



## Online Bullying Policy

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## Statement of Intent

We are committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all of our pupils and staff so they can learn and work in a secure atmosphere. In addition, we understand the importance of Computing at Inspire Multi Academy Trust in supporting a creative and innovative curriculum for all learners. Bullying of any kind is totally unacceptable within our Trust. If online bullying does occur, all pupils and staff should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Online bullying will not be tolerated.

We are a TELLING Trust. This means that *anyone* who knows that online bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

## Understanding Online Bullying

- Bullying is a deliberate, conscious and repeated intention to hurt, victimise, threaten or frighten someone. Online 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; and even the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target.
- Research into the extent of online bullying indicates that it is a feature of many young people's lives. It also affects members of trust staff and other adults; there are examples of staff being ridiculed, threatened and otherwise abused online by pupils.
- Online bullying, like all bullying, should be taken very seriously. It is never acceptable, and a range of Education Acts and government guidance outline schools' duties and powers in relation to bullying. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) includes legal powers that relate more directly to online bullying; it outlines the power of Headteachers to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off-site and provides a defense in relation to the confiscation of mobile phones and other items.
- Although Online Bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws that can apply in terms of harassment and threatening and menacing communications. Our academies should contact the police if they feel that the law has been broken.
- Online bullying takes different forms: threats and intimidation; harassment or "Online-stalking" (e.g. repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages); vilification / defamation; exclusion or peer rejection; impersonation; unauthorised publication of private information or images (including what are sometimes misleadingly referred to as 'happy slapping' images); and manipulation.
- Some online bullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive, but it is important to recognise that some incidents of online 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 pupils are made aware of the effects of their actions.

- In online bullying, bystanders can easily become perpetrators – by passing on or showing to others images designed to humiliate, for example, or by taking part in online polls or discussion groups. They may not recognize themselves as participating in bullying, but their involvement compounds the misery for the person targeted. It is recommended that anti-bullying policies refer to those ‘bystanders’ – better termed ‘accessories’ in this context – who actively support online bullying and set out sanctions for this behaviour. It is important that pupils are aware that their actions have severe and distressing consequences and that participating in such activity will not be tolerated.

### **Objectives of this Policy**

- All teaching and non-teaching staff, directors, governors, pupils and parents should have an understanding of what online bullying is.
- All teaching and non-teaching staff and governors should know what the Trust policy and procedures are in relation to online bullying, and follow them when bullying is reported.
- All pupils and parents should know what the trust policy and procedures are on online bullying, and what they should do if online bullying arises.
- As a Trust we take online bullying seriously. Pupils and parents should be assured that they will be supported when online bullying is reported.

### **Preventing Online Bullying**

At Inspire Multi Academy Trust we will work together; Governing Body, Headteacher, ICT Team, Head person on anti-bullying, the Anti-bullying team, Pastoral Care Staff and School Council members to raise awareness and promote understanding about online bullying. Activities to promote these may include:-

- Ensure that learners, parents and staff are all aware of the procedures and sanctions for dealing with online bullying, including bullying that takes place out of school
- Staff development activities
- Home-school events such as special assemblies with parents
- Information sent home to parents
- Addressing online bullying within Computing curriculum
- PSHE curriculum
- Staying up to date – prevention and responding strategies require continuous review and refinement as new technologies and services become popular. This policy similarly, will be updated periodically as technologies develop

It is useful to publicise progress and online bullying prevention activities to the whole-trust community. Keep online bullying a live issue and celebrate our successes.

## **Signs and Symptoms**

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:-

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- changes their usual routines
- is unwilling to go to school
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, or is lacking in confidence
- begins to do poorly in school work
- has a desire to remain with adults
- shows changes in their behaviour

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

## **Procedures for children**

- Pupils are encouraged to report all incidents of online bullying to any member of staff.
- Tell a member of the Anti-Bullying Team about the problem.
- Put a note in the worry box.

## **Procedures for parents**

- Report the incident to the class teacher
- Follow guidelines laid out in our booklet for parents

## **Procedures for staff and strategies for dealing with Online Bullying**

- Give reassurance that the person has done the right thing by telling someone, refer to any existing pastoral support/procedures and inform parents. Record the incident in the *Online Bullying log* and make it known to the Headteacher and Computing Leader. The bully would then be seen at the request of the Headteacher.

Advise on next steps:

- Make sure the person knows not to retaliate or return the message.
- Ask the person to think about what information they have in the public domain e.g. This could be information about themselves which has been posted on a social networking site or an image sent by Bluetooth technology to different mobile phone users.
- Help the person to keep relevant evidence for any investigation (e.g. by not deleting messages they've received, and by taking screen capture shots and noting web addresses of online bullying instances).
- Check the person understands simple ways to prevent it from happening again, e.g. by changing contact details, blocking contacts or leaving a chat room.

- Take action to contain the incident when content has been circulated: If you know who the person responsible is, ask them to remove the content; Contact the host (e.g. the social networking site) to make a report to get the content taken down.
- Use disciplinary powers to confiscate phones that are being used to online bully. Ask the pupil to tell you who they have sent messages on to.
- In cases of illegal content, contact the police, who can determine what needs to be kept for evidential purposes.

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

Once the person bullying is identified, steps should be taken to change their attitude and behaviour as well as ensuring access to any support that is required.

Factors to consider when determining the appropriate sanctions include:-

- The impact on the victim: was the bully acting anonymously, was the material widely circulated and humiliating, how difficult was controlling the spread of the material?
- The motivation of the bully: was the incident unintentional or retaliation to bullying behaviour from others?
- Technology-specific sanctions for pupils engaged in online bullying behaviour could include limiting internet access for a period of time or removing the right to bring a mobile into school.
- The Trust will also support parents and involve them in the necessary steps needed to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully. Parents/Carers will also be provided with information regarding e-safety at home and how to support their child.

### **Other strategies for dealing with Online Bullying**

- Buddies are trained to be observant and report incidents of bullying to an adult.
- Children can put a message in a Worry box, which will be checked regularly by the Anti-Bullying Team.
- Provide our children with knowledge, skills and understanding through the Computing and PSHE curriculum.
- Develop our children's emotional literacy to enable them to communicate worries and concerns effectively.
- Provide a safe environment where children feel confident to speak openly.
- Create an anti-bullying ethos.
- Online Bullying events held in trust, include
  - An annual Anti Bullying awareness week
  - Assemblies
  - Competitions

Within each academy there is an Anti-Bullying Team consisting of both staff and pupils. All pupils are aware of who is involved in our Anti-Bullying Team and have opportunities to share their concerns with these members. Children are made aware of online safety through dedicated days, assemblies and during anti-bullying week. During PSHE sessions they are given information about the risks and consequences linked to using the internet and practical advice on how to keep themselves safe, and who they can talk to, should

they have a problem or issue. Information is sent to parents to educate them on the potential dangers of using the internet.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The academies keep a record of incidents of online bullying. The effectiveness of the Behaviour and Anti Bullying policies are regularly monitored and evaluated by the Headteacher and Staff. The Headteacher reports to Governors about the effectiveness of the policy.