Cyber Bullying Policy on a page

Bourne Alliance Multi Academy Trust

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying offline, online bullying can be constant and follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and mobile phones.

Cyberbullying can present in many forms and provides opportunities for group perpetrators to take action, where multiple people are involved in bullying and/or isolating a victim through exclusion. These group dynamics can empower members to carry out and escalate their abusive actions.

The motivations to cyberbully are the same as other forms of bullying however, the online world provides a much wider medium for it to take place. Perpetrators may be motivated by thinking their actions will lead to or retain popularity with others and/or feeling powerful from witnessing the fear/hurt of their victims. They may, but not always, also have low self-esteem and are unable to empathise with their victims.

'Patterning' is an increasing issue for children; this is where children film child on child assaults and share the footage online,

Preventing cyber bullying

Education is key to ensure that all pupils understand what it is and what to do if they become aware of it happening to them or others and how to report this (whether they are the victim or a witness). PSHE/SRE will provide opportunities to discuss bullying, including online bullying – why it occurs, the forms it takes and how it will be addressed.

Teachers will find opportunities to use retrieve and reinforce the teaching around cyber bullying and online safety throughout the curriculum. Resources can be found on National Online Safety.
All staff, governors and volunteers (where appropriate) receive training on cyber-bullying, its impact and ways to support pupils, as part of safeguarding training.

Responding to cyber bullying

Our schools will:

- Act as soon as an incident has been reported or identified.
- Provide support to those involved (all parties)
- Take all available steps where possible to identify the person responsible.
- Work with the individuals and online service providers to prevent the incident from spreading and assist in removing offensive or upsetting material from circulation.
- Ensure that sanctions are applied to the person responsible for the cyberbullying; the school will take steps to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully, as well as ensuring access to any additional help that they may need.
- Inform the police if a criminal offence has been committed.
- Report to the LA using Report Racial and Bullying Incidents - KELSI

If a staff member **suspects** a device may contain an indecent image of a child (also known as a nude or semi-nude image), they will:

- **Not** view the image
- Confiscate the device and report the incident to the DSL (or equivalent) immediately, who will decide what to do next.

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard. Our school recognise that whilst AI provides opportunities to support learning and workload, it also has the potential to be used to bully others. For example, in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real.

See also

- Harmful content policy
- Searching, screening and confiscation policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Safeguarding and child protection policy

For some terminology which could be used – see page 5

Bourne Alliance
Multi Academy Trust

Policy document for: **Cyber bulling (online bullying)**
Due for review: Spring 2026

This policy forms part of the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and online safety policy and gives specific school actions in relation to their context.

Additions/amendments in this version

Jan 25	*Logging and dealing with online bullying added*
June 25	*Terminology which may be used added*

Linked guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education

Staff must remember contextual safeguarding. When considering safeguarding incident or behaviour concerns, all assessments must consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. This is an approach to understanding and responding to children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. This includes online abuse.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying offline, online bullying can be constant and follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and mobile phones. There is legislation in place to help tackle cyber bullying.

- *Section 1 of Malicious Communications Act 1988* it is an offence for any person to send another person a letter, electronic communication or article of any description which intends to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient. This offence carries a maximum sentence of 2 years imprisonment
- *Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003* makes it an offence to transmit any 'message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character' sent by means of a public electronic communications network. It also makes it an offence to purposefully cause annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety by sending an electronic message which is known to be false or persistently send messages to cause annoyance. It can be difficult to identify the perpetrators but conviction for this offence could result in up to 6 months in prison and a fine
- *Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006* requires that State schools in England must produce a Behaviour Policy or additional policy which states the strategy for the management of anti-bullying. The Act charges schools with: 'encouraging good behaviour and respect for others on the part of pupils and, in particular, preventing all forms of bullying among pupils'. develop and implement effective anti-bullying strategies. These anti-bullying strategies should also stipulate each organisation's policy relating to the prevention of cyberbullying as well as offline forms of bullying. Anti-bullying and Cyberbullying policies may regulate the behaviour of pupils when they are not in the educational setting or under the control of a teacher to an extent that is reasonable.

Cyberbullying can present in many forms including:

- Communications that are abusive and / or threatening;
- Abusive social media comments / posts;
- Sharing images designed to humiliate a person, including sexual images;
- Spreading false information / rumours;
- Anonymous posting / messaging / trolling;
- Harassment;
- Encouraging self-harm;
- Impersonating someone with the purpose of humiliating or causing distress/harm.

Cyberbullying also provides opportunities for group perpetrators to take action, where multiple people are involved in bullying and/or isolating a victim through exclusion. These group dynamics can empower members to carry out and escalate their abusive actions.

