

Reference material for developing Parent/Carer Anti-Bullying Leaflets

When creating your school's parent/carers version of the anti-bullying policy, you may wish to look at our model parent/carers AB leaflet for an example. This document provides other information that you may wish to refer to

Don't forget to personalise the factsheet to your school by including the following important information:

- Information about your anti-bullying policy (how to access it, how it links to the leaflet)
- What the school does about bullying and cyberbullying (a summary of the preventative, supportive and disciplinary measures that are included in your policy)
- Who parents should contact in regards to bullying, and if they have complaints about how incidents have been handled
- Your school's definition of bullying (see model policy for some example definitions)

Spotting the signs of Bullying

A larger list of signs of bullying is included here:

The following signs and behaviours could be indications that your child is being bullied, if he or she:

- Is frightened of walking to or from school
- Doesn't want to go on a bus
- Begs to be driven to school
- Changes their usual routine
- Is unwilling to go to school
- Begins to truant
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares or wets the bed
- Feels ill in the morning
- Comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- Has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- Has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Changes their eating habits
- Is frightened to say what's wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received
- Becomes withdrawn and is reluctant to say why
- Reduces their educational attainment
- Perceives comments from others as hurtful
- Displays challenging behaviour, which could be the result of intimidation or enforced isolation from others

What parents should do if their child is being bullied or is bullying someone else

- Listen and talk to your child. They may feel the situation is beyond their control or feel ashamed – whether they are bullied or bullying. Let them know you love them and want to help. Praise your child for telling you.
- Most importantly, do not encourage your child to retaliate. This may result in your child being disciplined in the same way as the bully. It also appears to your child that violent or threatening behaviour is an acceptable way of solving problems: moreover retaliation can perpetuate bullying.
- Collect any evidence e.g. who did what, when, and what was said and done. Keep any text messages, emails or website comments.
- Help your child to develop coping strategies and help to build their self-confidence.
- Make sure your child knows they are not to blame.
- Keep normal boundaries at home.
- Try and gauge what is going on. Find out about friendship groups and behaviour within these groups. If your child talks of bullying, please keep a written record.
- Be clear that it is important for the bullying to stop and that for this to happen the school will need to be involved.
- Involve and consult your child in making a plan for what should be done and how to talk to school.
- Please inform their Tutor or Head of Year immediately.
- Reassure your child that the school will deal with the matter sensitively but firmly.
- Support your child. Do not seek conflict with the suspected bully or family. Use the school as an intermediary.

A definition or introduction to cyberbullying

“Cyberbullying can be defined as the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else” (Safe to Learn, Cyberbullying 2007).

Local data indicates that cyberbullying is an issue for both primary and secondary schools. The Oxfordshire Cybersurvey 2009 (relating to 2,605 10 - 18 year olds from 7 primary and 5 secondary schools) indicated that 47% (49% of 10 & 11 year olds) of young people had received an abusive message on-line and 19% (22% of 10/11 year olds) said they had been cyberbullied.

What's different about cyberbullying?

The Safe to Learn Cyberbullying guidance and Childnet International website www.childnet-int.org are a very good reference for more information about cyberbullying, its particular qualities and how it impacts on young people. The points below give a summary

- Bullying can happen 24/7 making it difficult to escape.
- The audience for bullying is potentially much larger increasing the impact.
- Anonymity and being one step removed makes it easier for the bystander to join in.
- Anonymity also increases the impact on those being bullied as they can't be sure who is responsible.
- There is a general lack of awareness that behaviour is cyberbullying and young people tend to underestimate the impact of their behavior.
- Unlike traditional forms of bullying, evidence is readily available and should be preserved.

- Cyberbullying can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that have been previously been regarded as safe or personal.
- The audience can be very large and reached rapidly. The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages means the scale and scope of cyberbullying can be greater than other forms of bullying. Electronically forwarded content is hard to control, and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for targets to move on
- People who cyberbully may attempt to remain anonymous. This can be extremely distressing for those bullied. The person cyberbullying may never be in the same physical space as their target.
- The profiles of the people bullying and being bullied are different. Cyberbullying can take place both between peers and across generations. Age and size are not important.
- Some instances of cyberbullying are known to be unintentional. It can be the result of not thinking or as a lack of awareness of the consequences – for example saying something negative online about another pupil, or friend that they don't expect to be forwarded or viewed outside their immediate group.
- In some cases it can constitute a criminal offence.
- As with face-to-face bullying, young people may suffer cyberbullying in silence for a number of reasons, including the fear that their Internet access or mobile phone access will be removed from them.

