

JOHN COLET ANTI-BULLYING GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Please read this guide in conjunction with the anti-bullying policy, which is also available on our website.

We are firmly committed to working in partnership with parents and believe that the best outcomes emerge when professionals and parents/carers are able to work together when bullying occurs. We expect parents / carers to uphold our anti-bullying policy.

If your child tells us that they are being bullied, or we find out that they are bullying others, we will contact you and discuss with you how the situation can be improved.

What is bullying?

Bullying is any behaviour by an individual or group that:

- is meant to hurt – the person or people doing the bullying know what they are doing and mean to do it
- happens more than once – there will be a pattern of behaviour, not just a “one-off” incident
- involves an imbalance of power – the person being bullied will usually find it very hard to defend themselves

Bullying comes in many different forms including physical, verbal, sexual, indirect, prejudice related, or cyber bullying.



Spotting the signs of Bullying

You may be unsure if your child is being bullied. If you suspect this may be happening look out for the following signs. For example your child could:

- show signs of stress – being moody, silent or crying, or bullying a younger sibling or friend
- make excuses to miss school, such as stomach complaints or headaches (or your child may be skipping school altogether)
- seem upset after using the internet or mobile, or change their behaviour – for example, no longer wanting to look at new text messages immediately and be secretive and unwilling to talk about their online activities and phone use
- be withdrawn in their behaviour
- have more bruises or scrapes than usual
- change their eating habits
- have torn clothes, school things that are broken or missing, or have “lost” money
- sleep badly

There could be other reasons for these signs, so you need to ask yourself:

- Could there be anything else bothering your child?
- Could there be changes in your family life like a new baby, or divorce or separation that may be affecting your child's behaviour?

Who to contact about bullying

In the first instance, please contact: Tutor or Head of Year.

If you have any complaints about the way the school has responded, please follow: School complaints procedure, see school website

What to do if you think that your child is being bullied or is bullying anyone else:

- Listen and talk to your child. They may feel the situation is beyond their control or feel ashamed – whether they are bullied or bullying. Let them know you love them and want to help. Praise your child for telling you.
- Most importantly, do not encourage your child to retaliate. This may result in your child being disciplined in the same way as the bully. It also appears to your child that violent or threatening behaviour is an acceptable way of solving problems: moreover retaliation can perpetuate bullying.
- Collect any evidence e.g. who did what, when, and what was said and done. Keep any text messages, emails or website comments.
- Help your child to develop coping strategies and help to build their self-confidence.
- Make sure your child knows they are not to blame.
- Keep normal boundaries at home.
- Try and gauge what is going on. Find out about friendship groups and behaviour within these groups. If your child talks of bullying, please keep a written record.
- Be clear that it is important for the bullying to stop and that for this to happen the school will need to be involved.
- Involve and consult your child in making a plan for what should be done and how to talk to school.
- Please inform their Tutor or Head of Year immediately.
- Reassure your child that that the school will deal with the matter sensitively but firmly.
- Support your child. Do not seek conflict with the suspected bully or family. Use the school as an intermediary.

CYBER BULLYING

What is different about cyberbullying?

- Cyberbullying can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that have been previously regarded as safe or personal.
- The audience can be very large and reached rapidly. The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages means the scale and scope of cyberbullying can be greater than other forms of bullying. Electronically forwarded content is hard to control, and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for targets to move on
- People who cyberbully may attempt to remain anonymous. This can be extremely distressing for those bullied. The person cyberbullying may never be in the same physical space as their target.
- The profiles of the people bullying and being bullied are different. Cyberbullying can take place both between peers and across generations. Age and size are not important.
- Some instances of cyberbullying are known to be unintentional. It can be the result of not thinking or as a lack of awareness of the consequences – for example saying something negative online about another pupil, or friend that they don't expect to be forwarded or viewed outside their immediate group.
- In some cases it can constitute a criminal offence.
- As with face-to-face bullying, young people may suffer cyberbullying in silence for a number of reasons, including the fear that their Internet access or mobile phone access will be removed from them.

What the school does about cyberbullying:

- We have a policy regarding the use of mobile phones at school which is made clear to all students and parents
- Internet blocking technologies are used to protect students from inappropriate and harmful websites in school
- We aim to teach students about the risks involved with new communication technologies, how to use them safely and the consequences of their misuse
- We will work with the police and other agencies where necessary to manage cyberbullying
- We will work with students and parents/guardians to make sure that communication technologies are being used responsibly and that they know what steps to take if they are being bullied.

Cyberbullying is bullying by e-mail, over the phone, by text message and digital images, in chat rooms or on websites.

What you can do about cyberbullying

- Talk to your child about how to use technology safely. Discuss and promote “netiquette” – responsible online behaviour. You could show them web pages about how to stay safe online like childnet international’s <http://www.kidsmart.org.uk/> or CEOP’s <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>
- Consider restricting what sites and downloads your children can access.
- Become your child’s “friend” on Facebook or MSN. Have your child show you, or learn together, how to block someone on a chat service like MSN or how to report abuse to a website or service provider.
- Be aware that as well as being at risk, your child could also be involved in cyberbullying. Be alert to changes in your child’s behaviour – especially after using the internet or their mobile phone. Discuss the emotional impact of bullying on another person.
- Encourage your children to keep passwords safe. Treat your password like your toothbrush – don’t share it with anyone!
- Support and encourage your child if they tell you they’ve been cyberbullied – reassure them that it’s not their fault and that they’ve made the right choice by reporting it to you. Tell them that bullying is not acceptable and inform them of what you will do next by following the tips below.
- Make sure your child does not retaliate or reply to cyberbullying messages of any kind.
- Help your child to save evidence of cyberbullying. Use online tools or the “print screen” button on your computer and don’t delete text messages on a mobile phone.
- If you need to, you can help your child to change their contact details (email, online username, mobile phone number) to prevent further bullying. Denying them access to the technologies is not the answer.
- Use the security tools on your family’s computer, on websites or on your child’s mobile phone.
- Report cyberbullying. You can report the incident to the school, the website or service provider, and, in serious cases, the police. For a list of internet service providers, go to www.thinkbroadband.com/isps.html . Click on the name of your provider to find their contact page. Alternatively you can complain to the sender’s Internet Service Provider by writing abuse@ and then the name of the host, e.g. abuse@hotmail.com.