The motivations to cyberbully are the same as other forms of bullying however, the online world provides a much wider medium for it to take place. Perpetrators may be motivated by thinking their actions will lead to or retain popularity with others and/or feeling powerful from witnessing the fear/hurt of their victims. They may, but not always, also have low self-esteem and are unable to empathise with their victims.

Patterning

'Patterning', is a term used to describe behaviour where children film child-on-child violent assaults and share the footage on social media platforms. The practice of 'patterning' is specifically carried out with the deliberate intention of embarrassing victims even further by making the video footage across the web. This is an increasing issue.

'Patterning' is an extension of bullying by individual bullies and/or gangs seeking power and attention who, by using social media, are able to publicly ridicule victims beyond the confines of the playground to national and international audiences. Patterning is seen as 'sport', an amusement for the perpetrators without any consideration of the impact sharing such footage has on their victims.

Lots of approaches to tackling this issue have already been tried, with success. Approaches that have strong evidence of success include:

- Mentoring (where a mentor works closely with an individual to give advice and help to identify and solve problems) can prevent future behavioural problems if it is done well.
- Bullying prevention Anti-bullying programmes (for example, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme and KiVa10) can reduce reported victimisation.
- Improving social skills Improving social skills can strengthen school attachment and raise achievement, and can also reduce anti-social / aggressive behaviour and prevent future violence. Involving parents
- Programmes that work with both parents and young people have been shown to be successful in reducing behavioural problems and preventing violence.
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) Well-administered CBT (for example, anger-coping skills training, problem-solving skills training) has been shown to be effective in addressing aggression and conduct disorders in pre-adolescents.

Preventing cyber bulling

To help prevent cyber-bullying, we will ensure that pupils understand what it is and what to do if they become aware of it happening to them or others. We will ensure that pupils know how they can report any incidents and are encouraged to do so, including where they are a witness rather than the victim.

We share the National Online Safety poster for online bullying with the children with our families as well as our children (see Appendix 2).

The school will actively discuss cyber-bullying with pupils, explaining the reasons why it occurs, the forms it may take and what the consequences can be. This will be covered in class as part of PSHE lessons (or during other curriculum time) and the issue will be addressed in assemblies.

Teaching staff are also encouraged to find opportunities to use aspects of the curriculum to cover cyber-bullying. This includes personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, and other subjects where appropriate. Resources can be found on National Online Safety to support best practice and address teacher workload.

All staff, governors and volunteers (where appropriate) receive training on cyber-bullying, its impact and ways to support pupils, as part of safeguarding training.

Responding to cyber bulling

In relation to a specific incident of cyber-bullying, the schools will follow the processes set out in this policy. Where illegal, inappropriate or harmful material has been spread among pupils, the school will use all reasonable endeavours to ensure the incident is contained.

Staff must remain aware that cyberbullying is bullying.

The DSL will consider whether the incident should be reported to the police if it involves illegal material, and will work with external services if it is deemed necessary to do so.

When responding to cyberbullying concerns, our schools will:

- Act as soon as an incident has been reported or identified.
- Provide support to those involved (all parties):
    - Reinforce the message to the victim that they should never respond or retaliate to the bullying
    - Support the victim to block and report the accounts
    - Talking through privacy settings to prevent new accounts from making contact;
    - Encourage the person being bullied to keep any evidence (screenshots) of the bullying activity to assist any investigation.
    - Helping those involved to think carefully about what private information they may have in the public domain.
    - Consider the possible impact the cyberbullying content may have had on victims e.g. lowering of self-esteem/self-worth, self-harm and put support in place to address this through internal/external agencies
- Take all available steps where possible to identify the person responsible. This may include:
    - looking at use of the school systems;
    - identifying and interviewing possible witnesses;
    - Contacting the service provider and the police, if necessary.
- Work with the individuals and online service providers to prevent the incident from spreading and assist in removing offensive or upsetting material from circulation. This may include:
    - Support reports to a service provider to remove content if those involved are unable to be identified or if those involved refuse to or are unable to delete content.
    - Confiscating and searching pupils' electronic devices, such as mobile phones, in accordance with the law and the Trust **searching, screening and confiscation policy**
    - Requesting the deletion of locally-held content and content posted online if they contravene school behavioural policies.

- Ensure that sanctions are applied to the person responsible for the cyberbullying; the school will take steps to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully, as well as ensuring access to any additional help that they may need.
- Inform the police if a criminal offence has been committed.
- Report the incident to the Local Authority using Report Racial and Bullying Incidents - KELSI

Logging and dealing with online bullying

(Added January 2025)

The wide range of stages of development and experiences out of school means that there are some children who use racist, discriminatory or derogatory language (including swearing) in an echolalic manner (repeat words they have heard) and these are used out of context i.e. without intent to cause harm. However, this does not mean that the victim in the incident has not been offended – both factors are considered by the staff when logging the incident and responding appropriately.

