

## **CYBER BULLYING POLICY**

### **Safeguarding and ICT**

Protecting young people in the online world means thinking beyond the school environment. As well as the computer to access the Internet, now many mobile phones and games consoles offer broadband connections. Increasingly pupils will have access to personal devices not covered by network protection and therefore the emphasis needs to be on educating all users as to the risks involved and their obligation to act responsibly while online.

Safeguarding pupils in both the real and virtual world is everyone's responsibility and all staff should be aware of this policy and how to respond to e safety incidents.

All pupils should be made aware of the school's acceptable user policy and what to do if they have any ICT safeguarding concerns.

### **Procedures for dealing with Inappropriate/Illegal Internet Access or Material**

If staff or pupils discover unsuitable websites, this should be immediately reported to the Deputy Head who in liaison with the Director of IT will consider a referral to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and the Police.

What to do in the event of discovery of illegal material

- Seek immediate and specific advice from the Deputy Head who will consult with the Director of IT, the Headmaster and the Police.
- Prevent any further physical access to the device until the correct advice is gained.
- Unless absolutely necessary, DO NOT remove the power from a working PC and definitely DO NOT start a PC if it is already turned off.
- Consider if it is necessary to prevent remote access to the device.
- If you believe that a member of staff or pupil who has left the site, could remove or damage evidence on the device remotely, unplug ONLY the network cable from the back of the device to prevent this access from taking place.
- If the PC is already turned off and it is no longer realistically possible to prevent further physical access to the device (i.e. lack of supervision, high levels of access or an unoccupied location) disconnect the power at the base unit (not the wall) and remove the battery from a laptop. Store this device securely in a location where no one else can gain access to it and make a note of the date, time and name of the individual who performed this action.

Under no circumstances should the Headmaster, Deputy Head or Director of ICT attempt to conduct an investigation of their own or bring in an outside expert to do so as this may compromise the evidence if a legal case were to result. In some cases this may constitute a criminal offence in itself.

## **Combating Cyber-bullying**

Cyber-bullying can be defined as 'the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else'. It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. However, it differs in several significant ways from other kinds of bullying: the invasion of home and personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages, the size of the audience, perceived anonymity, and even the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target.

Cyber-bullying takes different forms: threats and intimidation, harassment or 'cyber-stalking' (e.g. repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages), vilification / defamation; exclusion or peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorised publication of private information or images and manipulation.

Some cyber-bullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive, but it is important to recognise that some incidents of cyber-bullying are known to be unintentional and the result of simply not thinking about the consequences. What may be sent as a joke may not be received as one, and indeed the distance that technology allows in communication means the sender may not see the impact of the message on the receiver.

In cyber-bullying, bystanders can easily become perpetrators, e.g. by passing on or showing to others images designed to humiliate, or by taking part in online polls or discussion groups. They may not recognise themselves as participating in bullying, but their involvement compounds the misery for the person targeted. It is recommended that anti-bullying policies refer to those 'bystanders' — better termed 'accessories' in this context — who actively support cyber-bullying and set out sanctions for this behaviour. It is important that pupils are aware that their actions have severe and distressing consequences, and that participating in such activity will not be tolerated.

There are particular features of cyber-bullying that differ from other forms of bullying which need to be recognised and taken into account when determining how to respond effectively. The key differences are:

- Impact — the scale and scope of cyber-bullying can be greater than other forms of bullying.
- Targets and perpetrators — the people involved may have a different profile to traditional bullies and their targets.
- Location — the 24/7 and any-place nature of cyber-bullying.
- Anonymity — the person being bullied will not always know who is attacking them.
- Motivation — some pupils may not be aware that what they are doing is bullying.
- Evidence — unlike other forms of bullying, the target of the bullying will have evidence of its occurrence.

### **Prevention**

We seek to instil values in all members of the School, which should, ideally, preclude all bullying. These are reinforced by a Positive Living programme which includes a unit about cyber-bullying and its effects and consequences. In essence, these seek to inculcate respect for others, their property and their individuality. We hope these values underpin ordinary curricular lessons too. There are also Internet Awareness sessions for pupils and parents.

