

## Teacher Resource Notes & Background Information: Cyberbullying

### • Chat/Text translators

Teachers may like to visit either of these Text (SMS) and Chat translation online sites before the class or note their URLs for future use:

[www.transl8it.com/cgi-win/index.pl](http://www.transl8it.com/cgi-win/index.pl)

[www.netlingo.com/inframes.cfm](http://www.netlingo.com/inframes.cfm)

### • Anti-bullying videos

Running a search on **YouTube.com** for '**AD COUNCIL Cyberbullying-Talent Show**' could be a useful starting point for teachers. (The other **US AD COUNCIL** videos in their 'Think before you post' campaign are good resources also.)

### • YouTube.com

In collaboration with Beatbullying.org has set up an anti-bullying site: [www.youtube.com/user/beatbullying](http://www.youtube.com/user/beatbullying)

- The Department of Education & Science publication '*Guidelines for Countering Bullying Behaviour*' for Primary and Post Primary schools is available at: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

## What is Cyberbullying?

Adapted from Nancy Willard's 'Educator's Guide to Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats' <http://cyberbully.org> © 2005-07

Cyberbullies use the Internet or mobile phones to send hurtful messages or post information to damage people's reputation and friendships. Cyberbullying is similar to other types of bullying, except it takes place online and through text messages sent to mobile phones. Cyberbullies can be classmates, online acquaintances, and even anonymous users, but most often they do know their victims.

### Some examples of ways teenagers bully online are:

- Sending someone mean or threatening emails, instant messages, or text messages.
- Excluding someone from an instant messenger friends/buddy list or blocking their email for no reason.
- Tricking someone into revealing personal or embarrassing information and sending it to others.
- Breaking into someone's email or instant message account to send cruel or untrue messages while posing as that person.
- Creating websites to make fun of another person such as a classmate or teacher.
- Using websites to rate peers as prettiest, ugliest, etc.

Both boys and girls sometimes bully online and just as in face-to-face bullying, tend to do so in different ways.

Boys more commonly bully by sending messages of a sexual nature or by threatening to fight or hurt someone. Girls more often bully by spreading rumours, sending messages that make fun of someone or exclude others. They also tell secrets.

## Different types of Cyberbullying

Some examples of different types of cyberbullying:

- Repeatedly sending hurtful, insulting and nasty messages to another.  
e.g. Anne was being bullied by another student in her class, she checked her mobile when she came home from school to find 30 hurtful messages, some from total strangers.
- "Dissing" someone online. Sending or posting rumours or gossip about someone to damage his or her reputation or friendships.  
e.g. A group of girls created a 'We Hate John' website where they posted rumours, spiteful comments, cartoons, and gossip etc, all dissing John.
- Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material intended to get that person in trouble, or to damage that person's reputation or friendships.  
e.g. Joan looked over Emma's shoulder as she logged on to her website and discovered her password. Later Joan logged on to Emma's site and sends a mean message to Emma's boyfriend, Paul.
- Sharing another person's secrets or embarrassing information or images online  
e.g. Using his mobile phone, George took a picture of Shane while Shane was changing after P.E. in the school locker room. Within a short time the picture had been sent to several phones in the school.
- Tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, then sharing it online.  
e.g. Katie sent a message to Maria, pretending to be her friend and asking rather personal questions to which Maria responded honestly, sharing some personal information. Katie forwarded the responses to others with the comment, 'Maria is a loser.'
- Someone is deliberately and cruelly excluded from an online group.  
e.g. Natalie tries hard to be included in a group of girls in school. She recently got on the wrong side of the leader of the group. Now Natalie has been blocked from the friendship links of the other girls in the group.
- Repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.  
e.g. When Jackie broke up with Paul, he sent her many angry, threatening, pleading messages. He spread hurtful rumours about her to her friends and posted online an inappropriate photograph of her (which she had given him when they were together), along with her email address and mobile phone number.

## Why might young people cyberbully others?

Here are some responses to that question, given by young people:

- Many don't think it is a big deal; it can be the result of not thinking and sending something as a joke which may be deeply upsetting to the recipient. They think it is funny, they are only 'messing' or joking they say.
- They have a lack of awareness or don't think about the consequences, they may say something hurtful about another pupil that they don't expect to be forwarded or viewed outside their immediate group.
- Encouraged to do so by friends
- Think that everybody cyberbullies
- Think that they won't get caught,
- It is an anonymous way of 'getting at' someone
- Jealousy / Resentment / Revenge
- To be part of the group
- Being dared by others to do so

## The effects of Cyberbullying

Victims of cyberbullying may experience many of the same effects as children who are bullied in person, such as a drop in marks or grades, low self-esteem, a change in interests, or depression. However cyberbullying can seem more extreme to its victims because of several factors.

### Cyberbullying

Occurs in the child's home and personal space day or night: Being bullied at home can take away the place children feel most safe.

Can be harsher: Often teens say things online that they wouldn't say in person, mainly because they can't see the other person's reaction.

Far-reaching: Teenagers can send emails making fun of someone to their entire class or school with a few clicks, or post them on a website for the whole world to see, forever. The worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for a child to cope with online bullying.

Anonymity: Cyberbullies often hide behind screen names and email addresses that don't identify who they are. Not knowing who is responsible for bullying messages can add to a victim's insecurity.

