

Prenton Primary School



Cyber Bullying

“The internet and mobile phones have such positive power to transform children’s lives for the better. However, when they are misused they can cause real pain and distress”.

Childnet International.

As more and more schools are having to face the challenge of cyberbullying it is important that parents and teachers understand the issue and help to prevent and respond to incidents.

This addition to our Anti-Bullying and Child Protection policies is to help to protect our children and keep them safe.

The advent of cyberbullying adds a new and worrying dimension to the problem of bullying – it means there can be no safe haven for the child being bullied. Unlike other forms of bullying, cyberbullying can follow children into their private spaces and outside school hours. Cyberbullies can communicate their messages to a wide audience with remarkable speed, and can often remain unidentifiable and unseen.

Research commissioned by the Anti-Bullying Alliance from Goldsmiths College, University of London, identifies seven categories of cyberbullying

- **Text message bullying** involves sending unwelcome texts that are threatening or cause discomfort.
- **Picture/video-clip bullying via mobile phone cameras** is used to make the person being bullied feel threatened or embarrassed, with images usually sent to other people. 'Happy slapping' involves filming and sharing physical attacks.
- **Phone call bullying via mobile phone** uses silent calls or abusive messages. Sometimes the bullied person's phone is stolen and used to harass others, who then think the owner is responsible. As with all mobile phone bullying, the perpetrators often disguise their numbers, sometimes using someone else's phone to avoid being identified.
- **Email bullying** uses email to send bullying or threatening messages, often using a pseudonym for anonymity or using someone else's name to pin the blame on them.
- **Chat room bullying** involves sending menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
- **Bullying through instant messaging (IM)** is an internet-based form of bullying where children and young people are sent unpleasant messages as they conduct real-time conversations online.
- **Bullying via websites** includes the use of defamatory blogs (web-logs), personal websites and online personal polling sites. There has also been a significant increase in social networking sites for young people, which can provide new opportunities for cyberbullying.

Other important points to note from the research:

- Between a fifth and a quarter of students had been cyberbullied at least once over the previous few months.
- Phone calls, text messages and email were the most common.
- There was more cyberbullying outside school than in.
- Girls are more likely than boys to be involved in cyberbullying in school, usually by phone.
- For boys, text messaging is the most usual form, followed by picture/video clip or website bullying.
- Picture/video clip and phone call bullying were perceived as most harmful.
- Website and text bullying were equated in impact to other forms of bullying.
- Around a third of those bullied told no one about the bullying.

Because of the anonymity that new communications technologies offer, anyone with a mobile phone or internet connection can be a target for cyberbullying. What's more, bullies can reach much larger numbers within a peer group than they can with conventional bullying. Vindictive comments posted on a website, for instance, can be seen by a large audience, as can video clips sent by mobile phone.

Most Cyberbullying is done by students in the same class or year group.

Although it leaves no visible scars, cyberbullying of all types can be extremely destructive.

What can we do about it?

In school:

- We will include cyberbullying in our anti-bullying and child protection policies.
- Through the curriculum we will teach children about the risks of mobile phones and the internet.
- All e-communications used on the school site or as part of activities off-site will be monitored.
- Children are not allowed to use mobile phones in school. Mobile phones, especially those with cameras, brought to the school disco will be confiscated and returned at the end of the evening.
- Children are not allowed to use chat rooms or have access to chat areas or web-sites within school. Staff must monitor internet use and ensure that children do not accidentally move into these areas.
- Internet blocking technology is regularly updated and harmful sites blocked.
- If necessary we will work with the police and other partners to manage cyberbullying.
- Take action if a child is being cyberbullied or is bullying someone else.
- If an unsuitable or derogatory video, wall post, picture or blog is uploaded onto social media and is known to have caused another child or any other person to become upset, distressed or embarrassed, this will be viewed seriously. In such circumstances, the consequences for the child who has released the material onto the internet will be in the form of an internal exclusion, external exclusion or exclusion to another school for a period of time at the discretion of the Headteacher.

For parents/carers at home:

Cyberbullying in all its forms should be stopped. No one should be subjected to it, least of all your child.

- Many parents think that mobile phone bullying isn't common or never happens – but it does!
- As with face-to-face bullying, it's not unusual for young people suffering cyberbullying to keep silent about it.
- With cyberbullying, there's the added apprehension about internet access or their mobile phone – often their most treasured possession – being removed from them altogether if they own up to a problem.
- Don't wait for something to happen before you act. Make sure your child understands how to use these technologies safely and knows about the risks and consequences of misusing them.
- Make sure they know what to do if they or someone they know are being cyberbullied.
- Encourage your child to talk to you if they have any problems with cyber bullying. If they do have a problem, contact the school, the mobile network or the Internet Service Provider (ISP) to do something about it.
- Parental control software can limit who your child sends emails to and who he or she receives them from. It can also block access to some chat rooms.
- Moderated chat rooms are supervised by trained adults. Your internet Service

Provider will tell you whether they provide moderated chat services.

