

2021

# Counter Cyber Bullying Policy



Implemented: February 2021

To be reviewed: September 2022

Review frequency: Annually

Consultation process:

Governors

Computing leader

Headteacher

Signed (HT)

(COG)

*“In everything we do today, we’re following Jesus and his way.”*

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## Counter Cyber Bullying policy

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### 1. Rationale

This policy is intended to be read in conjunction with the school Online Safety Policy, Computing Policy, Child Protection Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy. It is meant to complement those policies and offer practical suggestions and sources of information which will enable staff to help keep our pupils safe when online. In 2012, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) conducted research that concluded 52% of primary teachers said that their pupils had experienced bullying online. Research of the Anti-Bullying Alliance (2013) found that 44% of teachers would not know how to respond to cyber-bullying. This policy is a practicable way to support improvements to these statistics as they relate to our school.

### 2. What is cyber-bullying?

#### 2.1 Definition

*“Cyber bullying is the misuse of digital technologies or communications to bully a person or a group, typically through messages or actions that are threatening and/or intended to cause offense, anxiety or humiliation.” (Kidscape: Cyber Bullying and Online Safety)*

2.2 The Department for Education (DfE) has issued advice for schools on tackling bullying, which includes a section on cyber-bullying on page 6.

The guidance explains:

*“The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for ‘virtual’ bullying, which can occur in or outside school.”*

Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

2.3 Forms of cyber bullying include:

- Abusive comments, rumours, comments or threats
- Sharing pictures, videos or personal information without consent
- Creating specific websites that negatively target an individual or a group
- Pressurising someone into doing something they do not want to do

2.4 The dangers of cyber bullying in particular are:

- Bullying can happen 24/7 making it difficult to escape.
- The audience for bullying is potentially much larger increasing the impact
- Cyberbullying incidents can quickly escalate making them difficult to contain
- 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 what behaviour constitutes cyberbullying and young people tend to underestimate the impact of their behaviour.
- Unlike traditional forms of bullying, evidence is readily available and should be preserved.

### **3. Preventing cyber-bullying**

Childnet International, a charity focused on keeping pupils safe online, has published guidance on dealing with cyber-bullying. This helps our school staff by:

- Understanding the tools – be aware of the reporting mechanisms on different sites and services in order to support pupils in making a report
- Discussing cyber-bullying – be proactive in discussing cyber-bullying with pupils, including how and why it occurs and the consequences of such behaviour
- Knowing who to report to concerns to in the school

It also outlines advice that can give to young people about cyber-bullying and explains that young people should understand that, behaviour considered morally right and wrong offline must also be thought of in the same way online.

### **4. Signs that a pupil may be being bullied online**

Another guidance document on cyber-bullying from the DfE is aimed at parents and sets out some signs that a pupil may be subject on cyber-bullying on page 3.

These include where the pupil is:

- Upset after using the internet or his/her mobile phone
- Avoiding going to school and/or meeting friends
- Suffering from low self-esteem

## **5. Responding to incidents of cyber-bullying**

If a teacher has identified that a child may be suffering cyber bullying, the teacher must:

- Log a concern using the school child protection procedures
- Notify a designated safeguarding officer (DSO)
- contact the young person's parents/carers (if advised by the DSO)

As with our Anti-Bullying policy, we have a consistent system for monitoring and recording cyber-bullying. We will:

- Try to contain the incident when content has been circulated to other people
- Contact the young person's parents/carers in line with our school's anti-bullying policy
- Work with the person responsible for the bullying and make him/her aware of the consequences of this behaviour
- Apply disciplinary sanctions as outlined in our school's anti-bullying policy, and consider whether a restorative approach might be appropriate
- Consider whether the matter should be reported to the police, if the content is illegal

## **6. How staff tackle cyber-bullying**

The DfE guidance on preventing and tackling bullying, linked to in section 1, says:

*The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 give teachers stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones.*

We keep any evidence that cyber bullying has taken place, if made available. Childnet International states that there is no reason schools cannot look at pupils' social media webpages for evidence of cyber-bullying if they are in the public domain. There is no need to ask for permission.

The Safer Internet Centre's helpline, which offers advice on internet safety to professionals working with children and young people state that it would be reasonable for our school to look at pupils' social media accounts in some circumstances, including in cases of cyber-bullying.

Our staff can speak to the Safer Internet Centre about the specifics of any situation by:

- Calling 0844 381 4772
- Emailing [helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)

## **7. Supporting pupils who have been bullied online**

The school adopts the DfE guidance (see 08 Supporting Bullied Children, GOV.UK – DfE) which looks at how schools can support pupils who have been subject to bullying, including cyber-bullying.

It covers:

- Pupils who may be particularly vulnerable to bullying
- Ways to support pupils who have been bullied, including where bullying has had a severe impact on the pupil
- Using separate on-site provision or alternative provision to support pupils

On page 2, the document suggests that ways to support a bullied pupil could include:

- A quiet word from a teacher who knows the pupil well
- Asking the pastoral team to provide support
- Providing formal counselling
- Engaging with the pupil's parents
- Making a referral to the local authority's children's services
- Completing an early help assessment
- Making a referral to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)

## **8. Cyber-bullying: advice for pupils**

The DfE's advice for parents, linked to in section 3 of this article, includes advice for children on pages 2-3 such as:

- Be careful what pictures or videos you upload. Once a picture is shared online it cannot be taken back
- Treat your password like your toothbrush – keep it to yourself and change it regularly
- Block the bully – learn how to block or report someone who is behaving badly
- Do not retaliate or reply to offending e-mails, text messages or online conversations
- Save the evidence. Always keep a copy of offending e-mails, text messages or a screen grab of online conversations and pass to a parent, a carer or a teacher

## **9. Tackling cyber-bullying against staff**

[The guidance] advises against responding or retaliating to cyber-bullying

The DfE has also issued advice for schools on tackling instances of cyber-bullying against members of staff. It includes tips to help staff protect their online reputation, and outlines guidance on what to do if you are bullied online.

For instance, it advises against responding or retaliating to cyber-bullying and suggests saving evidence of the abuse.

## 10. Resources

The following resources and advice are available for teachers and other staff on the school server.

- 01 Preventing and tackling bullying, GOV.UK – DfE
- 02 Cyber-bullying, Childnet International  
<http://www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals/for-working-with-young-people/hot-topics/cyberbullying>
- 03 E-safety and cyber-bullying toolkit, Oxfordshire County Council
- 04 Advice for parents and carers on cyber-bullying, GOV.UK – DfE
- 05 Power of members of staff at schools to search pupils (legislation.gov.uk)
- 06 Childnet International (<http://digizen.org/contact.aspx>)
- 07 Helpline: Safer Internet Centre (<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/professionals-online-safety-helpline>)
- 08 Supporting Bullied Children, GOV.UK – DfE
- 09 Cyberbullying Advice for Headteachers and School Staff, GOV.UK – DfE
- 10 Cyberbullying and Online Safety: Guidelines for Professionals (Kidscape)