Monitoring by the senior teams

CPOMS has 2 flags in the Trust schools – contextual or non-contextual so that the senior staff can undertake monitoring of incidents to ensure that these are dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

DSL meetings and/or SLT meetings are used to monitor incidents and discussed. This is then recorded in the meeting minutes and/or on the CPOMS incident so that this is clear and any next steps are identified to ensure that incidents are dealt with fairly and consistently by all staff.

Examining electronic devices

See the searching, screening and confiscation policy.

Nude/semi nude images

If a staff member **suspects** a device may contain an indecent image of a child (also known as a nude or semi-nude image), they will:

- **Not** view the image
- Confiscate the device and report the incident to the DSL (or equivalent) immediately, who will decide what to do next. The DSL will make the decision in line with the DfE's latest guidance on screening, searching and confiscation and the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) guidance on sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people

If an incident of indecent image sharing is shared by the pupil, then staff must

- Not respond in any way which may make the child feel blamed or shamed;
- Do not ask the child to delete the image or take action to delete it;
- Explain to the child that this needs to be reported and that support will be offered;
- Report the incident to a DSL immediately;
- If viewed, inform the DSL this has happened e.g. if a child shows you an image without detailing its content before sharing it;
- Do not view, copy, print, share or store the image or request the child to share or download the image. This is illegal.

Report Remove (iwf.org.uk) is a tool which young people aged over 13 can ask to have an image removed. This information can be shared with parents/carers to enable the image to be removed where it is illegal.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard.

BA MAT recognises that AI has many uses to help pupils learn, but may also have the potential to be used to bully others. For example, in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real. Our schools will treat any use of AI to bully pupils in line with this policy and the behaviour policy.

Some terminology which may be used

Some pupils will use terms such as these listed below without having any idea what they mean, or mean to use them in a hurtful way or may mean to use a different word. Use of such terminology will always be explored by staff without assumption.

Staff are advised that if you hear pupils using a term you don't recognise, you can ask them what they mean, and then check to see if the pupil is using the word correctly.

If the term is potentially an offensive one, you can ask them:

- "Do you know that some people might be offended by that word/phrase?"
- "Do you know why it might be a bad idea to say that?"

Language related to cyber-bullying, harassment and cyber crime

Cyber-stalking	Using the internet or text messages to repeatedly harass or bully someone – often using multiple apps and platforms and multiple accounts.
Doxing / Doxxing	Publicly posting someone's private information (e.g. their name, address, place of work or school), usually without their consent. This information might be used to harass the person further.
Dogpiling	When a group of people, usually a large group, target a single person with harassment.
Griefing	Deliberately trying to ruin other people's fun in online games (e.g. blowing up another player's house in Minecraft).
Finsta	'Fake Insta/Fake Instagram' – this may mean a second, private, Instagram account for sharing more personal content with a trusted group of friends, **or** a second Instagram account made to look like another person, either to impersonate them or bully them. This is also known as a 'sock puppet account'.
KYS	Stands for 'kill yourself', used to harass or upset others.
Phishing	A kind of scam where criminals trick targets into giving up personal information (including bank details or account passwords).
Ratio / Ratio'ing	When a negative response to a social media post gets far more positive engagement than the original post.
Troll / Trolling	Deliberately saying hurtful or inflammatory things to get a response from someone, or a group of people.
Sub-tweeting	Negatively talking about someone publicly on social media without tagging them in a post, so the person might not see it. It's most common on X (formerly Twitter) but can happen on other platforms.
Swatting	Calling emergency services (usually the police) and falsely claiming a serious crime is happening at someone else's home (e.g. a bomb threat or a hostage situation), with the intent of police arriving at the person's house. This is done to harass and frighten someone.

Impact assessment

An initial impact assessment has been carried out for this policy and is graded as follows:

A	Positive impact is explicitly intended and very likely
B	**An adverse impact is unlikely, and on the contrary the policy has the clear potential to have a positive impact by reducing and removing barriers and inequalities that currently exist**
C	An adverse impact is unlikely. On the contrary there is potential to reduce barriers and inequalities that currently exist. There is insufficient evidence, however, for this assessment to be made with as much confidence as is desirable
D	Adverse impact is unlikely, but positive impact is also unlikely
E	Adverse impact is probable or certain, since certain groups will be disadvantaged, either proportionately or absolutely, or both. Remedial action is therefore necessary