




Aldenham Prep School

Anti Cyber Bullying Policy

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INFORMATION

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ANTI-CYBER BULLYING POLICY

Aims

- Bullying is wrong and damages individual children. Therefore at Aldenham Prep do all we can to prevent it by developing a school in which bullying is regarded as unacceptable.
- We aim, as a school, to produce a safe and secure environment where all can learn without anxiety. We also have a duty of care towards our staff who may also be the victims of cyber bullying.
- This policy aims to produce a consistent school response based on policy expressed in our School Aims and Behaviour and Discipline Policy.
- We aim to make all those connected with the school aware of our opposition to bullying, and we make clear each person's responsibilities with regard to the eradication of any forms of bullying in our school.

What is Cyber Bullying?

Cyber bullying can be defined as use of information and communications technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone. Cyber bullying is when a person, or a group of people, uses the internet, mobile phones or other digital technologies to threaten, tease or abuse someone. 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 and even the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target. Aldenham Prep treats cyber bullying, like all bullying, very seriously. Cyber bullying is never acceptable, either in or out of school. There are criminal laws that can apply in terms of harassment and threatening and menacing communications, and we will contact the police if they feel the law has been broken.

Examples of cyber bullying include:

- threats and intimidation;
- harassment or 'cyber stalking';
- sending unwanted texts and messages;
- sending instant messenger and chat room messages to friends or direct to a victim;
- exclusion or peer rejection;
- false impersonation;
- setting up profiles on social networking sites to make fun of someone;
- unauthorised publication and distribution of private images.

While some cyber bullying is deliberate and aggressive, it is important to recognise that there may be cases of cyber bullying which are unintentional and the result of simply not knowing about the consequences. The school reserves the right to make judgements about the severity of cyber communications. What may be sent as a joke may not be received as one and indeed the sender may not even see the impact of the message on the receiver. It is easy for bystanders to become perpetrators in cyber bullying by passing on humiliating images, or taking part in online polls or discussion groups, thus compounding the misery for the person targeted. Cyber bullying may take place

between children, between adults or also across different age groups. Targets may be adults or pupils.

The Effects of Cyber Bullying

Even though cyber bullying cannot physically hurt, it can still leave children feeling mentally vulnerable and very upset. They can also feel scared, lonely and stressed and also feel that there's no way out. Escaping cyber bullying can be very difficult. Because anyone can get access to a mobile phone or the internet almost anywhere, it can be tough for those on the receiving end to avoid it, even in the safety of their own home.

Why do Cyber Bullies do it?

There are many possible reasons why some people choose to cause pain to others by bullying them. Here are the common ones:

- It can simply be a case of someone being in the wrong place at the wrong time and allowing themselves to be easily intimidated;
- Some people who cyber bully think that they won't get caught if they do it on a mobile phone or on the internet.
- The people who cyber bully are jealous, angry or want revenge on someone, often for no reason at all.
- Cyber bullies often think that getting their group of friends to laugh at someone makes them look cool or more popular.
- Many do it for laughs or to get a reaction.

Cyber Bullying and the Law

Bullying is never acceptable, Aldenham Prep has a duty to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment. Aldenham Prep will treat all reported incidents of cyber bullying seriously, whether they occur inside or outside of school. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) includes legal powers that relate more directly to cyber bullying. It outlines the power of Head teachers to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off site and provides defence in relation to the confiscation of mobile phones and other items. Head teachers have the power "to such an extent as is reasonable" (digizen.org/cyberbullying) to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off site or not under the control or charge of a member of staff.

Responding to Cyber Bullying

Any person being bullied using mobile phones or information and communications technology should keep examples of texts or emails received as these may aid in any investigation. Additional reporting routes include contacting mobile phone companies, internet service providers and social networking sites, as well as looking at the school computer system and log on accounts. It is expected that most cases of cyber bullying can be dealt with through the school's existing Anti-Bullying policy and Behaviour and Discipline policy, though consideration will be given to the scale and scope of cyber bullying, the number of people involved, the location and nature of the cyber bullying and the anonymity of the perpetrator.

Some important tips to protect pupils from being caught up in cyber bullying are as follows:

1. Always respect others.
2. Think before you send.
3. Don't share your password.
4. Block the bully.
5. Don't retaliate or reply.
6. Never send pictures of yourself that you don't want in the public domain.
7. Save the evidence.
8. Make sure you tell.