It is crucial to the School's success in dealing with cyber-bullying that all members of the community are made aware that it is unacceptable and should not be tolerated. It is the responsibility of all members of the community to take action if they are aware of it happening. To remain silent is to condone the action of the bully.

### **Process:**

Information is crucial to dealing with the problem. Those who feel that they are being bullied, or who are witnesses to what they believe is bullying/cyber-bullying, should always tell a member of staff.

Advice, support and counselling will be offered to all parties involved, and, if necessary, their parents. While recognising that both victim and bully need help, we do not adopt a 'no blame' position.

1. If a pupil receives an abusive e-mail or text, they should report the matter to a member of staff as soon as possible.
2. Depending on the nature of the allegation, the case will be taken up either by the tutor, Deputy Head, Director of IT or a combination of these people. As a rough guide, the more serious the allegation, the more likely it is to involve senior staff and/or the Police.
3. Interviews will be conducted fairly, giving all sides the opportunity to state their case, so as to establish the truth in what seldom turn out to be straightforward issues.
4. An interview will be conducted; a record kept of the interview, and what is said, to be corroborated. Notes, both rough copies and, where necessary, a brief summary and copies of any letters sent to parents will be put on files with cross referencing where appropriate.
5. Letters written to parents will detail the nature of the offence and any sanctions imposed, and will set out what improvements the School expects to be made in behaviour as well as the consequences of failure to improve.
6. At the conclusion of the investigation, if appropriate, one of the members of staff involved will contact parents of all pupils directly involved and inform them of action taken. Wherever possible, the identity of "informers" and pupils other than the son or daughter of the parent will not be disclosed.
7. In practice, the sanctions applied range from a verbal warning or a ban on use of the School's computer network, to temporary or permanent exclusion, depending on the gravity of the offence and the pupil's previous record with reference to bullying.

### **Sanctions**

In practice, the sanctions applied range from a verbal warning or a ban on use of the School's computer network to a temporary or permanent exclusion, depending on the gravity of the offence and the pupil's previous record with reference to bullying / cyber-bullying.

The aim of sanctions is to:

- Help the person harmed to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop.
- Hold the perpetrator to account getting them to recognise the harm caused and deter them from repeating the behaviour.

- Demonstrate to the school community that cyber-bullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it, so deterring others from behaving similarly.

When cyber-bullying is investigated, reference will be made to the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). Technology-specific sanctions for pupils engaged in cyber-bullying behaviour could include limiting Internet access for a period of time or removing the right to bring a mobile phone into school (although issues of child safety will be considered in relation to the latter).

Cyber-bullying will have an impact on the education and wellbeing of the person being bullied, and the physical location of the bully at the time of their action is irrelevant in this. Schools now have broad new powers to discipline and regulate the behaviour of pupils, even when they are off the school site. These are set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Misconduct of any kind outside of school will be amenable to school discipline if the welfare of another pupil or the culture or reputation of the school are placed at risk.

### **Anti-Cyber-bullying Code: Advice to pupils**

Being sent an abusive or threatening text message, or seeing nasty comments about yourself on a website, can be really upsetting. This code gives you five important tips to protect yourself and your friends from getting caught up in cyber-bullying, and advice on how to report it when it does happen.

#### **1. SAFE**

Keep safe by being careful not to give out personal information when you're chatting or posting online. Personal information includes your email address, phone number and password.

#### **2. MEETING**

Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents' or carers' permission and even then only when they can be present. Remember online friends are still strangers even if you have been talking to them for a long time.

#### **3. ACCEPTING**

Accepting emails, IM messages, or opening files, pictures or texts from people you don't know or trust can lead to problems – they may contain viruses or nasty messages!

#### **4. RELIABLE**

Someone online might lie about who they are and information on the internet may not be true. Always check information with other websites, books or someone who knows. If you like chatting online it's best to only chat to your real world friends and family

#### **5. TELL**

Tell your parent, carer or a trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.

**Related policies:**  
Anti-bullying policy

*Deputy Head*  
*Policy reviewed: 2012*

*Next review date: Jan 2013 – Deputy Head*