



# Cyberbullying Policy

**This policy applies to:**

Whole College (including EYFS)

**Person responsible for the policy:**

Senior Deputy Head

**Review dates:**

Last review Sept 2024

Next review Sept 2025

## Introduction

The College recognises that technology plays an important and positive role in children's lives, both educationally and socially. It is committed to helping all members of the College community to understand both the benefits and the risks, and to equipping children with the knowledge and skills to be able to use technology safely and responsibly.

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click

## What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behaviour.

- Cyberbullying is the use of technology to upset someone else;
- It includes: threats and intimidation; harassment or 'trolling'; vilification/defamation; humiliation; manipulation, whether open or anonymous; exclusion or peer rejection; impersonation; unauthorised use of private information or images; posting without consent.

## Why is it dangerous?

- It can be used to carry out all the different types of bullying, and becomes an extension of face-to-face bullying;
- It can also go further in that it can invade home/personal space and can involve a greater number of people;
- It can take place across age groups and school staff and other adults can be targeted;
- It can draw bystanders into being accessories.

## *Sharing nudes and semi-nudes*

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes (formerly 'sexting' or more recently Youth Produced Sexual Imagery, YPSI) is the term used to describe the sending of explicit images electronically of someone under the age of 18. The appropriate terminology is "consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and videos".

Under the Sexual Offences Act (2003) taking an indecent image of a child (someone under the age of 18) is illegal. It is also illegal to send or be in possession of such an image. This law applies even to a young person taking and sending an image of themselves and applies to anyone receiving such an image if they do not delete it immediately. Obviously, any sharing of such images is also illegal. There may also be further legal implications if an older pupil/student requests such pictures of a younger student. This could be viewed legally as 'grooming'.

Pupils/students should be aware that no data is ever completely erased from a computer or phone – should they ever find themselves the subject of a serious investigation into their 'online' behaviour forensic examination of electronic devices will retrieve all deleted images/texts etc. The main concern about image sharing is that once an image is sent by a student it is then beyond their control. Sadly,

there have been numerous cases of such images then being distributed beyond a school's community with serious and far-reaching consequences.

The requesting of such pictures is not appropriate within our College community. Firstly, it is asking another person to break the law and, most importantly, because such action does not demonstrate the respect and kindness towards others that is expected. Sending or distributing such pictures is illegal and is also likely to lead to suspension as a minimum sanction.

This will apply to events both during and outside of term time. This community exists 'online' whether we are in school or not.

## PREVENTING CYBERBULLYING

### *Understanding and discussion*

- The Senior Deputy Head is responsible for overseeing the practices and procedures outlined in this policy and for monitoring its effectiveness. They will report to the Head;
- Students, parents and staff (and visitors) will have clear guidance on the use of technology in and outside the classroom (**Cyber-bullying policy, anti-bullying policy** which include sanctions).
- Staff will receive training in understanding their social media and appropriate pastoral responses;
- All staff will be helped to keep up to date with the technologies that children are using, including online safety measures. The College makes provision for teaching children to keep themselves safe, including on-line and when accessing remote learning (predominantly during Covid). Online safety considers content, contact, conduct and commerce. This is taught in PSHE lessons and also across various curricula.
- IT Ambassadors are given an opportunity to support students, staff and parents;
- The students will be involved in developing and communicating a code of advice on protecting themselves from getting caught up in cyberbullying and on reporting cases they experience. They will have a voice through the School Council, IT Ambassadors and Peer Listening;
- Students will be educated about cyberbullying through a variety of means: by invitation speakers and PSHE discussion;
- Students and staff agree to an **Acceptable Use of ICT Policy** when they join the College.

### *Policies and practices*

The College will:

- Ensure regular review and updating of existing policies to include cyberbullying where appropriate;
- Keep good records of all cyberbullying incidents;
- Publicise rules and sanctions effectively.
- Deploy a robust technical infrastructure to safeguard 'users' which will appropriately filter and monitor inappropriate content. Reports of our deployed filters are made to the Senior Deputy Head and the Deputy Head (Pastoral & Co-Curricular) daily to monitor for harmful content or any breach of the policy. Offenders will be dealt with accordingly (including potential loss of access to College ICT being revoked).

### *Promoting the positive use of technology*

The College will:

- Make positive use of technology across the curriculum;
- Use CPD opportunities to help staff develop their practice creatively and support students in safe and responsible use;
- Ensure all staff and children understand the importance of password security and the need to log out of accounts.
- Aim to build resilience in students to protect themselves and their peers through education and information sharing where a positive culture supports positive online communications.

