

BRYANSTON

POLICY ON CYBERBULLYING

I General

Cyberbullying may be defined as 'the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the Internet, to deliberately upset someone else'. It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. In many ways features of cyberbullying replicate aspects of bullying. However, it does differ in several significant ways from other types of bullying: the potential invasion of home and personal space, the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages, the potential size of the audience and the perceived anonymity which is often involved.

Cyberbullying may take different forms, including: threats and intimidation, harassment or 'cyber-stalking' (e.g. repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages), vilification / defamation, exclusion or peer rejection, impersonation and unauthorised publication of private information or images. (Please refer to Bryanston School Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy)

Some cyberbullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive, but it is important to recognise that some incidents of cyberbullying may well be unintentional and the result of simply not thinking about the consequences. 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 or to feel empathy. Pupils need to be aware of the effects of their actions.

In many cases of cyberbullying, bystanders can easily become perpetrators, e.g. by passing on or showing to others images designed to humiliate, or by taking part in online polls or discussion groups. (Please refer to Bryanston School Youth-Produced Sexual Imagery Policy). Such people may not recognise themselves as participating in bullying, but their involvement has the potential to compound the unhappiness for the person being targeted. 'Bystanders' or 'accessories' who actively support cyberbullying are liable to face sanctions themselves. Pupils who become involved in this respect need to be aware that their actions may have severe and distressing consequences, and that participating in such activity will not be tolerated.

There are particular features of cyberbullying that differ from other forms of bullying. The key differences include:

- Impact: the scale and scope of cyberbullying can be greater than other forms of bullying.
- Targets and perpetrators: the people involved may have a different profile to traditional bullies and their targets.
- Location: cyberbullying may take place on a "24/7 basis" and, given the nature of electronic communication, its effects may be felt in any location.
- Anonymity: the person being bullied will not always know who is attacking them.
- Evidence: unlike some other forms of bullying, the target of the bullying is likely to have evidence of its occurrence.

2 Different technologies

Cyberbullying may take place through any of the following electronic media:

- Mobile phones.
- Instant Messenger and Voice over Internet Protocols.
- Chat rooms and message boards.
- Email.
- Webcam.
- Social networking sites.

- Video hosting sites.
- Virtual learning environments.
- Gaming sites, consoles and virtual worlds.
- Blogs and Wikis.

3 Prevention

The school has a clear Anti-Bullying Policy Statement which seeks to reinforce values in all members of the School, which should, ideally, preclude all sorts of bullying, including cyberbullying. In addition to this general statement, this statement on cyberbullying has been produced in order to address features specific to cyberbullying. All aspects of bullying, including cyberbullying, are addressed in the PSRE programme. There are also year group talks delivered by external speakers and by the Second Master/Director of Technology. In addition, there are specific assemblies, both school and House-based, which seek to deal with aspects of cyberbullying. Furthermore, staff are trained in e-safety, which includes cyberbullying.

It is important that all members of the school community are aware that cyberbullying is unacceptable and should not be tolerated. It is the responsibility of all members of the community to take action if they are aware of cyberbullying taking place; to remain silent could be seen as condoning the action of the bully. The school will also seek to build resilience in its pupils to protect them and their peers through education (PSRE, Assemblies, House Assemblies, etc). When cyberbullying is investigated, reference will be made to the school's Digital Communications Policy. The school has, through the Digital Communications Policy, procedures in place to actively manage hardware and software connectivity within the school setting. The filtering system is managed by the Director of Technology and he maintains regular contact with the Second Master in relation to any Safeguarding matters.

Communication takes place with parents advising them about e-Safety, and information sessions are arranged in conjunction with the Bryanston Parents Association in this regard.

Cyberbullying takes many forms and may cover physical appearance, disability, nationality, race, gender, religion and sexual orientation.

4 What should a pupil do?

1. If a pupil receives an e-mail or text (or any other form of unacceptable electronic communication), that might be considered to be cyberbullying, he/she should report the matter to a member of staff (usually the Housemaster/Housemistress) as soon as possible. A copy of the e-mail with full headers, plus dates and times should be saved wherever possible.
2. Depending on the nature of the allegation, the case will usually be addressed initially either by the Housemaster/Housemistress or by the Head of Pastoral. For more serious allegations, the incident will certainly involve the Second Master and, in extreme cases, could involve the Police or other external agencies.
3. Pupils involved will be interviewed and given the opportunity to state their case, in order to establish the truth in what seldom turns out to be straightforward issues. The investigation may also involve the Director of Technology who may have access to various electronic records. In all cases, pupils will be warned not to do or say anything that may prejudice their position vis-à-vis the pupil who has been bullied.
4. At the conclusion of the investigation, and in the light of what has been concluded, the outcome will be announced. This will be communicated to the staff and pupils involved and to parents. As indicated below, there is a range of sanctions which may be applied.