Advice for young people about cyberbullying

- Advise them not to reply to the person responsible or send a nasty message back
- Advise them to preserve the evidence. If you need further advice on this please contact the police by telephoning 101.
- Advise them to remove the person responsible from your friends list (if you know them) and use built-in privacy tools to block them
- Offer support and manage the incident in the same way you would normally manage bullying
- Provide details for Childline, the NSPCC or Samaritans if they would like to speak to someone in confidence about what has happened.
- Recommend charity websites for further advice, such as Beatbullying and Cybermentors

What parents can do about cyberbullying

Prevention

- Be aware of what cyberbullying is and how it can happen by reading more in "Cyberbullying: A whole-school community issue" at <http://www.digizen.org/cyberbullying/overview/>
- With your children, explore the online technologies and websites they like to use
- Support your child in making responsible decisions on the internet and when using a mobile phone – make sure they are aware of the types of photos and other content that are appropriate to post online (e.g. no photos in a school blazer or sports uniform).
- Encourage your child to talk to you if he/she is being cyberbullied or if they come across any sites that could cause offence or pose some kind of danger
- Make sure your child understands how to use these technologies safely and that any misuse may constitute a criminal act. With your children, explore the online technologies and websites they like to use. You could show them pages like Childnet international's page for children and young people about how to stay safe online <http://www.kidsmart.org.uk/> or CEOP's similar page including how to report problems <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

- If you do catch them on a site that you think is unsuitable, don't assume that they made the choice to go there. It's not that hard for a determined webmaster to "disguise" a website to catch innocent visitors.
- Look in the Help menu of your browser for *Security* - you can, to a certain extent, restrict what sites and downloads your children can access.
- Agree on family rules and procedures about what to do if someone is being cyberbullied, such as saving the message or text as evidence and telling a trusted adult.
- Become your child's "friend" on Facebook or MSN. Have your child show you, or learn together, how to block someone on a chat service like MSN or how to report abuse to a website or service provider.
- Encourage positive use of technology by helping your child to use it to support learning, socialise with peers and explore the wider world. Discuss and promote "netiquette" – responsible online behaviour – and reward your child for this. Tell them this means they should:
 - respect others online – treat them how you would want to be treated
 - only post things online and in text messages that you'd be happy for anyone to see
 - use appropriate language when chatting or playing games online
 - pay close attention to a website's terms and conditions and make sure you're old enough to be using a site or online service.
- Make sure your child is aware of the types of photos and other content that are appropriate to post online (e.g. no photos in a school blazer or sports uniform).
- Be aware that as well as being at risk, your child could also be involved in cyberbullying. Be alert to changes in your child's behaviour – especially after using the internet or their mobile phone. Discuss the emotional impact of bullying on another person.
- Encourage your children to keep passwords safe. Treat your password like your toothbrush – don't share it with anyone!

Responding to cyberbullying

- Support and encourage your child if they tell you they've been cyberbullied – reassure them that it's not their fault and that they've made the right choice by reporting it to you. Tell them that bullying is not acceptable and inform them of what you will do next by following the tips below.
- Make sure your child does not retaliate or reply to cyberbullying messages of any kind.
- Help your child to save evidence of cyberbullying. Use online tools or the "print screen" button on your computer and don't delete text messages on a mobile phone.
- If you need to, you can help your child to change their contact details (email, online username, mobile phone number) to prevent further bullying. Denying them access to the technologies is not the answer.
- Use the security tools on your family's computer, on websites or on your child's mobile phone.
- Report cyberbullying. You can report the incident to the school, the website or service provider, and, in serious cases, the police. For a list of internet service providers, go to www.thinkbroadband.com/isps.html. Click on the name of your provider to find their contact page. Alternatively you can complain to the sender's Internet Service Provider by writing abuse@ and then the name of the host, e.g. abuse@hotmail.com.

The Law on cyberbullying

Although cyberbullying is not a specific criminal offence in UK law, criminal laws such as the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 may apply in terms of harassment or threatening behaviour. Where mobile phone bullying is concerned, the Telecoms Act 1984 makes it a criminal offence to make anonymous or abusive calls and, if you are harassed persistently on your mobile, it may be an offence under the 1997

Harassment Act. NB. Furthermore, the Communications Act 2003 makes it a criminal offence to send: "...by means of a public electronic communications network, a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character". In relation to sexting (the possession and sending of indecent images of children under 18) this is an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 for the person sending it and the person receiving it. This could mean young people who pass on indecent images taken of boyfriend/girlfriends/picture taken of others could be committing a sexual offence and could find themselves on the Sex Offenders register. If you are concerned about how to deal with matters that may be criminal, including how and whether to view evidence that involves indecent images please contact either your police schools liaison officer or telephone the police enquiry number on 101 for further advice.