May seem inescapable: It may seem easy to an adult how to get away from a cyberbully- just get offline- but for some teenagers not going online takes away one of the major places they socialise.

Children who are cyberbullied report feeling angry, hurt, embarrassed or scared. These reactions can cause the victims to react in such ways as:

- Seeking revenge on the bully
- Avoiding friends and activities
- Cyberbullying back

## What to do if you are cyberbullied?

- Tell your parents or a trusted adult.
- Do not retaliate. This only feeds into the cyberbully and could make other people think you are part of the problem.
- Try to ignore the cyberbully.
- Block the bully from your site.
- Save the evidence. Keep a record of every message but do not reply to any bullying messages.
- Show or give the record of the bullying messages to your parents

### If the cyberbullying persists and gets worse, your parent or a trusted adult can:

- File a complaint with the website, ISP, or mobile phone company. There is generally a link on the website's home page for reporting concerns.
- Contact the Gardai if the cyberbullying includes any threats.

## Responding to Cyberbullying

### The School

Schools already deal with bullying through their anti-bullying policies and procedures, they can respond to cyberbullying in the following ways:

- Supporting the person being bullied. Offer support and reassurance; tell the child that he/she has done the right thing in telling. Refer to any pastoral support or procedures in the school. Inform parents.
- Help the child to keep relevant evidence for investigation by taking screen shots or printing webpages and by not deleting mobile messages. Show the child how to prevent it happening again by-
  - changing password and contact details, blocking contacts, reporting abuse on site.
  - ensure that the child knows not to retaliate or return the message.
  - encourage the child to keep personal information private online.

### Investigating incidents

- Investigate and record all bullying incidents. If the person responsible for the content is known, ask them to remove it.
- Try and keep a record of the bullying as evidence.
- Report the abuse to the social networking site; block the sender on a mobile phone.
- Use the guidelines of the school's Acceptable Use Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Behaviour and Discipline Policy to determine the actions and sanctions that are appropriate.



## Peers and Friends

Encourage the child who is being bullied to:

- Get help from parents, from the school counsellor, principal, or a teacher they can talk to at school.

Support the child who is being bullied:

- Bystanders and witnesses can comfort the victim and support them. Speaking up in a calm supportive way, but *not* retaliating online, will let the bullies know that their behaviour is being noted and not condoned.
- Bystanders can speak up to a trusted adult, telling a teacher in school if a classmate is being bullied online in a school related site.

Bystanders have a critical role to play in creating an anti-bullying environment. In a social networking website linked to a school this is an important role fellow students, especially older students can play. Teachers can acknowledge the power of the bystander and encourage them to report an incident of bullying. Bystanders need to understand that by observing the bullying and not taking action they are condoning the bullies' behaviour.

## Preventing Cyberbullying in your school

The best way to prevent cyberbullying is to treat it as a whole school community issue and another form of bullying within the school's anti-bullying policies and procedures. We teach students that bullying is wrong. We should help them understand that cyberbullying is hurtful and wrong and to always treat others on and offline with the respect we would like from others.

- Inform and educate students and parents of the school's Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) and the sanctions for the misuse of ICTs to cause hurt and distress to other students.
- Teach students that they have rights *and* responsibilities online.
- Teach students that the Internet is not a private place and they should guard their private information online.
- Promote the positive use of technology, discuss netiquette, personal safety issues and digital literacy.
- Encourage a 'telling' atmosphere, make reporting of cyberbullying easier. Provide and publicise different ways of reporting cyberbullying in the school.
- Review anti-bullying policies, keep them up-to-date. Promote anti-bullying (including cyberbullying) awareness days and events.
- Encourage students to make friends and promote positive well being and a supportive atmosphere in the school

## Advice for Students - ways of avoiding Cyberbullying

- Treat others that you meet online with the same respect that you would like to be given and the same respect that you give others when you meet them in person

- Don't give out private information such as passwords, pin numbers, addresses, phone numbers, or personal details. Don't even reveal your password to your friends. Personal and private information should be kept private as unfortunately it can be misused by bullies and other harmful people on the Internet.
- Think before you post personal pictures online, it's online forever, so be sure that you would be comfortable with your parents, grandparents, teacher or anybody seeing it, this week, next year or in 30 years time.
- Don't post pictures of others without their permission or give out their e-mail addresses or mobile phone numbers to people you meet on the Internet.
- Don't say or post anything that might cause you embarrassment in the future or which could be used by a bully to embarrass you online. As a general rule, if you wouldn't say it to your gran or granddad, don't say it online.
- If you use instant messaging, don't accept messages from people you don't know, don't add people to your buddy list unless you know them personally.
- Don't send a message when you are angry—it's hard to undo things that are said in anger.
- Do delete messages from people you don't know, or those from people who seem angry or mean.
- Learn to recognise the signs. When something doesn't seem right, it probably isn't. Never hop on the band-wagon or join in with bullying behaviour.
- Understand that by doing nothing about bullying that you witness you are condoning bullying behaviour. Take action, tell an adult.
- Learn how to block and report certain people in chat rooms and also how to save or print a copy of a conversation in case your parents need to report it.
- Realise that online conversations are not private. Others can copy, print and share any comments or pictures you post.

## Be careful online!