5 Education

We seek to achieve these aims through a whole School approach, which is principally based on delivery via the PSRE programme and in IT lessons, but also in other contexts (including School assemblies and House assemblies).

6 Sanctions

Sanctions applied may range from a verbal warning to one of the school's standard punishments (i.e. Detention or Chart), even ranging up to temporary or permanent exclusion, depending on the gravity of the offence and the pupil's record with reference to bullying.

The aim of sanction is to:

- Help the person harmed to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop.
- Hold the perpetrator to account getting him/her to recognise the harm caused and to deter him/her from repeating the behaviour.
- Demonstrate to the school community that cyberbullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it, so deterring others from behaving similarly.

7 Anti-Cyberbullying Code: Advice to pupils

This section is intended to help pupils protect themselves from getting caught up in cyberbullying and to give advice about how to report it when it does happen. Seeing inappropriate comments about oneself on a website or being sent abusive or threatening text messages can cause considerable upset.

1. Respect other people

Remember that when you send a message to someone, you cannot see the impact that your words or images may have on the other person. That is why it is important to always show respect to people and be careful what you say online or what images you send. What you think is a joke may really hurt someone else. Always ask permission before you take a photo of someone.

If you receive a rude or nasty message or picture about someone else, do not forward it. You could be assisting a bully and even yourself be accused of cyberbullying. You could also be breaking the law.

2. Think first before you send

It is important to think before you send any images or text about yourself or someone else by email or mobile phone, or before you post information on a website. Remember that what you send can be made public very quickly and could stay online forever. Parents, teachers, friends or future employers may be able to access photos in years to come.

3. Protect your password

Take care to ensure that other people do not know your passwords. It is a good idea to change them on a regular basis and you are advised not to use obvious passwords like your name or date of birth. Choosing hard-to-guess passwords with symbols or numbers will help stop people hacking into your account and pretending to be you. It is also sensible to give your mobile phone number only to trusted friends.

4. Block the Bully

Most responsible websites and services allow you to block or report someone who is behaving badly.

5. Don't retaliate or reply

Replying to bullying messages, particularly in anger, may well be what the bully wants and can easily escalate matters very quickly.

6. Save the evidence

It is important to keep records of offending messages, pictures or online conversations. If you are intending to make a complaint, this will help you demonstrate to others what is happening and can be used by the school, Internet Service Provider, mobile phone company, or even the Police to investigate the cyberbullying.

7. Make sure you report incidents of cyberbullying

You have a right not to be harassed and/or bullied online and you should report incidents of cyberbullying which take place.

There are people who may be able to help:

- You should tell your Housemaster/Housemistress, Tutor, the Second Master or any other member of staff, who will be able to advise you on this.
- The provider of the service you have been bullied on (e.g. your mobile-phone operator or social-network provider). Check their websites to see where to report.
- If you are unable to make progress with the areas listed above, you are able to call a helpline, such as Childline on 0800 1111.

Finally, it should be kept in mind that the School may take a view upon any items published, by any means, if those items could bring the name of the School into disrepute. This is not confined to term-time only.

The school understands its responsibilities in relation to cyberbullying by undertaking the following:

- (a) Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for online safety as part of the school's wider safeguarding strategy and how this links with other safeguarding policy;
- (b) Clear guidance on the use of technology in the classroom and beyond for all users, including staff, students/pupils and visitors that references permissions/restrictions and agreed sanctions;
- (c) Detail the school's technical provision/infrastructure and the safeguards in place to filter and monitor inappropriate content and alert the school to safeguarding issues;
- (d) Detail on how the school builds resilience in its students to protect themselves and their peers through education and information;
- (e) Detail on staff safeguarding professional development that includes online safety;
- (f) Reporting mechanisms available for all users to report issues and concerns to the school and how they are managed and/or escalated;
- (g) How the school informs, communicates with and educates parents/carers in online safety;
- (h) The management of personal data in line with statutory requirements.

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