

how to deal with cyberbullying

guidelines for senior management team



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MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



Co-financed by the European Union
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what is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is one particular form of bullying, but it doesn't sit on its own. It is bullying that is enabled, enhanced, or in some way, mediated through digital technology. Due to the increase in the use of social media, students may find themselves more easily drawn into initiating or being part of bullying behaviour in the digital environment. The ease of using technology and the influence of their peers can be a factor in this, and can create a disruptive environment within the schools.

Some argue that schools should not be responsible for what happens outside of school. However if the students being bullied and bullying others are attending the same or different schools, then it seems inevitable that some of the problems will leak over during class time or occur on school property. Cyberbullying presents new challenges because it can start outside of school and carries on in school or vice versa. Thus, it is important that both parents/guardians and educators in schools have to do their utmost to avoid these undesired behaviours. It is the parents/guardians' responsibility to monitor the technological use of their children once away from school, whilst it is the teaching staff's duties to take note and pass on any information regarding any incidents concerning cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying also presents different challenges because it manifests itself differently from face to face bullying.

For example:

1. repetition — can be influenced by the ability of a single action to spread and be repeated rapidly to a wider audience and with a degree of permanence (e.g. forwarding texts/videos/pictures)
2. power imbalance — is created through the anonymity of the person initiating the cyberbullying; or the person's ability to use technology in a manipulative way
3. anonymity — can involve people who have never physically met; do not know each other and / or people who share no common acquaintances.

Purpose of these guidelines

Schools already deal with cyberbullying through the Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy under the umbrella the 'Respect for all Framework' and can make use of the procedures found on:

<https://goo.gl/t4DtYD>

However the ever increasing number of cyberbullying cases is causing diverse challenges to schools and their staff.

The aim of these guidelines is to help Senior Management Team deal effectively with this phenomena for the wellbeing of all students.

Definition of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a form of aggression conducted by an individual or a group against others. Such behaviour is committed via electronic means. A person can be also ostracised from electronic communities or interactions.

Cyberbullying includes (but is not limited to) communicating via electronic means with the objective of causing hurt, fear, embarrassment, humiliation, alarm and/or distress to one or more persons.

Cyberbullying can be carried out on commonly used devices such as smart phones and any electronic device that is connected to the internet.

Examples of cyberbullying include:

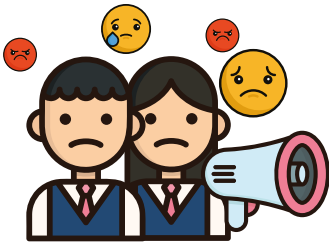
- ⦿ A deliberate act of leaving a person out from online conversations and tagging other friends but the person in question (exclusion).
- ⦿ Intentionally sending abusive or threatening messages (harassment).
- ⦿ Logging onto a person's social networking account and impersonating him/her by posting inappropriate content (fraping).
- ⦿ Sending or posting cruel information about someone to damage their reputation (dissing).
- ⦿ Stealing someone's online identity, usually photos, and re-creating them on social networking profiles for deceptive purposes (catfishing).

Standards of Procedures



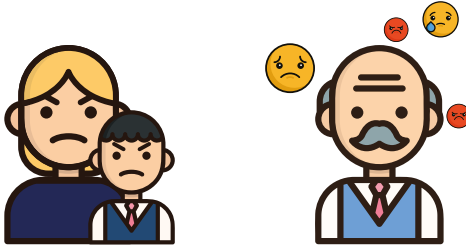
Educators reporting cyberbullying

- ◉ Educators should report immediately to SMT.
- ◉ The SMT informs parents or custodians of the concerned student
- ◉ If the incident takes place during school hours, the SMT is to keep a record of the incident using the report template, found online or as a hard copy in the Addressing Bullying behaviour in schools: Procedures Appendix B.
- ◉ The SMT should ensure that the parents or guardians are given the necessary support and guidelines when necessary. The information or guidelines that can be given to parents or guardians is the following:
 - they can make a report at the police station if they want to take legal procedures,
 - report directly to the Anti-Bullying service,
 - keep all the evidence related to the case.
- ◉ The SMT can decide to take disciplinary action against the person that is continues the bullying in school in accordance with the school or college disciplinary policy.
- ◉ When the SMT is further concerned about the safety of the student/s, they are to inform APPOGG about this incident.



Students reporting cyberbullying themselves

- ◉ The SMT informs the guidance teachers or counsellors and ensures that the support is given to the students involved.
- ◉ The SMT should ensure that the parents or guardians are given the necessary support and guidelines when necessary. The information or guidelines that can be given to parents or guardians is the following:
 - they can make a report at the police station if they want to take legal procedures,
 - report directly to the Anti-Bullying service,
 - keep all the evidence related to the case.
- ◉ The SMT should encourage the person who received the report to keep a record of the incident using the report template, found online or as a hard copy in the Addressing Bullying behaviour in schools: Procedures Appendix B.
- ◉ When the SMT is further concerned about the safety of the student/s, they are to inform APPOGG about this incident.
- ◉ The SMT can decide to take disciplinary action against the person that is continues the bullying in school in accordance with the school or college disciplinary policy.



Cyberbullying of Educators by parents/guardians/caregivers or students

- ⦿ The SMT should encourage the Educator concerned to keep any evidence of cyber bullying.
- ⦿ The SMT is to advise the educator concerned to file a report at the nearest police station.
- ⦿ The SMT can decide to take disciplinary action against students (within the school) who are responsible for cyber bullying in accordance with the school or college disciplinary policy.
- ⦿ The SMT should inform his superiors about the case
- ⦿ The SMT ensures that the Educator concerned is given the correct guidelines on how to seek help and support through the Employment Support Scheme.

Important things to remember

1. If an adult is carrying out cyberbullying on children, this is a criminal offence and thus parents or guardians should be informed immediately about the case and a report should be lodged with the police.
2. If an educator is carrying out cyberbullying on a student, the SMT should immediately inform the College Principal/The Secretariat for Curia and decide on a plan of action.
3. If the cyberbullying is being carried out by a MEDE employee, the PSC Disciplinary Regulations come into force

Schools or colleges who require information sessions for educators, parents/guardians or/and students about issues related to cyberbullying may book a session on <http://www.besmartonline.org.mt/request-talk>

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