



## Cyberbullying Policy

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2011-12

*This policy applies to Early Years Foundation Stage, Junior School and Senior School.*

This policy aims to:

- Reinforce and safeguard the wellbeing of pupils and others who use the school
- Promote understanding of the impact of cyberbullying
- Make reporting cyberbullying easier
- Promote the positive use of technology
- Outline prevention activities
- Outline the management of reported incidents

### **Definitions of Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, to deliberately upset someone else.

### ***What's different about Cyberbullying?***

- Cyberbullying can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe and personal.
- The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages means the scale and scope of cyberbullying can be greater than for other forms of bullying. Electronically forwarded content is hard to control and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for targets to move on.
- Cyberbullies can attempt to remain anonymous. This can be extremely distressing for those being bullied. The person cyberbullying may never be in the same physical space as their target.
- Cyberbullying can take place both between peers and across generations; teachers have also been targets. Age or size is not important. Bystanders can also become accessories in the bullying, by for example, passing on a humiliating image.
- Some instances of cyberbullying can be unintentional. For example, saying something negative about another pupil or friend that is forwarded or viewed outside the immediate group.

### **Cyberbullying and the Law**

#### ***Education Law***

Bullying is never acceptable. The school community has a duty to protect its members and provide a safe, healthy environment. Schools have to power 'to such an extent as is reasonable' to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off site (The Education and Inspections Act 2006). This Act also provides a defence for school staff in confiscating items such as mobile phones from pupils.

#### ***Civil and Criminal Law***

Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence in UK law, there are laws which apply to harassing or threatening behaviour including menacing or threatening communications.

## **Relationship with other Policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Information and Communication Technology Policy
- Behaviour Policy

## **Staff with Key Responsibility for Cyberbullying**

Whilst all staff to whom an incident is related are responsible for listening and discussing the issue, the Head of Juniors (Junior School) and the Deputy Head will collate the evidence and speak to the individuals. The Headmistress will be informed.

## **Education**

Key safety advice for pupils when using the internet/chat rooms/social networking sites/mobile phones and other relevant technologies will be issued via assemblies, the Issues programme and ICT schemes of work. Regular communications will be sent to parents to alert them to the negative and potentially harmful use of such technology and encourage their support.

## **Staff Support and Training**

Regular staff in service training will be held on changing technology and the impact it may have on pupils. Key staff will be offered training in dealing with anti-bullying strategies including cyberbullying.

## **Management of Cyberbullying in School**

### **School ICT Support**

Hollygirt has a filtering and monitoring proxy server, which blocks social networking sites such as facebook, bebo, myspace, msn and other chat sites, pornographic content and web-based email sites. There is complete control over the internet connection. If there is an issue with a specific site or a specific user, filters can be added as necessary. Therefore, most reported incidents are likely to have taken place off site. Nevertheless all cyberbullying incidents will be properly recorded and investigated by key staff.

- Pupils are to be advised to keep evidence of emails or texts and to keep screen capture shots and noting web addresses of online cyberbullying.
- Pupils will be advised of simple preventative strategy for example changing contact details, blocking contacts or leaving a chat room.
- Appropriate steps will be taken to identify the bully which may include looking at the school systems, identifying and interviewing possible witnesses and contacting the police and service provider if necessary.
- If the person responsible is known, they will be asked to remove any offending content from the internet. If not, attempts will be made to contact the host (e.g. the social networking site) to make a report to get the content taken down.
- Phones may be confiscated from pupils.
- In cases of illegal content, the police will be informed.
- The person being bullied will be supported pastorally and parents informed where necessary.

## **Sanctions**

Once the bully is identified, steps will be taken to change their attitude/behaviour, to encourage them to consider the impact on the victim and to understand their motivation.

Sanctions will include:

- Carrying out useful tasks to help the school
- Detention
- Withdrawal of break/lunchtime privileges
- Withholding participation in education visits or sports events which are not essential to the curriculum

Persistent bullying or threatening or abusive behaviour or incidents involving racism this will be considered a serious breach of discipline and will incur:

- A fixed term suspension (1-5 days)

Or

- Permanent exclusion

In these cases parents will be informed at the first opportunity, a copy will be kept on the girls' files and sent to the Chair of the Trustees. Parents have a right to appeal against the decision to permanently exclude.

### **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with changing technologies, legislation and good practice.

*July 2010  
Unchanged August 2011*