St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Cyber Bullying Policy

Introduction

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School embraces the advantages of modern technology in terms of the educational benefits it brings, however the school is mindful of the potential for bullying to occur. Central to the School's anti-bullying policy is the belief that 'all pupils have a right not to be bullied' and that 'bullying is always unacceptable'. The School also recognises that it must 'take note of bullying perpetrated outside School which spills over into the School'. Under powers granted by the EIA 2006, the Head is able to police cyber-bullying or any bullying aspects carried out by pupils even at home.

Definition of Cyber Bullying

Cyber-bullying is an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself/herself.

By cyber-bullying, we mean bullying by electronic media:

- Bullying by texts or messages or calls on mobile phones
- The use of mobile phone cameras to cause distress, fear or humiliation
- Posting threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating material on websites, to include blogs, personal websites, social networking sites
- Using e-mail to message others
- Hijacking/cloning e-mail accounts
- Making threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating remarks in chat rooms, to include Facebook and Youtube .

Legal issues

Cyber-bullying is generally criminal in character. The law applies to cyberspace.

- It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information in any media including internet sites.
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by public means of a public electronic communications network, a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or one of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.

Policy

At St Matthew's we educate our pupils both in the proper use of telecommunications and about the serious consequences of cyber-bullying and will, through PSHE, E-Safety, Computing lessons and assemblies continue to inform and educate its pupils in these fast changing areas.

We train our staff to respond effectively to reports of cyber-bullying or harassment and have systems in place to respond to it. At St Matthew's we endeavour to block access to inappropriate web sites, using firewalls, antivirus protection and filtering systems and no pupil is allowed to work on the internet in the Computing suite or any other location within the school which may from time to time be used for such work, without a member of staff present. Whilst education and guidance remain at the heart of what we do, we reserve the right to take action against those who take part in cyber-bullying.

- All bullying is damaging but cyber-bullying and harassment can be invasive of privacy at all times. These acts may also be criminal acts.
- We support victims and, when necessary, will work with the Police to detect those involved in criminal acts.
- We will use, as appropriate, the full range of sanctions to correct, punish or remove pupils who bully fellow pupils or harass staff in this way, both in and out of school.
- We will use its power of confiscation where necessary to prevent pupils from committing crimes or misusing equipment.
- All members of the School community are aware they have a duty to bring to the attention of the Head any example of cyber-bullying or harassment that they know about or suspect.

Guidance for staff

If you suspect or are told about a cyber-bullying incident, follow the protocol outlined below:

Mobile Phones

All pupil mobile phones have to be handed in to the office first thing in the morning but if you suspect an incident has taken place:

- Ask the pupil to show you the mobile phone
- Note clearly everything on the screen relating to an inappropriate text message or image, to include the date, time and names
- Make a transcript of a spoken message, again record date, times and names
- Tell the pupil to save the message/image
- Go with the pupil and see the Head, or in his absence, a member of the Senior Leadership Team

Computers

- Ask the pupil to get up on-screen the material in question
- Ask the pupil to save the material
- Print off the offending material straight away
- Make sure you have got all pages in the right order and that there are no omissions
- Accompany the pupil, taking the offending material, to see the Head or Deputy
- Normal procedures to interview pupils and to take statements will then be followed particularly if a child protection issue is presented.

Guidance for pupils

If you believe you or someone else is the victim of cyber-bullying, you must speak to an adult as soon as possible. This person could be a parent/guardian, your tutor, your matron or the Head.

- Do not answer abusive messages but log and report them
- Do not delete anything until it has been shown to a member of staff or a parents/guardian (even if it is upsetting, the material is important evidence which may need to be used later as proof of cyber-bullying)
- Do not give out personal details
- Never reply to abusive e-mails
- Never reply to someone you do not know
- Stay in public areas in chat rooms

Guidance for parents

It is vital that parents and the school work together to ensure that all pupils are aware of the serious consequences of getting involved in anything that might be seen to be cyber-bullying. At St Matthew's we inform parents of our cyber-bullying policy and the procedures in place to deal with cyber-bullying.

- Parents can help by making sure their child understands the school's policy and, above all, how seriously St Matthew's takes incidents of cyber-bullying
- Parents should also explain to their children legal issues relating to cyber-bullying
- If parents believe their child is the victim of cyber-bullying, they should save the offending material (if need be by saving an offensive text on their or their child's mobile phone) and make sure they have all relevant information before deleting anything
- Parents should contact the Head as soon as possible. A meeting can then be arranged with the Head, which may involve other relevant members of staff
- If the incident falls during a holidays we reserve the right to take action against bullying perpetrated outside the school which spills over into the school.

E-Safety at home

Several sites offer helpful advice to parents, particularly with respect to how they can best monitor their child's use of the computer at home. Links to useful sites are available on the school website. Additional important and useful information can be found on the following site:

www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/safeguarding-learners/Safeguarding-learners-content/Parents-and-carers/