



# Cyber Bullying Policy

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## 1. Statement of intent

Furze Platt Senior School believes that everyone in the school community has the right to learn and to teach in a healthy and caring environment, without fear of being bullied.

ICT plays an increasingly large and important part in the school curriculum.

We understand that in the wider community, students can, and do, access all types of material online and use technology for social networking. It is therefore important to acknowledge that sometimes, these technologies are used for unpleasant purposes. We accept that there are unfortunate misuses of this technology and we aim to address any breaches of this nature.

We recognise the existence of cyber bullying and the severity of the issue.

We are committed to:

- Educating students, staff and parents about cyber bullying and its consequences
- Providing a productive and safe learning environment
- Providing a robust policy to prevent and, if necessary, deal with cyber bullying, should it arise in school or within the school community
- Developing and improving the policies and procedures around cyber bullying through regular evaluation and review
- Providing a strong anti-bullying policy and acting upon it where bullying arises

## 2. Legal framework

2.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Public Order Act 1986
- Communications Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Education Act 2011

2.2. This policy has been written in accordance with guidance, including, but not limited to:

- DfE (2017) 'Preventing and tackling bullying'
- DfE (2022), 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2018) 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'

2.3. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Relationships & Sex Education Policy

### **3. Cyber Bullying Definitions**

- 3.1. Bullying is based on unequal power relations, real or perceived. It will usually be repeated and be difficult to defend against. It is intended to hurt the recipient emotionally and/or physically. It can manifest verbally, in writing or images, and can be done physically, financially (including damage to property) or through social isolation. Verbal bullying is the most common form especially within schools.
- 3.2. Cyber bullying is the use of ICT, commonly a mobile phone or the internet, to deliberately upset someone else.
- 3.3. Cyber bullying can be used to carry out all the different types of bullying; an extension of face-to-face bullying.
- 3.4. Cyber bullying can include threats and intimidation, harassment, defamation, exclusion or peer rejection, impersonation, and unauthorised publication of private information or images. It can include messages intended as jokes, but which have a harmful or upsetting effect.
- 3.5. Cyber bullying may take place inside school, within the wider community, at home or travelling.
- 3.6. Cyber bullying can draw bystanders into being accessories.
- 3.7. Cyber bullying includes:
  - Threats and intimidation
  - Harassment or 'cyber stalking'
  - Vilification/defamation
  - Exclusion or peer rejection
  - Impersonation
  - Unauthorised publication of private information or images
  - Manipulation
- 3.8. Cyber bullying may be carried out in many ways including the following:
  - Threatening, intimidating or upsetting text messages
  - Threatening or embarrassing pictures and video clips via mobile phone cameras
  - Silent or abusive phone calls or using the victim's phone to harass others, to make them think the victim is responsible
  - Threatening or bullying emails, possibly sent using a pseudonym or someone else's name
  - Intimidating or hurtful responses to someone in a chat-room
  - Unpleasant messages sent during instant messaging
  - Unpleasant or untrue information posted to blogs, personal websites and social networking sites (e.g. Facebook)

### **4. Legal Issues**

- 4.1. Cyber-bullying is generally criminal in character.
- 4.2. It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information in any media, including internet sites.
- 4.3. The legislation that covers cyber bullying is section 127 of the Communications Act 2003, which makes it an offence to send, by public means of a public electronic communications network, a message or other matter that is grossly offensive, or one of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.

- 4.4. In addition, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.
- 4.5. At Furze Platt Senior, cyber bullying is considered as serious as any other form of bullying. Cyber bullying issues are dealt with in line with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

## **5. Responsibilities for the Prevention of Cyber Bullying**

- 5.1. The DSL is in charge of the practices and procedures outlined in this policy and will ensure that their effectiveness is monitored.
- 5.2. The DSL will ensure that the school maintains details of agencies and resources that may assist in preventing and addressing cyber bullying.
- 5.3. All members of staff will be trained to identify signs of cyber bullying and will be helped to stay informed about the technologies that children commonly use, by self-study and regular updates.
- 5.4. Students will be informed about cyber bullying through curricular and pastoral activities.
- 5.5. Students and staff are expected to comply with the Acceptable ICT Use Agreement.
- 5.6. Parents will be provided with information and advice on cyber bullying.
- 5.7. It is made clear in staff meetings and the staff handbook that members of staff should not have contact with current students on social networking sites (specifically should not befriend students on Facebook). In addition, it is advisable not to have past students as friends.
- 5.8. The delivery of PSHE at KS4 and ICT at KS3 is important and will discuss keeping personal information safe and the appropriate use of the internet. In addition, students will be educated about e-safety through projects in other subjects.
- 5.9. Outside the curriculum, students will receive regular pastoral sessions about e-safety and cyber bullying through assemblies, conferences and Anti-Bullying Week.
- 5.10. Students will have a voice through the school student council to ensure they are fully engaged and involved in evaluating and improving policy and procedures.
- 5.11. Students from Year 7 will sign the Acceptable ICT Use Agreement before they are allowed to use school computer equipment and the internet in school. Parents will be asked to confirm that they have discussed its contents with their children.
- 5.12. Parents will be provided with information and advice on e-safety and cyber bullying via literature, talks, etc.