Extent of School Responsibility

In cases of cyber bullying the school has a responsibility to act in accordance with its Anti Bullying policy. The school also has statutory powers to investigate incidents of bullying which occur outside of school hours and may apply appropriate sanctions, especially if it causes problems in school. The school will treat all cases of cyber bullying seriously but given the nature of modern technology and communication we recognise the limits of our ability to investigate certain areas of cyber bullying. Our duty of care cannot automatically extend beyond the school gates so incidents of cyber bullying which take place entirely off site may not always be matters which come under our jurisdiction. Pupils should be aware that issues of cyber contact can lead to criminal action if guidelines/laws are breached.

It should be noted that in the case of Leah Bradford-Smart v West Sussex County Council (2002), the Lord Justice Judge said "the school does not have the charge of its pupils all the time and so cannot directly protect them from harm all the time. At a day school that charge will usually end at the school gates ...". He went on to add "the school cannot owe a general duty to its pupils, or anyone else, to police their (the pupils) activities once they have left its charge. That is principally the duty of parents and, where criminal offences are involved, the police".

(Ref. Education Law Update, Issue 103, September 2010, page 4, author Kerry Trewern.)

Prevention

In order to minimise the chances of cyber bullying happening within the school day and to raise general awareness of cyber bullying we will:

- Regularly teach and remind children how to remain vigilant when using technology.
- Raise awareness of staff and parents on how to keep children safe on the internet.
- Not allow the use of personal electronic devices during school hours (eg mobile phones, tablets, laptops) unless given express permission by staff and in an appropriately supervised context and setting.
- Ensure pupils have no access at all to social media websites on the school network and via the wireless network infrastructure.
- Prevent pupils from accessing questionable sites or sites that promote peer to peer contact through use of a network wide internet filter.

How might a member of staff become aware that cyber bullying is taking place?

Cyber bullying or suspected cyber bullying may be communicated to staff directly by pupils, parents or members of the wider school community. Staff may observe changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being cyber bullied. These include:

- Unwillingness to come in to school

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- Displays of excessive anxiety – becoming withdrawn or quiet
- Failure to produce work/ produce late work/ produce poor quality work
- Damage to or loss of personal property
- Reduced level of self – esteem / confidence
- Poor eye contact
- Dark conversation – suicide / running away from home or school

Reporting Cyber Bullying and taking action

The school community is obliged to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment. All staff have a duty to be vigilant in preventing any form of bullying and reporting any concerns to the Head of the Prep School or the Deputy Head who is member of SLT responsible for the pastoral care of the pupils. In cases of cyber bullying, staff should follow the same guidelines for reporting as outlined in the Aldenham Prep anti bullying policy.

In cases of cyber bullying the school has responsibilities to:

- work with and take steps to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully
- take care to make an informed evaluation of the severity of the incident, taking into account the ways in which cyber bullying differs from other forms of bullying
- deliver appropriate and consistent sanctions, in accordance with the anti bullying policy

In addition to the procedures set out in the anti-bullying policy the following procedures should also be put in place:

- If a cyber bullying incident directed at a child occurs using email or mobile phone technology either inside or outside of school time:
 - Make sure the person knows not to retaliate or to return the message
 - Secure and preserve any evidence
 - Check the person knows simple ways to prevent it from happening again eg. by changing the contact details, blocking contacts or leaving the chat room.
 - Inform the sender's email service provider
- Consider informing the police depending on the severity or repetitions nature of offence.
- If malicious or threatening comments are posted on the Internet site about a pupil or member of staff or associates of the school:
 - Inform and request the comments be removed if the site is administered externally
 - Secure and preserve any evidence
 - Endeavour to trace the origin and inform police as appropriate
 - Any attempt to use ICT on which to put messages or images which are damaging to individual pupils, teachers, members of staff and associates of the school or which damage the reputation of the school in any way will be treated very seriously and exclusion, whether temporary or permanent is the likely consequence.

For more information on cyber bullying refer to Digizen.org or the DfE 'Safe to Learn' document on cyber bullying. Further information on dealing with bullying may be obtained from websites such as <http://www.kidscape.org.uk/>

Help Organisations

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) 08088005793

Children's Legal Centre 0845 345 4345

KIDSCAPE Parents' Helpline 0845 1205 204

Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

Youth Access 020 8772 9900

Bullying Online www.bullying.co.uk

Related Policies

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Computing Policy

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Document History

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