Seva Education

Cyberbullying Policy

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Agreed By:	The Seva Governing Board
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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 Information Communications Technology (ICT) are positive and it can enable additional routes for those intent on bullying.

Online behaviour is no different in principle from behaviour 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 through cameras on mobile phones and similar devices

- phone call bullying through mobile phones or landlines

- email bullying

- sexting-related bullying

- chat room bullying

- bullying through instant messaging

- bullying through websites

- "de-friending", etc on social networking sites (in some circumstances).

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.

- 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.

- It is appreciated that this problem is likely to be endemic since electronic messages are almost impossible to control.

The Aims of the Policy

Through this policy we aim to:

• raise awareness among students and staff about cyberbullying

• provide a safe learning environment in which preventive 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 — Students

A number of opportunities have been highlighted as part of the curriculum to help students stay safe. A unit is included in our personal, social, health and citizenship education medium-term planning. At the beginning of the school year, all classes will discuss safe use of the laptops during their first lesson. They will be reminded about the acceptable use policy, and this is available to parents.

If an issue relating to cyberbullying has arisen, the subject may be discussed with the class teacher or a teaching assistant. If this is in relation to a particular individual, consideration will be given to how the issue is raised. Students will be made aware of the importance of telling an adult, and which adults they can approach in school.

During Anti-Bullying Week, which is held in mid-November each year, cyberbullying is covered as part of whole-school assemblies and anti-bullying activities in all classes.

If students wish to express a concern of complaint about the school, they are encouraged to talk to their class teacher to do so rather than resorting to social media. This is not intended to stifle legitimate concerns but rather to raise awareness that using social media to express these feelings can turn into cyberbullying if not used carefully.

Awareness-raising — Parents

Parents and carers are made aware of the school's approach to cyberbullying and provided with information about websites that offer additional support and advice. Parents and carers are encouraged to take notice of their children's online activities and to discuss the risks with them.

If parents or carers wish to express a concern or a complaint about the school, they are encouraged to use the complaints system rather than use social media to do so. This is

not intended to stifle legitimate concerns but rather to raise awareness that using social media to express these feelings can turn into cyberbullying if not used carefully.

Awareness-raising — School Staff

Staff have a duty to ensure that the students 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 a line manager at the first opportunity should any incident occur.

Bullying and cyberbullying form part of regular INSET during which new developments of potential sources of bullying may be raised and possible ways of challenging these discussed. New terminology used by the students 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. Students should be encouraged to pass this on to their parents or carers; staff and parents/carers 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 to block material or have it removed. Since online harassment is a crime, the police should be contacted in severe cases.

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 a senior staff member (or other appropriate adult, if you are a pupil).

- 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 behaviour policy (for students), the disciplinary procedure (for staff) or appropriate mechanism (for others). 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 email member sites.

- Excluding students, either temporarily or permanently; dismissing or issuing disciplinary warnings to staff.

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 students, parents and staff recognise that when an incident of cyberbullying takes place it is dealt with swiftly.

Use of the Internet in School

This school has its own acceptable use policy that clearly identifies how laptops and the internet should be used. Students and parents are reminded of this policy annually. Some of the main features are:

- students should not be allowed unsupervised access to the internet

- students should be made aware of their own responsibility in reporting anything they identify that causes them concern

- permission must be given from parents for students to use the internet and students must also agree to follow internet usage rules.

The senior leadership team and, where appropriate, the Governing Board, are responsible for reviewing how the school network is monitored.

Use of Mobile Phones in School by Students

Students are discouraged from bringing their mobile phones to school unless permission has been sought by parents and given by the school. This is generally the case if a student uses their phone on the bus/taxi travelling to and from school.

It should be expressly understood and agreed that under no circumstances should the mobile phone be used while on schools premises, including for taking photographs. Phone are handed in to a member of staff when they arrive at school. Phones are then re-issued out at the end of the school day.

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

Use of Mobile Phones in School by Adults

Although parents will bring mobile phones onto the premises, it must be understood that these should not be used for the purpose of taking photographs and they should be switched on to silent/vibrate mode while on school premises.

No member of staff should make or receive personal calls during teaching time.

All members of staff must be careful about giving out their mobile number. Wherever possible, the school's mobile phone should be used for school trips and visits. However, there may be times when more than one phone is necessary. Where this is the case, a member of staff may use their personal phone but access to this should be restricted to a senior member of school staff. If any situation arises where this needs to be extended, permission should be secured first.

Emailing and Instant Messaging

No member of staff may give a pupil their personal email address. Students 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 PHSE curriculum or tutorial system.

Bystanders

The issue of being a bystander or accessory is addressed with all students regularly. Students 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 who will then report it to their line manager, and the appropriate action will be taken. In accordance with the school's anti-bullying procedures, all incidents of cyberbullying are logged and this information is shared annually with the governing body.

Special Needs

Students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) 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 students with SEND 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

Other policies which should be referred to include:

• Behaviour

• Anti-bullying

• ICT and Internet

• Acceptable Use

• Safeguarding