Hebburn Comprehensive School

Cyberbullying Policy

Statement of Intent

Hebburn Comprehensive School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils. We recognise that bullying can take many forms, including online and electronic communication. Cyberbullying presents unique challenges and dangers, and this policy outlines how the school will prevent, identify, and respond to incidents.

We take all forms of bullying seriously and will not tolerate cyberbullying by pupils, staff, parents, or third parties.

Definition of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the use of digital technology—such as mobile phones, gaming platforms, messaging apps, email, social media, or websites—to intimidate, threaten, harass or humiliate another individual or group. This includes:

- Sending abusive or threatening messages.
- Sharing embarrassing images or videos without consent.
- Excluding individuals from online groups or activities.
- Creating fake profiles to impersonate or defame.
- Spreading false or malicious rumours.

Legal and Policy Context

This policy is informed by the following statutory and non-statutory guidance:

- Education Act 2002 – duty to safeguard and promote welfare.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 – powers to address off-site bullying.
- Children Act 1989 & 2004 – duty to protect children from harm.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) – safeguarding in a digital world.
- UKCIS "Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff" (2017)
- UK GDPR / Data Protection Act 2018 – data protection and privacy online.

Aims and Objectives of the Policy

- To prevent incidents of cyberbullying through education and awareness.
- To provide a clear framework for identifying and responding to cyberbullying.
- To support victims of cyberbullying and take appropriate action against perpetrators.
- To encourage responsible use of digital technologies within and beyond school.

Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team:

- Ensure cyberbullying is addressed as part of the school's safeguarding strategy.
- Oversee policy implementation and training.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- Act as the point of contact for cyberbullying concerns.
- Coordinate referrals, investigations, and interventions.
- Liaise with police and external agencies when required.

All Staff:

- Be vigilant to signs of cyberbullying and respond appropriately.
- Report concerns in line with safeguarding procedures.
- Students
- Are taught to use technology safely, respectfully, and responsibly.
- Are encouraged to report incidents affecting themselves or others.

Parents/Carers:

- Are expected to support the school's approach and monitor children's online activity.
- Will be informed of concerns and involved in appropriate responses.

Education and Prevention

Cyberbullying is addressed across the curriculum, especially through:

- PSHE and RSE programmes.
- Computing and digital literacy lessons.
- Assemblies and awareness events.

Students learn:

- How to identify cyberbullying.
- Strategies to protect themselves online.
- How to report concerns appropriately.
- The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is signed by all students and staff to reinforce expectations.

Responding to Cyberbullying

All reports of cyberbullying are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. The school will:

- Record the incident on safeguarding systems.
- Interview the individuals involved, seeking to gather evidence.
- Involve parents and carers as appropriate.
- Apply sanctions in line with the Behaviour Policy, which may include:
- Removal of ICT access privileges.
- Internal or fixed-term exclusions.
- Referral to external agencies (e.g. police) where criminal behaviour is involved.

Support will be offered to the victim, including:

- Reassurance and ongoing pastoral support.
- Restorative conversations (if appropriate).
- Referral to counselling or external services if needed.

Perpetrators may also receive education or support to address underlying causes.

Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually or in response to incidents, local trends, or updates in statutory guidance. Monitoring is conducted through safeguarding audits, student surveys, and incident logs.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs S Burdis
Contact: 01914833199 / office@hebburn.net

Signed:

Head Teacher: Mr D R Thompson

Chair of Governors: Mr G Thompson
Ratification Date: 02/10/2025
Date of Next Review: Autumn Term 2026