

Cyberbullying Policy

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Endorsement: Full endorsement to this policy is given by:

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Position: Brighton Waldorf School Trustee

Signed: 

Date: 01/09/2020

Policy Statement

The possibilities of the Internet and mobile phones are endless. Young people benefit from having opportunity to access one another and communicate in a variety of different forms. However, not all aspects of ICT are positive and it can enable additional routes for those intent on bullying.

Online behaviour is no different in principle from behavior in the school or face to face. The same rules of politeness and consideration apply, as do the same sanctions for breaches of those rules.

Definition of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying includes:

- text message bullying
- picture/video-clip bullying via cameras on mobile phones and similar devices
- phone call bullying via mobile phones or landlines
- e-mail bullying
- sexting-related bullying
- chat room bullying
- bullying through instant messaging
- bullying via websites
- “de-friending”, etc on social networking sites.

Although similar in many respects to other forms of bullying, cyberbullying also has some very specific features.

- It invades both home and personal space.

- The size of the audience can be vast.
- Electronically circulated messages can be difficult to control.
- The bully can feel relatively anonymous.
- It can have a large number of “bystanders” or “accessories”.
- Much (if not all) of the bullying may take place out of school.

The Aims of the Policy

Through this policy we aim to:

- Raise awareness among pupils and staff about cyberbullying
- Provide a safe learning environment in which preventative measures are in place to deter cyberbullying
- Ensure systems are in place to deal with cyberbullying should it occur.

Procedure

Prevention

In order that these aims can be fulfilled, a number of preventative measures will be taken.

Awareness-raising — Pupils

A number of opportunities have been highlighted as part of the curriculum to help children “stay safe” and a unit is included in our Life skills medium-term planning. At the beginning of the school year, all relevant classes will discuss safe use of the school computers. They will be reminded about the ICT acceptable use policy and a copy of this will be sent out to parents. There may also be specific workshops organized in conjunction with outside organisations and charities, such as Cybersmile.

If an issue relating to cyberbullying has arisen, the subject may be discussed during Guardian or Forum lessons or the School Council meetings. If this is in relation to a particular individual, consideration will be given to how the issue is raised. Pupils will be made aware of the importance of telling an adult, and which adults they can approach in school.

Involvement of the whole school community may be necessary.

Awareness-raising — Parents

This policy is available on the school’s website. The school is able to provide up to date information about websites that offer additional support and advice. In addition, parents are invited to discuss any concerns or questions they may have with the Class Teacher or Guardian either in private or at termly parents’ evenings. Parents are encouraged to take notice of their children’s online activities and to discuss the risks with them.

Awareness-raising — School Staff

Staff have a duty to ensure that the children in their care stay safe, and also that they themselves are alert to the dangers of cyberbullying. This can be particularly difficult for members of staff who have children and relatives in the school. All members of school staff can be affected and staff should inform the administrator at the first opportunity should any incident occur.

Bullying, and cyberbullying form part of regular INSET days during which new developments of potential sources of bullying may be raised and possible ways of challenging these discussed. New terminology used by the pupils is also shared at this session. Staff need to be aware of what the risks are and the potential for implications of misuse. On occasions an outside speaker is invited to update staff on latest developments.

Dealing with Cyberbullying Incidents

There is usually some visual evidence after cyberbullying has taken place. Pupils should be encouraged to record and store this and pass this on to a member of staff or their parents. Staff and parents should pass evidence on to a senior member of staff. In some cases, it will be necessary to contact mobile phone companies, Internet service providers or social networking sites.

The following advice should be given to those experiencing cyberbullying:

- Do not retaliate or reply.
- Save the material in question by making an electronic copy or screenshot.
- Block or remove offenders from friends lists.
- Review the information you are giving out.
- Make sure you tell an adult (or senior staff member).
- Try to keep calm and do not let the bully see a reaction.

If the person responsible for the bullying is identified, sanctions will be applied under the school's behaviour policy. In addition, the following sanctions might be implemented, depending upon the nature and severity of the bullying:

- Confiscating equipment such as mobile phones
- Withdrawing access to the Internet for a set period of time
- Limiting use of the Internet for a set period of time
- Contacting the police, where the cyberbullying is sufficiently severe
- Informing external agencies such as social networking or e-mail member sites.

Support will be provided for the victim. This may include meeting the bully to discuss what has happened and agree a way forward.

It is important that all children and staff recognise that when an incident of cyberbullying takes place it is dealt with swiftly. Parents should be told, in the early stages of any bullying, what actions have been taken to remedy it.

Use of the Internet in School

This school has its own ICT acceptable use policy that clearly identifies how the school computers and Internet should be used. The relevant pupils and their parents are reminded of this policy annually. Some of the main features are as follows:

- Children should not be allowed unsupervised access to the Internet.
- Children should be made aware of their own responsibility in reporting anything they identify that causes them concern.
- Pupils must also agree to follow Internet usage rules.

The College of Teachers is responsible for reviewing how the school network is monitored but may delegate this to an individual teacher or group.

Use of Mobile Phones in School by Pupils, Parents and Staff

The school has a Use of Mobile Phones policy which clearly sets out the rules for pupils, parents and staff. It states who can bring phones into school, where they are to be stored and where and when they can be used.

No mobile phone will be used to take photographs. Reference should be made to the school's Image Use policy.

The school retains the right to temporarily confiscate mobile phones from pupils where they are brought into school without permission or when they are being used inappropriately.

The school's mobile phones must be used for school trips and upon return to school, all phone numbers must be erased.

E-mailing and Instant Messaging

No member of staff may give a pupil their personal email address. Children and staff should never reply to unpleasant or unwanted emails or open files from people they don't know.

When writing emails or instant messages, think carefully about the content. When angry or distressed, you might send something likely to cause further anguish. Leave the computer and discuss the issue with someone else.

Social Networking Sites

Staff will not accept a pupil's invitation to be their "friend" on a social networking site. It is

recognised that the removal or “blocking” of access to a social networking site might be seen as a form of bullying by those who experience it and this will be discussed as part of our Life Skills curriculum or pastoral care system.

Bystanders

The issue of being a bystander or accessory is addressed with all children regularly, and the College of Teachers has compiled some bystander guidelines. Pupils are encouraged to respect other people on- and offline and to recognise how sharing a secret and passing on numbers and passwords can cause harm and distress to others.

Being a bystander can include:

- Forwarding messages
- Contributing to discussions
- Taking part in an online poll.

Recording and Reporting

The whole school community is made aware of ways of reporting incidents of bullying. Bullying is reported to a member of school staff, and the appropriate action will be taken. All incidents of cyberbullying are logged as part of the school's anti-bullying policy and this information is shared annually with the trustees.

Special Needs

Children with special educational needs (SEN) are particularly vulnerable to all forms of bullying. Members of school staff are alert to changes in behaviour and ensure that there are opportunities and established methods for children with SEN to communicate should the need arise.

Equal Opportunities

As with other forms of bullying, cyberbullying is prone to being driven by prejudice. Staff are alert to the possibilities of sexist, racist and homophobic cyberbullying. Although all victims of bullying can be reluctant to discuss their experiences, victims of homophobic bullying may be particularly so.

Linked Policies

- Behaviour, Pupil Code of Conduct and School Rules
- Anti-bullying
- Safeguarding
- ICT and Acceptable Use
- Use of Mobile phones
- Image Use