- Many parents think that search engines such as Google are safe but unfortunately children can access unsafe sites from these.

Visit www.nch.org.uk for more information on internet safety.

More Information to help parents, carers and children. Some of this information is suitable for older children and maybe parents or carers would like to discuss it with them.

Text and Video messaging:

- You can easily stop receiving text messages for a while by turning off incoming messages for a couple of days. This might stop the person texting you by making them believe you've changed your phone number. To find out how to do this, visit www.wiredsafety.org.
- If the bullying persists, you can change your phone number. Ask your mobile service provider (such as Orange, O2, Vodafone or T-Mobile).
- Don't reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages. Your mobile service provider will have a number for you to ring or text to report phone bullying. Visit their website for details.
- Don't delete messages from cyberbullies. You don't have to read them, but you should keep them as evidence.
- Text harassment is a crime. If the calls are simply annoying, tell a teacher, parent or carer. If they are threatening or malicious and they persist, report them to the police, taking with you all the messages you've received.

Phone calls:

- If you get an abusive or silent phone call, don't hang up immediately. Instead, put the phone down and walk away for a few minutes. Then hang up or turn your phone off. Once they realise they can't get you rattled, callers usually get bored and stop bothering you.
- Always tell someone else: a teacher, youth worker, mum or dad, or carer. Get them to support you and monitor what's going on.
- Don't give out personal details such as your phone number to just anyone. And never leave your phone lying around. When you answer your phone, just say 'hello', not your name. If they ask you to confirm your phone number, ask what number they want and then tell them if they've got the right number or not.
- You can use your voicemail to vet your calls. A lot of mobiles display the caller's number. See if you recognise it. If you don't, let it divert to voicemail instead of answering it. And don't leave your name on your voicemail greeting. You could get an adult to record your greeting. Their voice might stop the caller ringing again.
- Almost all calls nowadays can be traced.
- If the problem continues, think about changing your phone number.
- If you receive calls that scare or trouble you, make a note of the times and dates and report them to the police. If your mobile can record calls, take the recording too.

Emails:

- Never reply to unpleasant or unwanted emails ('flames') – the sender wants a response, so don't give them that satisfaction.
- Keep the emails as evidence. And tell an adult about them
- Never reply to someone you don't know, even if there's an option to 'unsubscribe'. Replying simply confirms your email address as a real one.
- Don't accept emails or open files from people you don't know.
- Remember it might not just be people your own age in a chat room.

Chat rooms and instant messaging:

- Never give out your name, address, phone number, school name or password online. It's a good idea to use a nickname. And don't give out photos of yourself.
- Stick to public areas in chat rooms and get out if you feel uncomfortable.
- Tell your parents or carers if you feel uncomfortable or worried about anything that happens in a chat room.
- Think carefully about what you write; don't leave yourself open to bullying.

Three steps to stay out of harms way:

- Respect other people – online and off. Don't spread rumours about people or share their secrets, including their phone numbers and passwords.
- If someone insults you online or by phone, stay calm – and ignore them.
- 'Do as you would be done by'. Think how you would feel if you were bullied. You're responsible for your own behaviour – make sure you don't distress other people or cause them to be bullied by someone else.

Did you know?

- That Year 6 and Year 10 pupils have been shown to be those who will take the most risks and put themselves in danger.
- That if a camera is linked to the PC and is on standby it can still be activated. Children often have a computer in their bedroom. They have all the gadgets attached such as microphones and cameras and they will often leave everything switched on or on standby.
- That the camera can be activated by anyone with a PC anywhere in the world! Children can then be watched or recorded whilst in their own bedrooms.
- That young people can often be easily duped in chat rooms by being made to feel comfortable first – questions may be about football or favourite foods or hobbies, then move on to proper names, ages, mobile phone numbers or even a simple photo. This will develop trust and help gain control. It may feel safe to give out this information whilst still in your own home or bedroom.

These are important messages to give out to children. They need to be aware!
Children and young people often feel they are invincible and do not see anything wrong in giving out personal information.

- Visit www.nch.org.uk for more information on internet safety.
- www.antibullying.net/cyberbullying1.htm
- www.kidscape.org.uk
- www.wiredsafety.org