## **6. Required Actions if Cyber Bullying Occurs**

- 6.1. Advise the victim not to respond to the message.
- 6.2. Refer to relevant policies including E-Safety and Anti-Bullying and apply appropriate sanctions.
- 6.3. Advise the student not to delete the message/image.
- 6.4. Secure and preserve any evidence.

- 6.5. If appropriate, inform the sender's e-mail service provider.
- 6.6. Notify parents of the students involved.
- 6.7. Consider delivering a parent workshop for the school community.
- 6.8. Consider informing the police, depending on the severity or repetitious nature of the offence.

## **7. Required actions if malicious posts or threats are made against students or teachers**

- 7.1. Inform the site used and request the comments be removed if the site is administered externally.
- 7.2. Secure and preserve any evidence including URLs, screenshots and printouts.
- 7.3. Inform the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher / DSL.
- 7.4. Inform parents.
- 7.5. Send all the evidence to name of contact at the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre.
- 7.6. Endeavour to trace the origin and inform police as appropriate.

## **8. Reporting**

- 8.1. At Furze Platt Senior School, issues of cyber bullying should be reported according to the procedures in the Anti-Bullying Policy

## **9. Responding to Cyber Bullying**

- 9.1. Cyber bullying will generally be dealt with according to the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- 9.2. A cyber bullying incident might include features different to other forms of bullying, prompting a particular response. Significant differences may include:
  - Impact: possibly extensive scale and scope
  - Location: the anytime and anywhere nature of cyber bullying
  - Anonymity: the person being bullied might not know who the perpetrator is
  - Motivation: the perpetrator might not realise that his/her actions are bullying
  - Evidence: the subject of the bullying will have evidence of what has happened

## **10. Investigation and legal powers**

- 10.1. The nature of any investigation will depend on the circumstances. It may include:
  - Review of evidence and advice to preserve it, for example, by saving or printing (e.g. phone messages, texts, emails, website pages)
  - Efforts to identify the perpetrator, which may include looking at the media, systems and sites used; however, members of staff do not have the authority to search the contents of a phone
  - Identifying and questioning witnesses
  - Contact with the CEOP centre if images might be illegal or raise child protection issues
  - Requesting a student to reveal a message or other phone content or confiscating a phone

- The school has a duty to protect all of its members and provide a safe, healthy environment

## **11. Support for the person being bullied**

11.1. The feelings of the victim are paramount and, as with any form of bullying, support for the individual will depend on the circumstances.

11.2. Available support will include:

- Emotional support and reassurance that it was right to report the incident
- Advice not to retaliate or reply, but to keep the evidence and show or give it to their parent or a member of staff
- Emotional support and reassurance that they haven't done anything wrong
- Advice on other aspects of the code to prevent re-occurrence
- Advice on how the perpetrator might be blocked from the individual's sites or services
- Actions, where possible and appropriate, to have offending material removed from the host media
- Advice to consider changing email addresses and/or mobile phone numbers
- Discussing contacting the police in cases of suspected illegal content

## **12. Working with Perpetrator**

12.1. Work with the perpetrator, and any sanctions, will be determined on an individual basis, in accordance with the Anti-Bullying Policy, with the intention of:

- Helping the person harmed to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop
- Holding the perpetrator to account, so they recognise the harm caused and do not repeat the behaviour
- Helping bullies to recognise the consequences of their actions and facilitating change in their attitude and behaviour
- Demonstrating that cyber bullying, as with any other form of bullying, is unacceptable, and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it

## **13. Cyber Bullying Education**

13.1. As part of our on-going commitment to the prevention of cyber bullying, regular education and discussion about e-safety will take place as part of the computing and PSHE curriculum.

## **14. Monitoring & Review**

14.1. This policy is reviewed every year by the Deputy Headteacher / DSL, who will make any changes necessary, taking into account previous cyber bullying incidents and the effectiveness of procedures, and will communicate changes to all members of staff.

14.2. The scheduled review date for this policy is June 2023.