

Cyber Bullying Policy

The following policy document has been produced with reference to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (Sept 2019) and Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and School staff produced by the Department for Education (Nov 2014) and Preventing Bullying Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies (July 2017) It should be read in conjunction with the Anti-Bullying, Safeguarding and Pupil Behaviour policies as well as the Pupils and Non Pupil Acceptable Use Policy.

Seva Independent School (SIS) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils in its care. As is made clear in the Anti-Bullying policy, SIS rejects any and all forms of bullying behaviour.

In recent years, all schools have had to address issues associated with the use of technology. Cyber bullying is a particularly pernicious aspect of bullying and is recognised as posing significant risk to the welfare of children. Current research into the extent of cyber bullying indicates that it is a feature of many young people's lives. Cyber bullying can have a seriously detrimental impact on an individual for a number of reasons.

- The sense of invasion of an individual's home and personal space – can happen at any point day or night
- The anonymity (at least initially) of the bully.
- The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages.
- The ability to broadcast upsetting messages and images to a potentially huge audience.
- The opportunity for others to become involved in the bullying activity. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology.

Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites. Particular examples might include;

- Threats and intimidating messages sent via computers or mobile phones.
- Derogatory remarks about a pupil or member of staff on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter.
- Cyber-stalking – repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages.
- Pupils who set up website pages and invite others to post derogatory comments about a pupil or member of staff.
- Pupils who film fights or assaults (so called 'happy-slapping') and circulate them via mobile phones.
- Pupils sending, insulting and vicious text messages or messages of a sexual nature (so called 'sexting' / Youth Produced Sexual Imagery).
- Pupils posting fake and/or obscene photographs of another individual on a social networking site.
- Up skirting - the act of taking a photograph of underneath a person's skirt without their consent.

As with other forms of bullying, some cyber bullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive. However, it is important to recognise that other incidents can be 'unintentional' and the result of a lack of thought and poor judgment regarding the consequences of their actions.

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 directly or to feel empathy. Here at SIS, we are committed to raising the awareness of all members of the school community to the dangers associated with cyber bullying. Pupils are reminded of the fact that such activity can have severe and distressing consequences and that any form of participation will not be tolerated.

Prevention and Recording

As with all aspects of pastoral care, education lies at the heart of our approach. Issues associated with the appropriate use of TECHNOLOGY are discussed both inside and outside the classroom.

All pupils follow a structured programme of TECHNOLOGY in the embedded curriculum. This work includes emphasis on the appropriate and responsible use of technology. In addition to this, important and pertinent issues are raised in PSD and within the tutorial programme.

Pupils are reminded of the need to think carefully about what private information they may have in the public domain. Occasional year group Assemblies may also be used as well as external specialists in the area of 'e-safety'. The issues are regularly raised and discussed through the school's INSET programme.

In all of the above, pupils are reminded of the positive role of TECHNOLOGY and its clear benefits to everyday life. However, its intrinsic nature requires a significant degree of personal responsibility and accountability. It should be understood by all pupils that:

- Bullying behaviour of any description is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- The school reserves the right to monitor pupils' use of the internet on a routine basis and to examine mobile phones where there is reason to suspect abuse.
- Pupils will be held personally responsible for all material they have placed on a website and for all material that appears on a website of which they are the account holder.
- Children can abuse other children. This is generally referred to as peer on peer abuse and can take many forms.

This can include cyberbullying/ inappropriate online behaviours towards others. Where incidents of cyber bullying do occur, they are monitored and recorded in the same way as all other forms of bullying.

In serious cases the Headmaster may consider suspension or indeed permanent exclusion. Where there are concerns that a criminal act has been committed or that a pupil has been subject to child abuse, the matter may need to be referred to the police and / or children's services. Involvement of parents and guardians SIS seeks to work closely with parents and guardians in promoting a culture of e-safety.

The school will always contact parents if it has any concerns about pupils' behaviour in this area and likewise it hopes that parents will feel able to share any concerns with the school.

School staff are trained under child protection and safeguarding guidelines to support and report any disclosures of cyberbullying to the DSL.

Legality

There are criminal laws that can apply in terms of harassment, threatening and menacing communications. SIS will contact the police if there is evidence to suggest the law has been broken. There are a number of offences that may be committed in the course of cyber bullying.

Pupils are entitled to their freedom of expression and respect for their private lives, but they must not infringe the rights of others.

Infringement includes, among other things, libel and slander, bullying, harassment and victimisation, inciting hatred on racial, religious and homophobic grounds, breach of confidentiality and breach of copyright.

The following pieces of legislation may have a bearing in any of the above examples. Obscene Publications Act 1959, Protection of Children Act 1978, Public Order Act 1986, Malicious Communications Act 1988, Computer Misuse Act 1990 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Communications Act 2003, Defamation Act 2013.

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