### *Making reporting easier*

The College will:

- Publicise and promote the message that asking for help is the right thing to do and shows strength and good judgement;
- Publicise to all members of the College community the ways in which cyberbullying can be reported;
- Provide information on external reporting routes e.g. mobile phone company, internet service provider, Childline, CEOP 'report it' button.

## **RESPONDING TO CYBERBULLYING**

Most cases of cyberbullying will be dealt with through the College's existing **Anti-bullying Policy** and **Behaviour & Conduct Policy**. Some features of cyberbullying differ from other forms of bullying and may prompt a particular response. The key differences are:

- 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: the 24/7 and anywhere nature of cyberbullying;
- Anonymity: the person being bullied will not always know who is bullying them;
- Motivation: some students may not be aware that what they are doing is bullying and encourages pupils to join in when they might not normally do so;
- Evidence: unlike other forms of bullying, the target of the bullying will have evidence of its occurrence;
- It is possible that a member of staff may be a victim and these responses apply to them too.

### *Support for the person being bullied*

The College advises the following to staff, pupils and parents:

- Offer emotional support; reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling; help them understand how to deal with the situation;
- Advise the person not to retaliate or reply. Instead, keep the evidence and take it to their parent or a member of staff;
- Advise the person to consider what information they have in the public domain;

- Unless the victim sees it as a punishment, they may be advised to make some changes e.g. mobile phone number;
- If hurtful or embarrassing content is being distributed, try to get it removed from the relevant online platform. If the person who posted it is known, ensure they understand why it is wrong and tell them to remove it. Alternatively, contact the host provider and make a report to get the content taken down;
- Confiscate mobile phone, ask student to delete the offending content and say who they have sent it on to;
- Contact the police in cases of actual/suspected illegal content;
- In some cases, the person being bullied may be able to block the person bullying from their sites and services.

### *Investigation*

The Education Act 2011 amended the power in the Education Act 1996 to provide that when an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, has been seized by a member of staff who has been formally authorised by the headteacher, that staff member can examine data or files, and delete these, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone.

- Staff and students should be advised to preserve evidence and a record of abuse, save phone messages, record or save-and-print instant messenger conversations, print or produce a screen-grab of social network pages, print, save and forward to staff whole email messages. If necessary, confiscate devices to protect the victim and retain evidence;
- If images are involved, determine whether they might be illegal or raise child protection concerns. If this is the case, confiscate the device and contact the DSL. Do not view the images;
- Identify the bully;
- Any allegations against staff should be handled following guidance in the **Safeguarding Policy** under *Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Staff*.

### *Working with the bully and applying sanctions*

The aim of the sanctions will be:

- to help the person harmed to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop;
- to hold the perpetrator to account, getting them to recognise the harm caused and deter them from repeating the behaviour;
- to demonstrate to the College community that cyberbullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it, so deterring others from behaving similarly.
- Sanctions for any breaches of the **Acceptable Use of ICT Policy** will be applied and range from confiscation to exclusion;
- In applying sanctions, consideration must be given to the type and impact of the bullying and the possibility that it was unintentional or was in retaliation;
- The outcome must include helping the bully to recognise the consequence of their actions and providing support to enable the attitude and behaviour of the bully to change.

### *Evaluating the effectiveness of prevention measures*

The College will:

- Use appropriate forums to hear the children's point of view;
- Identify areas for improvement and incorporate ideas from the student body/council;

- Conduct regular evaluations;
- Use IT Ambassadors/Prefects to advise staff on sites where unpleasantness has been reported as well as educate staff, students and parents.

### *Legal duties and powers*

- The College has a duty to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment;
- Staff may confiscate equipment and return to the HoMM for fuller investigation;
- Head teachers have the power 'to such extent as is reasonable' to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off-site or not under the control or charge of a member of staff. (Education and Inspections Act 2006);
- College staff may request a pupil to reveal a message or other phone content and may confiscate a phone; they may not search the contents of the phone unless the Senior Deputy Head or Head agrees;
- Some cyberbullying activities could be criminal offences under a range of different laws including Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Communications Act 2003 and Sexual Offence Act 2003.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following additional College policies and Government guidance:

- **Behaviour and Conduct**
- **Anti-Bullying**
- **Acceptable Use of ICT, Mobile Phones and Other Electronic Devices**
- **Safeguarding and Welfare**
  
- DfE advice on preventing and tackling and bullying, including cyberbullying:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>
- Current government advice on sharing nudes/semi-nude images:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>