Examples of cyberbullying

Gaming Sites / consoles / virtual worlds: name calling, making abusive or derogatory remarks; players may pick on weaker or less experienced users, repeatedly killing their characters; forwarding unwanted messages to other devices in the immediate vicinity.

Chatrooms / message boards: Sending threatening or nasty messages. Groups of people deciding to pick on or ignore individuals. Making friends under false pretences – people pretending to be someone else in order to get personal information that they can misuse in a number of ways – e.g. by spreading secrets or blackmailing.

Mobile Phones: Sending nasty calls or text messages, including threats, intimidation, and harassment. Taking and sharing humiliating images. Videoing other people being harassed and sending these to other people or internet sites.

Learning Environments: Posting inappropriate messages or images; hacking into someone else's account to post inappropriate comments or delete schoolwork;

Webcams: Making and sending inappropriate content. Persuading or threatening young people to act in inappropriate ways.

Instant Messenger: Sending nasty messages or content. Using someone else's account to forward rude or mean messages via their contact list.

Video hosting sites: Posting embarrassing, humiliating film of someone.

Social Network sites: Posting nasty comments, humiliating images / video. Accessing other person's account details and sending unpleasant messages, deleting information or making private information public. Creating fake profiles pretending to be someone else, e.g. to bully, harass or get the person in trouble.

Sources of further information and advice:

- Family Lives: call 0808 800 2222 for Immediate support and advice for parents, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They also have helpful advice on their webpages on digital life <http://familylives.org.uk/advice/digital-life>
- Advisory Centre for Education: 0808 800 5793 Advice for parents and children on all school matters.
- Children's Legal Centre: 08451 202948 Free legal advice on all aspects of the law affecting children and young people.
- Oxfordshire web pages for parent/carers on bullying including cyberbullying www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/anti-bullying
- Oxfordshire Family Information Service: Phone 08452 262636 or 01865 328580 (Mon – Thurs 9am – 5pm; Fri 9am – 4pm). Information and support for families
- Oxfordshire Parent Partnership Parent Partnership Oxfordshire offers impartial information, support, advice and training to parents to enable them to make informed decisions about their child's special educational needs. 01865 810516

Support and advice about cyberbullying and e-safety

- Info on what cyberbullying is and how it can happen <http://www.digizen.org/cyberbullying/overview/>
- Childnet International is a non-profit organisation working with others to “help make the Internet a great and safe place for children” which contains useful advice and information for both parent/carers and young people. It’s website for parents <http://www.childnet-int.org/kia/parents/> is an excellent and comprehensive web site
- The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is dedicated to eradicating the sexual abuse of children. CEOP also provides help and advice on cyberbullying and maintains a website for children and young people about staying safe online. Their parent’s website also provides comprehensive information and advice <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>
- Kidscape: 08451 205 204 A telephone helpline for parents and carers of bullied children.
- www.wiredsafety.org - this is the world’s largest Internet safety and help group to promote safer and smarter use of interactive technologies.
- www.antibullying.net/cyberbullying1.htm
- www.chatdanger.com - advice on chat-room safety
- www.software4parents.com - for blocking software
- If you feel unsure about the technology, why not try an IT or Internet evening course somewhere? Have a look at LearnDirect (<http://www.learndirect.co.uk/>) or the online BBC Webwise (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/>) site.

Social Network Sites

- On any website there should be a button or page where you can report abuse. If you cannot successfully report abuse on a website, then it is not a good website to be using at all.

Support with Phones

If you or your child is being bullied through your mobile phone, you can seek help from your phone network provider:

- O2: ncb@o2.com or 08705214000
- Vodafone: 191 from a Vodafone phone or 08700700191 for Pay Monthly customers and 08700776655 for Pay as you Go
- The 3 service: Call 333 from a 3 phone or 08707330333
- Orange: Call 450 on an Orange phone or 07973100450 for Pay as you Go or 150 or 07973100150 for Pay Monthly
- T-Mobile: Call 150 on a T Mobile phone or 08454125000
- Landlines: BT Nuisance Call Advisor: 0800 661 441 / NTL: 0845 454 0000 / Telewest: 0845 142 0220