

CYBER-BULLYING STATEMENT

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; 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 or defamation; exclusion or peer rejection; impersonation; unauthorised publication of private information or images; spreading rumours or 'gossip'; 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. There is also less opportunity for either party to resolve any misunderstanding or to feel empathy. It is important that students are made aware of the effects of their actions.

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 important that students 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 any time and any place nature of cyber-bullying.
- Anonymity – the person being bullied will not always know who is attacking 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.

Prevention

We seek to instil values in all members of the School, which should, ideally, preclude all bullying. These are reinforced by a PSHE programme which includes teachers spending time talking about cyber-bullying and its effects and consequences.

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.