



Online bullying and the protection of students

Advice for parents and carers



Research shows that school is one of the safest places for children and young people to access the internet.

What is online bullying?

Online, or cyberbullying, is an intentional, repeated behaviour by an individual or group to cause distress or undue pressure to others using technology.

Today's technology allows children to communicate instantly with others in both positive and negative ways.

Online bullying includes all communications that seek to threaten, humiliate, intimidate, control or put another person or persons down.

How does online bullying work?

Online bullying can be carried out through an internet service such as:

- email
- instant messaging
- chatroom
- discussion group or forum
- social networking websites such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter or YouTube.

Online bullying can also include bullying through mobile phones by:

- text and picture messaging
- video clips
- phone calls.

Online bullies can flame (repeatedly leave negative messages), harass, exclude or cyberstalk victims using these technologies.

What are schools doing to protect students?

Bullying requires whole-of-community solutions, and the Department supports schools and their communities to work together to prevent and respond to bullying.

Policies

All New South Wales public schools are required to have an Anti-bullying Plan that includes both prevention and response strategies.

Filters

The Department maintains a strict filtering system to ensure that all websites and emails viewed on school computers are appropriate for children. Anything not appropriate is automatically blocked.

Programs

There are a range of programs available in schools that promote positive relationships and support students. These include buddy and peer support programs, mentoring and transition programs and conflict resolution programs.

Bullying behaviour is specifically addressed through curriculum areas such as Personal Development, Health and Physical Education, Child Protection Education and Values Education also promote strategies to counter bullying.



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What can you do to protect your child?

Protecting your child from harm online is just as important as protecting them in the 'real' world. You can play an important role in helping your child to have safe and positive experiences online.

1. Talk to your child

Discuss online safety and reassure your child that you are there to help if they need it.

2. Provide safe and supervised access

Keep your family computer in a high traffic area so you can keep an eye on your child's technology use.

Install safety software on your computer. For example, anti-virus, spy ware, a firewall and filters.

Agree on some rules for internet use.

3. Monitor technology use

Take an interest in what your child is doing online.

Remind your child of 'stranger danger'. Your child might think they are talking to another child but it could be an adult.

4. Get involved and be aware

Has your child's behaviour changed recently? Are they spending more or less time online? Have your mobile phone bills suddenly increased?

Encourage your child to come to you if anybody says or does anything to make them feel uncomfortable.

5. Know the technologies that your child is using

This will help you to understand the risks and be able to talk to your child about what they do online.

6. Make sure that your child knows not to share personal information or photos

This includes their full name, mailing address, phone number, school name or other information that could allow someone to work out who they are, or where they live.

Help is available:

Your child's school

If you are aware of school-related online bullying issues, encourage your child to notify a trusted adult at school or notify the school yourself. New South Wales public schools are equipped to provide advice and support to help resolve this issue.

Offensive websites

If you are concerned about offensive websites, contact the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and they will investigate the matter. Complete an online form at www.acma.gov.au/hotline, or send an email to online@acma.gov.au, or phone 1800 880 176.

Report harassment and threats

Report incidents of online harassment to your local police and your Internet Service Provider (ISP). If your child is bullied through a mobile phone, report the problem to your phone service provider. They can help you block messages or calls from certain senders. If the problem continues, you may want to consider changing your number.

Helpline for parents and carers

For confidential support, call the Cyber Smart helpline on telephone 1800 880 176.

Helpline for children and young people

Confidential counselling is available for children and young people from the Kids Help Line on telephone 1800 551 800 or at www.kidshelpline.com.au

Other useful websites:

NSW Public Schools

www.schools.nsw.edu.au/news/technology

School A to Z – Practical help for parents (technology)

www.schoolsatoz.nsw.edu.au/technology

Cybersmart

www.cybersmart.gov.au/contacts

Bullying. No way!

www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

Lifeline

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