

What can schools do?

The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 requires all schools to have an Anti-Bullying Policy, which has been drawn up in consultation with registered pupils and their parents or carers. This law also places a duty on the Board of Governors of schools to "safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils".

The Department of Education has provided schools with guidance on the acceptable use of internet and digital technologies in schools. Schools must ensure that pupils are taught to use technology in a safe, responsible and legal way.

Most cases of cyber bullying happen outside school, meaning schools are not always able to take direct action. However, as the effects can be seen in the classroom it is important that parents make schools aware of any incidents of cyber bullying their child is experiencing. In the first instance you should contact your child's teachers or form tutor and speak to him or her about the issue.



* Is it against the law?

There are pieces of legislation which may provide protection from cyber bullying under the criminal law. It is important that children and young people are reminded of their responsibilities to use technology in a safe and legal way.

It is important to report serious incidents of cyber bullying to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). When discussing the matter with the Police Officer it is important to highlight any evidence that exists. You should print out any website pages, store any texts and make sure not to delete any voicemail messages. You might like to talk to your local PSNI Neighbourhood Policing Team before making an official report.

* Further Support

If you are worried about a cyber bullying incident, you may find it helpful to talk to someone about it before deciding what action to take. You can call the Parenting NI helpline on **0808 8010 722**.

For links to helpful websites and details of organisations that can offer support, please visit the NIABF website at...

www.endbullying.org.uk

What is cyber bullying?



Information for parents and carers



Northern Ireland
Anti-Bullying Forum

The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum defines bullying as the **repeated** use of power by one or more persons **intentionally** to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights or needs of another or others. Cyber bullying is bullying that takes place through the use of technology, such as mobile phones and the internet. This could include:

- * Posting hurtful, embarrassing or threatening material on social networking websites.
- * Sending nasty text messages or leaving rude voicemails on a mobile phone.
- * Excluding someone from an online game.
- * Sharing, or threatening to share, embarrassing or inappropriate photos of videos to humiliate someone.
- * Setting up fake profiles on a social network to make fun of others.

How big is the problem?

A study carried out by the Department of Education in 2011 showed that 15.5% of pupils in Year 6 (9-10 years old) and 17% of pupils in Year 9 (12-13 years old) had experienced cyber bullying recently. For both sets of children most of the bullying took place through text messaging and social networking websites.

Top tips for parents

* Preventing Cyber Bullying

- Be aware of what cyber bullying is and how it can happen.
- Agree rules for using computers and mobile phones with your children, including what they should do if they think they are experiencing cyber bullying.
- Make sure your child knows how they should behave online. Talk to them about 'netiquette', reminding them about having good manners when using the internet or mobile phone.
- Try to discourage young people from having a computer or mobile phone in their bedroom at night. Perhaps you could set up a "charging station" in the kitchen to charge phones overnight.
- Talk to your child about cyber bullying, make sure they know what it is and how serious it is. Remind them that if they experience or witness cyber bullying they should talk to you or another adult about it.
- Remind your child that they should never give their password to anyone.
- As well as being at risk of experiencing cyber bullying, be aware that your child may also be involved in cyber bullying others.

* Responding to Cyber Bullying

- Make sure your child knows that they should talk to you if they are worried about behaviour they are experiencing online or through mobile phones.
- If your child tells you they are experiencing cyber bullying reassure them that it's not their fault and they have done the right thing by telling you. Listen to what they have to say and together agree the next steps to take.
- Make sure your child does not retaliate or reply to any of the offensive messages.
- Save all evidence of the cyber bullying that you have. Print out any emails or website pages that are relevant, and save any texts or voicemail messages.
- Remember, texts, email and messages on social networking sites don't always give you the full picture of what's going on. It's important to talk to your child about any offending messages to put them into context.
- 'Text speak' can seem like a different language, even to children and young people themselves. If your child shows you an offending message talk to them about what it actually means.
- Report any abuse you encounter to the website administrators or mobile phone company. Look out for reporting buttons on profiles and by posts on social networking websites.
- If the bullying is between pupils at the same school you should notify your child's teacher or Head of Year. Remember, most cyber bullying happens outside school therefore schools may not be able to act upon this.
- Consider reporting the incident to the PSNI. You can talk to your local PSNI Neighbourhood Policing Team before deciding on whether you want to make an official report.