

## SENIOR SCHOOL ANTI-CYBERBULLYING POLICY

See also *Anti-Bullying Policy*. The *Anti-Bullying Policy* and the *Anti-Cyberbullying Policy* should both be understood in the context of the *Code of Conduct and the Behaviour Policy*, which are available on the school website.

### 1. Introduction

New Hall school recognises that technology plays an important and positive role in children's lives, both educationally and socially. It is committed to helping all members of the school community to understand both the benefits and the risks, and to equip children with the knowledge and skills to be able to use technology safely and responsibly.

#### 1.1 Aims

The aims of this policy are to ensure that:

- students, staff and parents are educated to understand what cyberbullying is and what its consequences can be;
- policies and procedures are in place to prevent incidents of cyberbullying in school or within the school community;
- we have effective measures to deal effectively with cases of cyberbullying;
- we monitor the effectiveness of prevention measures.

#### 1.2 What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the use of ICT, commonly a mobile 'phone or the internet, deliberately to upset someone else. It can be used to carry out all the different types of bullying; an extension of face-to-face bullying. However unlike 'traditional' forms of bullying it can have a greater impact because:

- it can also go further, in that it can invade home/personal space and can involve a greater number of people;
- the anonymity of the bully;
- it can take place across age groups and school staff and other adults can be targeted;
- the ability to broadcast upsetting messages and images rapidly to a potentially huge audience and to continue to do so repeatedly over a long period of time;
- it can draw bystanders into being accessories.

Cyberbullying includes:

- threats and intimidation; harassment or 'cyber-stalking';
- vilification/defamation; exclusion or peer rejection; impersonation;
- unauthorised publication of private information or images ('happy-slapping').

### 2. Preventing Cyberbullying

#### 2.1 Understanding and discussion

- Staff will receive training in identifying cyberbullying and understanding their responsibilities. The Head of PSHE and the Vice Principal (Pastoral) will liaise with the Head of ICT and the IT manager on this matter.
- All staff will be helped to keep up-to-date with the technologies that children are using.

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- The students will be involved in developing and communicating a code of advice on protecting themselves from getting caught up in cyberbullying and on reporting cases they experience. They will have a voice through the School Council, Willow and the Cybermentors.
- Students will be educated about cyberbullying through a variety of means: assemblies, conferences, Anti-bullying Week, projects (ICT, PSHE, Drama, English), etc.
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on cyberbullying via literature, talks, etc.
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on the legalities of contractual agreements with web companies and organisations.
- Parents will be asked to sign an IT Code of Practice before their children are allowed to use the internet in school and will be asked to confirm that they have discussed its contents with their children.
- Students, staff and parents will be involved in evaluating and improving policies and procedures.

## **2.2 Policies and practices**

- Ensure regular review and update of existing policies to include cyberbullying where appropriate.
- Provide opportunities for policies to be addressed and for children to be involved in the process of updating and improving them through the Student Council and Parents' Forum.
- Keep good records of all cyberbullying incidents.
- Publicise rules and sanctions effectively.

## **2.3 Promoting the positive use of technology**

- Make positive use of technology across the curriculum.
- Use CPD opportunities to help staff develop their practice creatively and support students in safe and responsible use.
- Explore ways of using technology to support assertiveness, self-esteem and to develop friendships.
- Ensure all staff and children understand the importance of password security and the need to log out of accounts.

## **2.4 Making reporting easier**

- Ensure staff can recognise non-verbal signs and indications of cyberbullying.
- Publicise and promote the message that asking for help is the right thing to do and shows strength and good judgement.
- Publicise to all members of the school community the ways in which cyberbullying can be reported.
- Provide information for 'bystanders' including reassurances about protection from becoming victims themselves.
- Provide information on external reporting routes e.g. mobile phone company, internet service provider, Childline.

### 3. Responding to Cyberbullying

Most cases of cyberbullying will be dealt with through the school's existing Antibullying Policy and Behaviour Policy. Some features of cyberbullying differ from other forms of bullying and may prompt a particular response. The key differences are:

- impact: the scale and scope of cyberbullying 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 'anywhere' nature of cyberbullying
- anonymity: the person being bullied will not always know who is bullying them
- motivation: some students 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

It is possible that a member of staff may be a victim and these responses apply to them too.

#### 3.1 Support for the person being bullied:

- Offer emotional support; reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling.
- Advise the person not to retaliate or reply. Instead, keep the evidence and take it to their parent or a member of staff.
- Advise the person to consider what information they have in the public domain.
- Unless the victim sees it as a punishment, they may be advised to change e.g. mobile phone number.
- If hurtful or embarrassing content is being distributed, try to get it removed from the web. If the person who posted it is known, ensure they understand why it is wrong and ask them to remove it. Alternatively, contact the host provider and make a report to get the content taken down.
- Confiscate mobile phone, ask student to delete the offending content and say who they have sent it on to.
- Contact the police in cases of actual/suspected illegal content.
- In some cases, the person being bullied may be able to block the person bullying from their sites and services.

#### 3.2 Investigation

- Staff and students should be advised to preserve evidence and a record of abuse; save phone messages, record or save-and-print instant messenger conversations, print or produce a screenshot of social network pages, print, save and forward to staff whole email messages.
- If images are involved, determine whether they might be illegal or raise child protection concerns. If so, contact: Internet Watch Foundation ([www.imf.org.uk](http://www.imf.org.uk)), the local police or the Essex Safeguarding Children Board Officer.
- Identify the bully.
- Any allegations against staff should be handled as other allegations following guidance in Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education.

### **3.3 Working with the bully and applying sanctions**

The aim of the sanctions will be:

- to help the person harmed to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop;
- to hold the perpetrator to account, getting them to recognise the harm caused and deter them from repeating the behaviour;
- to demonstrate to the school community that cyberbullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it, so deterring others from behaving similarly.

In applying sanctions, consideration must be given to type and impact of bullying and the possibility that it was unintentional or was in retaliation.

The outcome must include helping the bully to recognise the consequence of their actions and providing support to enable the attitude and behaviour of the bully to change.

### **3.4 Evaluating the effectiveness of prevention measures**

- Use the School Council and Willow to hear the students' point of view.
- Identify areas for improvement and incorporate children's ideas.

### **3.5 Legal duties and powers**

- The school has a duty to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment.
- Headteachers in all schools have the power 'to such extent as is reasonable' to regulate the conduct of students when they are off-site or not under the control or charge of a member of staff (Education and Inspections Act 2006).
- School staff may request a student to reveal a message or other phone content and may confiscate a phone; staff may search the contents of a student's phone given that the school's Code of Conduct expressly states that right.
- Some cyberbullying activities could be criminal offences under a range of different laws including Protection from Harassment Act 1997.