



## **CYBER-BULLYING POLICY**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the School's Anti-Bullying policy, IT Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection policies. It is the policy of the School that, without exception, behaviour by a student, which causes distress to another person, whether intentional or thoughtless, is regarded as bullying and is unacceptable. Such behaviour can include actions performed on-line, by mobile phone or by other forms of ICT. At its most serious it is recognised that bullying can cause psychological damage and can even lead to suicide. It should also be recognised that although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws, which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

### **SAFEGUARDING AND ICT**

Protecting students in the online world means thinking beyond the school environment. As well as the computer to access the Internet, many mobile phones and games' consoles offer internet connections. Students may be on-line at school, at home, in an Internet café or anywhere from where wireless connections are available. Increasingly students have access to personal devices not covered by network protection and therefore the emphasis needs to be on educating all users as to the risks involved and their obligation to act responsibly while online.

Safeguarding students, in both the real and virtual world, is everyone's responsibility and all staff should be aware of this policy and how to respond to e-safety incidents.

All students should be made aware of the school's IT policy and what to do if they have any ICT safeguarding concerns. Harassment, grooming of another person using technology, or breaching their right to privacy pose a serious threat to physical and emotional safety, and may have legal consequences.

### **PROCEDURES for dealing with inappropriate/illegal internet access or material.**

If staff or students discover unsuitable websites, this should be immediately reported to the Lead Safeguarding Practitioner, who in liaison with the ICT Manager, will consider a referral to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and the Police. Illegal material within the School's network is a very serious situation and must always be reported to the Police. Monkfrith School ensures processes are in place to minimise the risk of students gaining access to inappropriate materials, through supervision and monitoring. Any incident that involves inappropriate adult access to legal material on the School premises will be dealt with by the School's disciplinary policy.

### **What to do in the event of discovery of illegal material.**

- Seek immediate and specific advice from the Lead Safeguarding Practitioner (the headteacher), who will consult with the ICT Manager and the Police.
- Leave computer, phone or equipment containing the material switched on until advice from the police has been given.

Under no circumstances should the ICT Manager or Headteacher attempt to conduct an investigation of their own, or bring in an outside expert to do so, as this may compromise the evidence if a legal case were to result. In some cases this may constitute a criminal offence in itself.

## **COMBATTING CYBER-BULLYING**

Cyber-bullying can be defined as ‘the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to 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. However, it differs in several significant ways from other kinds of bullying: the invasion of home and personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; the size of the audience; perceived anonymity; the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target.

Cyber-bullying takes different forms: threats and intimidation; harassment or ‘cyber-stalking’ (e.g. repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages); vilification or defamation; exclusion or peer rejection; impersonation; unauthorised publication of private information or images; spreading rumours or ‘gossip’; manipulation.

Some cyber-bullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive, but it is important to recognise that some incidents of cyber-bullying are known to 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. It is important that students are made aware of the effects of their actions.

In cyber-bullying, 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. They may not recognise themselves as participating in bullying, but their involvement compounds the misery for the person targeted. It is important that students are aware that their actions have severe and distressing consequences, and that participating in such activity will not be tolerated.

There are particular features of cyber-bullying that differ from other forms of bullying which need to be recognised and taken into account when determining how to respond effectively.

The key differences are:

- Impact – the scale and scope of cyber-bullying 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 – the any time and any place nature of cyber-bullying.
- Anonymity – the person being bullied will not always know who is attacking them.
- Motivation – some students may not be aware that what they are doing is bullying.
- Evidence – unlike other forms of bullying, the target of the bullying will have evidence of its occurrence.

### **Prevention**

We seek to instil values in all members of the School, which should, ideally, preclude all bullying. These are reinforced in ICT lessons and our PSHE programme which includes teachers spending time talking to their groups about cyber-bullying and its effects and

consequences. In essence, these seek to inculcate respect for others, their property and their individuality.

It is crucial to the School's success in dealing with cyber-bullying that all members of the community are made aware that it 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 it happening. To remain silent is to condone the action of the bully. The School has the ability to monitor pupil's internal internet activity and will act to have any material removed when possible, where it contravenes this policy.

Dangers will also be highlighted to parents by after-school talks and information in newsletters.

**PROCESS DISCIPLINARY STEPS** (refer also to the Behaviour and Discipline and Child Protection Policy)

- Pupils will be warned officially to stop offending.
- Their parents will be informed.
- They may be given an appropriate sanction.
- The SMT will be informed
- • The incident will be recorded on file • For serious incidents and repeated offences, they may be suspended for a fixed period or expelled from school.

**NOTE FOR PUPILS: WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED?**

Remember that your silence is the bully's greatest weapon!

- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied and that it is **WRONG!**
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Fighting back may make things worse. If you want to fight back, talk to a teacher or parent/guardian instead.
- Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support.
- It is right to raise your concerns. Teachers will take you seriously and will deal with the bullies in a way, which will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.

**IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE IS BEING BULLIED:**

- **TAKE ACTION!** Waiting and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.
- If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult **IMMEDIATELY**. Teachers have ways of dealing with the bully without getting you into trouble.
- Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with a bully.
- Helplines such as Child Line are there for you if you feel that you do not want to speak to someone at school.

Monitoring and review:  
New policy Mar 2015  
Review due January 2016