

## Maidensbridge Primary School

### Guidance - Dealing with Cyberbullying

#### Introduction

This guidance document has been written in order to clarify our approach in addressing incidents of Cyberbullying as and when they occur. Cyberbullying is perpetrated differently from other forms of 'traditional' forms of bullying and therefore requires a different approach in some aspects. This guidance runs alongside the school's Anti-bullying Policy.

#### What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the misuse of digital technologies or communications to bully a person or group, typically through messages or actions that are threatening and/or intended to cause offence, anxiety or humiliation. Like 'real-life' bullying, cyber bullying is a behaviour that is sustained over a period of time.

Cyberbullying has similarities to traditional bullying and much of the guidance and advice offered in the school's Anti-Bullying Policy applies. There are some differences which can be summarised as follows:

- Bullying can happen 24/7 making it difficult to escape.
- The audience for bullying is potentially much larger increasing the impact
- Cyberbullying incidents can quickly escalate making them difficult to contain
- Anonymity and being one step removed makes it easier for the bystander to join in.
- Anonymity also increases the impact on those being bullied as they can't be sure who is responsible.
- There is a general lack of awareness that behaviour is cyberbullying and young people tend to underestimate the impact of their behaviour.
- Unlike traditional forms of bullying, evidence is readily available and should be preserved.

Behaviour that is classed as cyberbullying includes:

**Abusive comments**, rumours, gossip and threats made over the internet or using other digital communications – this includes trolling.

**Sharing pictures**, videos or personal information without the consent of the owner and with the internet to cause harm and/or humiliation.

**Hacking** into someone's email, phone or online profiles to extract and share personal information, or to send abusive or inappropriate content while posing as that person.

**Creating specific websites** that negative target an individual or group, typically by posting content that intends to humiliate, ostracise and/or threaten.

**Blackmail**, or pressuring someone to do something online they do not want to such as sending an appropriate/explicit image.

## Preventing Cyberbullying

1. **Discuss cyberbullying:** be proactive in discussing cyberbullying with children; how it occurs, why it occurs, and the consequences of such behaviour.
2. **Raise awareness in the community:** provide opportunities for parents/families to learn about how young people use technology and how to deal with abusive/unacceptable online behaviours.
3. **Know who to report to:** ensure that school staff are aware of who to go to in the school if you have concerns about cyberbullying incidents. ***At Maidensbridge Primary School, this is the Headteacher/Deputy headteacher as well as the Designated Safeguarding Lead.***

## Signs of Cyberbullying

It is not always easy to spot the signs of cyberbullying as it can happen all the time, which is a feature that makes it different from other forms of bullying. Be alert to a change in your child's behaviour, for example:

- Being upset after using the internet or their mobile phone;
- Unwilling to talk or secretive about their online activities and mobile phone use.
- Spending much more or much less time texting, gaming or using social media.
- Many new phone numbers, texts or e-mail addresses show up on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet.
- After texting or being online they may seem withdrawn, upset or outraged.
- Not wanting to go to school and/or avoiding meeting friends and school mates.
- Avoiding formerly enjoyable social situations.
- Difficulty sleeping.
- Low self-esteem.

***These signs could also indicate other problems, but Cyberbullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated further.***

## Responding to Cyberbullying

- Children should report bullying incidents to staff or any adult that they trust -whether it happens to the pupil themselves or they witness it happening to someone else. Children should be educated to tell.
- Children should be educated to retain any information as evidence. Do not delete upsetting/offending messages, posts or images.
- Any parent who has a concern should hold a discussion with the class teacher in the first instance. If the matter is not resolved, then the matter should pass to the Headteacher and then eventually to the Governing Body.
- All cases of cyberbullying will be recorded by the school. This will be done undertaken by the Deputy Headteacher.
- Where the school encounters a cyberbullying issue, parents will be contacted to discuss the problems encountered. This will also serve to alert parents to increase awareness of their child's use of digital devices and increase vigilance.
- If necessary and appropriate, the police will be consulted.

- Cyberbullying behaviour or threats of cyberbullying will be investigated and the bullying behaviours stopped quickly.
- The school will work with the bully (bullies) to change their behaviour by making them understand the consequences of their actions.
- The school will make Cyberbullying an important part of its Anti-bullying and Internet safety work.

**Further guidance and sources.**

E-safety and Cyberbullying Toolkit – January 2015 (Oxfordshire County Council)

Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying – November 2014 (Department for Education)

Cyberbullying (CHILDNET) - <http://www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals/for-working-with-young-people/hot-topics/cyberbullying>

Cyber bullying and online safety: Guidelines for professionals - Kidscape