



St. Bernadette's Special School

Anti Cyber-Bullying Policy

St. Bernadette's School aims to ensure that children are safe and feel safe from bullying, harassment and discrimination. This school is committed to teaching children the knowledge and skills to be able to use ICT effectively, safely and responsibly.

UNDERSTANDING CYBER-BULLYING:

- Cyber bullying is the use of ICT (usually a mobile phone, game console and or the internet) to abuse another person;
- It can take place anywhere and involve many people;
- Anybody can be targeted including pupils and school staff;
- It can include threats, intimidation, harassment, cyber-stalking, vilification, defamation, exclusion, peer rejection, blackmail, impersonation, unauthorized publication of private information or images etc.;
- While bullying involves a repetition of unwelcome behaviour the **Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, September 2013**, states:

"2.1.3. In addition, in the context of these procedures placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour."

WHAT IS CYBER-BULLYING?

There are many types of cyber-bullying. The more common types are:

1. Text messages—can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also included here is 'Bluejacking' (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using Bluetooth wireless technology);
2. Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras—images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed;
3. Mobile phone calls—silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim's phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible;

4. Bullying via websites—use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal ‘own web space’ sites such as YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, Tik Tok etc
5. Emails—threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else’s name;
6. Chat room bullying—menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room or online gaming on Xbox or PlayStation;
7. Instant messaging (IM)—unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online using MSM (Microsoft Messenger), Yahoo Chat or similar tools;

Explanation of slang terms used when referring to cyber-bullying activity:

1. ‘Flaming’: Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language;
2. ‘Harassment’: Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages;
3. ‘Cyber Stalking’: Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating or engaging in other on-line activities that make a person afraid for his or her own safety;
4. ‘Denigration’: ‘Dissing’ someone online. Sending or posting cruel gossip or rumours about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships;
5. ‘Impersonation’: Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material online that makes someone look bad, gets her/him in trouble or danger, or damages her/his reputation or friendships;
6. ‘Outing and Trickery’: Tricking someone into revealing secret or embarrassing information which is then shared online;
7. ‘Exclusion’: Intentionally excluding someone from an on-line group, like a ‘buddy list’.

This list is not exhaustive and the terms used continue to change.

AIMS OF THIS POLICY:

- To ensure that pupils, staff, and parents understand what cyber bullying is and how it can be combated;
- To ensure that practices and procedures are agreed to prevent incidents of cyber-bullying;
- To ensure that reported incidents of cyber-bullying are dealt with effectively and quickly.

STRATEGIES & PROCEDURES TO PREVENT CYBER-BULLYING:

- Staff, pupils, parents and Board of Management (BOM) will be made aware of issues surrounding cyber bullying through the use of appropriate awareness-raising exercises;
- Pupils will learn about cyber bullying through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), e.g. Stay Safe Webwise Programmes, school assemblies, friendship week activities and other curriculum projects.
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on how to combat cyber bullying;
- Pupils will sign an Acceptable Use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) contract. Parents will be expected to sign an Acceptable Use of ICT contract prior to enrolment and to discuss its meaning with their children;
- Pupils and parents will be urged to report all incidents of cyber bullying to the school;
- All reports of cyber bullying will be investigated, recorded, stored in the principal's office;
- Procedures in our school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy shall apply;
- The Gardai will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content;
- This policy will be reviewed annually. Pupils, parents, and staff will be involved in reviewing and revising this policy and any related school procedure.

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS:

If you are being bullied by phone or on the Internet:

- Remember, bullying is never your fault. It can be stopped and it can usually be traced;
- Don't ignore the bullying. Tell someone you trust, such as a teacher or parent or call an advice line;
- Try to keep calm. If you are frightened, try to show it as little as possible. Don't get angry, it will only make the person bullying you more likely to continue;
- Don't give out your personal details online - if you are in a chat room, do not say where you live, the school you go to, your email address etc. All these things can help someone who wants to harm you to build up a picture about you;
- Keep, screenshot and save any bullying emails, text messages or images. Then you can show them to a parent or teacher as evidence;
- If you can, make a note of the time and date bullying messages or images were sent, and note any details about the sender;
- There is plenty of online advice on how to react to cyber-bullying. For example, ie.reachout.com and www.wiredsafety.org have some useful tips.

Text/video messaging:

- You can easily stop receiving text messages for a while by turning-off incoming messages for a couple of days. This might stop the person texting you by making them believe you've changed your phone number;
- You can block the sender of any messages and report them if bullying is happening via an online web
- If the bullying persists, you can change your phone number. Ask your mobile service provider about this;
- Don't reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages;
- Don't delete messages from cyber bullies. You don't have to read them, but you should keep them as evidence.

Useful Websites:

<https://www.webwise.ie/>
ie.reachout.com
www.sticksandstones.ie
www.childline.ie/index.php/support/bullying/1395
<https://antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/primary/workshops/>
<https://antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/parent-hub/>

This Policy was ratified as an addendum to the Anti-Bullying Policy by the Board of Management on ___/___/_____.

It was brought to BoM for approval on ___/___/_____.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: ___/___/_____