

HEBBURN

Comprehensive School



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Cyberbullying Policy

Review Period	Annual		
Date of next review	Spring Term 2025	Author	Mrs S Burdis
Type of Policy	Statutory	Approval	Governing Body
Signed by:			
Head Teacher	Mr D Thompson	Date: 22 May 2024	
Chair of Governors	Mr G Thompson	Date: 22 May 2024	

This policy should be read in conjunction with the: Anti-bullying Policy, the Behaviour and Rewards Policy, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (including Prevent) and the E-Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

The school recognises that a bullying incident should be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying may be defined as ‘the use of electronic communication, particularly mobile phones and the internet, to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature: children and adults may be reluctant to admit to being the targets of cyberbullying’. It can take a number of different forms: threats and intimidation, harassment or ‘cyber-stalking’ (e.g. repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages), sexting (e.g. sending and receiving sexually explicit messages, primarily between mobile phones) vilification/defamation, exclusion/peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorised publication of private information/images and ‘trolling’ (abusing the internet to provoke or offend others online). It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the perpetrator with another route to harass their target.

However, it differs from other forms of bullying in several significant ways:

- by facilitating a far more extreme invasion of personal space. Cyberbullying can take place at any time and intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe and personal.
- the potential for anonymity on the part of the perpetrator. This can be extremely distressing for the target.
- the potential for the perpetrator to play very rapidly to a larger audience so the scale and scope of cyberbullying can be greater than for other forms of bullying.
- through the knowledge that the data is in the world-wide domain, disproportionately amplifying the negative effect on the target, even though the perpetrator may feel his / her actual actions had been no worse than conventional forms of bullying.
- the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages as more people get drawn in as accessories. By passing on a humiliating picture or message a bystander becomes an accessory to the bullying.
- the profile of the perpetrator and target can be different to other forms of bullying as cyberbullying can take place between peers and across generations. Teachers can be targets and age and size are not important.
- many cyberbullying incidents can themselves act as evidence, so it is important the target saves the information.

Cyberbullying can include the following:

- Threatening, intimidating or upsetting text messages
- Threatening or embarrassing pictures and video clips
- Disclosure of private sexual photographs or videos with the intent to cause distress
- Silent or abusive phone calls
- Using the target's phone to harass others, to make them think the target is responsible
- Threatening or bullying emails, possibly sent using a pseudonym or someone else's name
- Menacing or upsetting responses to someone online
- Unpleasant messages sent via instant messaging
- Unpleasant or defamatory information posted to blogs, personal websites and/or social media platforms.

The above list is not exhaustive, and cyberbullying may take other forms.

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to cyberbullying. The school views cyberbullying with the same severity as any other form of bullying and will follow the sanctions set out in the Behaviour and rewards Policy.

Many of the signs of cyberbullying will be similar to those found in the 'Signs of bullying' section of this policy; however, staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a pupil is being cyberbullied:

- Avoiding use of the computer
- Being on their phone routinely
- Becoming agitated when receiving calls or text messages

Staff will also be alert to the following signs which may indicate that a pupil is cyberbullying others:

- Avoiding using the computer or turning off the screen when someone is near
- Acting in a secretive manner when using the computer or mobile phone
- Spending excessive amounts of time on the computer or mobile phone
- Becoming upset or angry when the computer or mobile phone is taken away

The 'anytime' and 'anywhere' nature of cyberbullying – pupils may not have an escape from the torment when they are at home due to the bullying continuing through technology at all times.

- The person being bullied might not know who the perpetrator is – it is easy for individuals to remain anonymous online and on social media, and pupils may be bullied by someone who is concealing their own identity.
- The perpetrator might not realise that their actions are bullying – sometimes, the culture of social media, and the inability to see the impact that words are having on someone, may lead to pupils crossing boundaries without realising.
- The target of the bullying may have evidence of what has happened – pupils may have taken screenshots of bullying, or there may be a digital footprint that can identify the perpetrator.
- The school will support pupils who have been targets of cyberbullying by holding formal and informal discussions with the pupil about their feelings and whether the bullying has stopped
- In accordance with the Education Act 2011, the school has the right to examine and delete files from pupils' personal devices, e.g. mobiles phones, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone. In these cases, the school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy will be followed at all times.

Cyberbullying and the Law

Bullying is never acceptable, and the school fully recognises its duty to protect all of its members and to provide a safe, healthy environment for everyone.

Education Law:

- 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 the school site.
- The Act also allows staff to confiscate items from pupils, if necessary.

Civil and Criminal Law

- There is not a specific law which makes cyberbullying illegal, but it can be considered a criminal offence under several different acts including Protection from Harassment Act (1997), Malicious Communications Act (1988), Communications Act (2003) Obscene Publications Act (1959) and Computer Misuse Act (1990).

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Governing Board will:

Appoint a safeguarding governor who will work with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure the policies and practices relating to safeguarding, including the prevention of cyberbullying are being implemented effectively. The current governor for safeguarding is Mrs W. Stead.

