by making them believe you've changed your phone number. To find out how to do this, visit www.wiredsafety.org.

If the bullying persists, you can change your phone number. Ask your mobile service provider.

Don't reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages. Your mobile service provider will have a number for you to ring or text to report phone bullying. Visit their website for details.

Don't delete messages from cyber bullies. You don't have to read them, but you should keep them as evidence.

Text harassment is a crime. If the calls are simply annoying, tell a teacher, parent or carer. If they are threatening or malicious and they persist, report them to the police, taking with you all the messages you've received.

Phone calls

- If you get an abusive or silent phone call, don't hang up immediately. Instead, put the phone down and walk away for a few minutes. Then hang up or turn your phone off. Once they realise they can't get you rattled, callers usually get bored and stop bothering you. If abusive, you could report it to your provider or if extreme and persistent to the police.
- Always tell someone else: a teacher, youth worker, mum or dad, or carer. Get them to support you and monitor what's going on.
- Don't give out personal details such as your phone number to just anyone. And never leave your phone lying around. When you answer your phone, just say 'hello', not your name. If they ask you to confirm your phone number, ask what number they want and then tell them if they've got the right number or not.
- You can use your voicemail to vet your calls. A lot of mobiles display the caller's number. See if you recognise it. If you don't, let it divert to voicemail instead of answering it. And don't leave your name on your voicemail greeting. You could get an adult to record your greeting. Their voice might stop the caller ringing again.
- Almost all calls nowadays can be traced.
- If the problem continues, think about changing your phone number.

- If you receive calls that scare or trouble you, make a note of the times and dates and report them to the police. If your mobile can record calls, take the recording too.

Emails

- Never reply to unpleasant or unwanted emails ('flames') — the sender wants a response, so don't give them that satisfaction.
- Keep the emails as evidence. And tell an adult about them.
- Ask an adult to contact the sender's Internet Service Provider (ISP) by writing abuse@ and then the host, e.g. abuse@hotmail.com
- Never reply to someone you don't know, even if there's an option to 'unsubscribe'. Replying simply confirms your email address as a real one.

Web bullying

If the bullying is on a website, tell a teacher or parent, just as you would if the bullying were face-to-face.

If you don't know the owner of the website, follow one of the online safety links below to find out how to get more information about the owner.

Chat rooms and instant messaging

- Never give out your name, address, phone number, school name or password online. It's a good idea to use a nickname. And don't give out photos of yourself.
- Don't accept emails or open files from people you don't know.
- Remember it might not just be people your own age in a chat room.
- Stick to public areas in chat rooms and get out if you feel uncomfortable.
- Tell your parents or carers if you feel uncomfortable or worried about anything that happens in a chat room.
- Think carefully about what you write; don't leave yourself open to bullying.

Three steps to stay out of harms way

1. Respect other people - online and off. Don't spread rumours about people or share their secrets, including their phone numbers and passwords.
2. If someone insults you online or by phone, stay calm – and ignore them.
3. 'Do as you would be done by.' Think how you would feel if you were bullied. You're responsible for your own behaviour – make sure you don't distress other people or cause them to be bullied by someone else.

The law is on your side

The **Protection from Harassment Act**, the **Malicious Communications Act 1988** and Section 43 of the **Telecommunications Act** may be used to combat cyberbullying. People may be fined or sent to prison for up to six months.

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