

MONASTERY NATIONAL SCHOOL

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Monastery NS Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy 2019

Monastery NS 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.

While cyber bullying often takes place at home and at night, the consequences are often felt in school. In addition, cyber bullying can be an extension of traditional bullying in school and consequently schools have a role, working with the wider school community, and in particular parents, in tackling this issue.

How does cyber bullying differ from other forms of bullying?

There is no cut off point or safe haven from bullying for many young people as cyber bullying can happen any time and any place. When young people come home from school and shut their front door, they are still available to become victims of cyber bullying, via text messages, internet chat rooms and an indefinable myriad of constantly evolving social media platforms. Social barriers have become blurred and in some cases, removed completely as technology means that communications channels are open round the clock. The anonymity of the internet has developed a psychological blank in many young peoples' minds with regards to a separation between spoken communications and written communications.

What is the impact of cyber bullying?

- The anonymity that the Internet affords has particular consequences. In most cases, cyber bullies know their targets, but their victims don't always know the identity of their cyber bullies. This can lead to suspicion and alienation among peers.
- Young people posting messages on the internet do not feel as responsible for their actions as they might otherwise. They are not immediately confronted with the consequences of their actions and they don't fear being punished for them. The nature of the medium means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. Young people may not be aware that the nature of cyber bullying provides for a permanent record of the bullying offense which could impact on them in the future.
- Young people are often fearful of reporting incidents, as they fear that adults will take away their mobile phone, computer and/or internet access.
- Like other forms of bullying it can cause stress and anxiety. This can make it more difficult for young people to learn. It can affect concentration levels and decrease ability to focus. In turn, this affects the ability to understand and retain information. For fear of reprisal after class, students who are being bullied can also demonstrate a reluctance to participate in lesson activities or discussions.
- They may feel distracted and pre-occupied with the bullying, spending time thinking of ways to avoid it.
- They may feel a lack of interest and motivation due to feelings of depression or anxiety.
- They might avoid school, complain of regular illness or mitch from classes or activities to avoid the bullying.

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. **Emails** – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name.
5. **Chat room bullying** – menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
6. **Instant messaging (IM)** – unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online using MSM (Microsoft Messenger), Yahoo Chat or similar tools.
7. **Bullying via websites** – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal 'own web space' sites such as You Tube, Facebook, Ask.fm, Bebo (which works by signing on in one's school, therefore making it easy to find a victim) and Myspace – although there are others.

Aims of 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.

Understanding Cyber bullying:

- Cyber bullying is the use of ICT (usually a mobile phone 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, impersonation, unauthorized publication of private information or images etc.

Procedures to prevent Cyber bullying:

- Staff, pupils, parents and Board of Management (BOM) to be made aware of issues surrounding cyber bullying.
- Pupils and parents will be urged to report all incidents of cyber bullying to the school.
- Staff CPD (Continuous Professional Development) will assist in learning about current technologies.
- Pupils will learn about cyber bullying through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), assemblies and other curriculum activities.
- Pupils will sign an *Acceptable Use of the Internet, School Network, Emerging and New Technologies* contract.
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on how to combat cyber bullying.

- Parents will be expected to sign an *Acceptable Use of the Internet, School Network, Emerging and New Technologies* contract prior to enrolment and to discuss its meaning with their children.
- Pupils, parents and staff will be involved in reviewing and revising this policy and school procedure.
- All reports of cyber bullying will be investigated, recorded, stored in the Principal's office and monitored regularly.
- The school will engage facilitators from Ardee SCP to facilitate a workshop on bullying and cyber bullying for 5th class annually.
- Procedures in our school Anti-bullying Policy shall apply.
- The Gardaí will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content.
- This policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly.

Information for Pupils

If you're being bullied by phone or 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're in a chat room, watch what you say about 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 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's plenty of online advice on how to react to cyber bullying. For example, www.webwise.ie and www.hotline.ie 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
- 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. Your mobile service provider will have a number for you to ring or text to report phone bullying
- Visit their website for details.
- Don't delete messages from cyber bullies. You don't have to read them, but you should keep them as evidence.

Useful Websites

www.webwise.ie

www.hotline.ie

www.antibullying.net

www.kidsmart.org.uk/beingsmart

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents/cyber_bullying/

www.childline.ie/index.php/support/bullying/1395

www.chatdanger.com

www.kidpower.org

www.abc.tcd.ie

A copy of this policy will be made available to all new parents and staff. This policy will be reviewed and evaluated to establish if policy and procedures are effective. This policy was agreed by staff, parents and Board of Management.

Signature of Chairperson: *Canon Peter Murphy*

Date of ratification by Board of Management: 15/10/19