The Head Teacher will:

Ensure that all aspects of this policy are implemented.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

Take overall responsibility for the coordination and implementation of cyberbullying prevention and response strategies. The Safeguarding Lead will:

- ensure that all incidents of cyberbullying both inside and outside school are dealt with immediately and will be managed and/or escalated in line with the procedures set out in the school's Anti-bullying Policy, Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- ensure the school's Acceptable Use Policy is reviewed annually
- ensure that all policies relating to safeguarding, including cyberbullying are reviewed and updated regularly
- ensure that all staff know that they need to report any issues concerning cyberbullying to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- ensure that all staff are aware of the Prevent Duties.
- provide training so staff feel confident to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism, to challenge extremist ideas and to know how to make a referral when a child is at risk. The DSL is also the Designated Prevent Lead.
- the Cyberbullying Policy is available at all times on the school website
- ensure that pupils know how to report a concern. (to staff, via email to speakout@hebburn.net, Childline or the thinkuknow website: www.thinkuknow.co.uk)
- ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities by providing clear guidance for staff on the use of technology within school and beyond.

The Head of ICT will:

- ensure that all pupils are given clear guidance on the use of technology safely and positively, both in school and beyond including how to manage their personal data and how to report abuse and bullying online.
- plan and deliver a curriculum on online safety in computing lessons which builds resilience in pupils to protect themselves and others online.

The Network Manager will:

- ensure adequate safeguards are in place to filter and monitor inappropriate content and alert the Designated Safeguarding Lead to safeguarding issues. The school uses a third party web-proxy solution to filter all internet access. The internet filter records access to prohibited sites which enables the Network Manager to report issues immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- ensure that visitors to the school are given clear guidance on the use of technology in school. This includes how to report any safeguarding issues to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Visitors will be given highly restricted guest accounts which will not allow any access to personal data and that any misuse of the system will result in access to the system being withdrawn.

Guidance for Staff

Guidance on safe practice in the use of electronic communications and storage of images is contained in the Online Policy. The school will deal with inappropriate use of technology in line with this, which could result in disciplinary procedures.

If you suspect or are told about a cyber-bullying incident, follow the protocol outlined below:

Mobile Phones

- Ask the pupil the nature of their concern.
- If you believe the concern is of a sexual nature refer immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will deal with the matter in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, and Behaviour and Rewards Policy.
- If the concerns are not of a sexual nature, refer to the relevant Head of Learning who will:
 - note clearly everything on the screen relating to the concern, or make a transcript of a spoken message, recording date, times and names.
 - manage the incident in line with the school's Anti-bullying Policy and Behaviour Policy.
 - inform the DSL/DDSL and relevant Head of Key Stage.

Computers

- Ask the pupil the nature of their concern.
- If you believe the concern is of a sexual nature refer immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will deal with the matter in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Behaviour Policy.
- If the concerns are not of a sexual nature ask the student to save the text/image and refer to the Head of Learning who will:
 - note clearly everything on the screen relating to the concern, or make a transcript of a spoken message, recording date, times and names.
 - manage the incident in line with the school's Anti-bullying Policy and Behaviour Policy.
 - inform the DSL/DDSL and relevant Head of Key Stage.

Use of Technology in School

All members of the school community are expected to take responsibility for using technology positively.

As well as training, the following is in place:

- All staff are expected to have read and understood the Acceptable Use Policy.
- All children are expected to have read and understood the Acceptable Use Policy.

Guidance for Pupils

If you believe you or someone else is the target of cyber-bullying, you must speak to an adult as soon as possible. This person could be a parent/guardian, or a member of staff.

- Do not answer abusive messages but save them and report them.
- Do not delete anything until it has been shown to your parents/carers or a member of staff at school (even if it is upsetting, the material is important evidence which may need to be used later as proof of cyber-bullying.)
- Do not give out personal details or contact information without the permission of a parent/guardian (personal data).
- Be careful who you allow to become a friend online and think about what information you want them to see.
- Never arrange to meet someone you do not know. Remember that people you could meet online may not be who they say they are. If you have any concerns about this, you should report it to a trusted adult.
- Protect your password. Do not share it with anyone else and change it regularly.
- Always log off from the computer when you have finished or if you leave the computer for any reason.
- Always put the privacy filters on to the sites you use. If you are not sure how to do this, ask a teacher or your parents.
- Never reply to abusive e-mails.
- Never reply to someone you do not know.
- Always stay in public areas in chat rooms.
- The school will deal with cyberbullying in the same way as other bullying. Do not think that because it is online it is different to other forms of bullying.
- The school will deal with inappropriate use of technology in the same way as other types of inappropriate behaviour and sanctions will be given in line with the school's Behaviour and Rewards Policy.

Guidance for Parents/Carers

It is vital that parents/carers and the school work together to ensure that all pupils are aware of the serious consequences of getting involved in anything that might be seen to be cyber-bullying. Parents/carers must play their role and take responsibility for monitoring their child's online life.

- Parents/carers can help by making sure their child understands the school's policy and, above all, how seriously the school takes incidents of cyber-bullying.
- Parents/carers should also explain to their children legal issues relating to cyber-bullying.
- If parents/carers believe their child is the target of cyber-bullying, they should save the offending material (if need be by saving the offensive text on their computer or on their child's mobile phone) and make sure they have all relevant information before deleting anything.
- Parents/carers should contact the school as soon as possible. Please contact their child's Head of Learning to discuss the matter.
- If the incident falls in the holidays, the school reserves the right to take action against bullying perpetrated outside the school both in and out of term time.

E-Safety at Home

Several sites offer helpful advice to parents/carers, particularly with respect to how they can best monitor their child's use of the computer at home. Here are some parents/carers might like to try:

- www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents
- www.saferinternet.org.uk
- www.childnet.com
- www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- www.nspcc.org.uk
- [Digizen](#)

The Designated Safeguarding and Prevent Strategy Lead is Mrs S Burdis.

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads is Mr M Bingham.