



Oak Park Primary School Cyber Bullying Policy



2017

Cyber Bullying Rationale

Technological change in education means we are facing the largest transformation of how our students receive, interact with and respond to learning experiences that the teaching profession has ever seen. These changes mean that schools and early childhood settings are now broader than the walls of a classroom. Teachers, students and parents are increasingly using digital technologies to teach, learn and communicate, challenging the traditional concept of a school.

Having said this, Oak Park Primary School will support students to develop the skills needed for critical evaluation, online collaboration and communication and behaviours which support the safe, responsible and ethical use of digital technologies – essential to participating in life and work in the 21st century.

What is Cyber Bullying?

Cyber bullying is when someone uses technology (phones, computers, iPads etc.) to deliberately and repeatedly bully someone. Cyber bullying is usually conducted on several occasions from one individual to another or from a group of people to another group of people. Although cyber bullying is considered to happen several times before it is considered bullying, Oak Park primary school will respond to and investigate initial reports of cyber bullying immediately.

Types of Cyber Bullying

- **Flaming:** Online fights usually through emails, instant messaging or chat rooms where angry and rude comments are exchanged.
- **Denigration:** Putting mean online messages through email, instant messaging, chat rooms, or websites set up to make fun of someone.
- **Exclusion:** Intentionally leaving someone out of a group such as instant messaging, friend sites, or other online group activities.
- **Outing:** Sharing secrets about someone online including private information, pictures, and videos.
- **Trickery:** Tricking someone into revealing personal information then sharing it with others.
- **Impersonation:** Pretending to be someone else when sending or posting mean or false messages online.
- **Harassment:** Repeatedly sending malicious messages to someone online.
- **Cyberstalking:** Continuously harassing and denigrating including threats of physical harm.

Children and young people can also be affected by hostile behaviour that does not fit the definition of cyber bullying. For example, a one-off insensitive remark or joke online or via text is not cyber bullying by definition. However, the impact can still be widespread due to the rapid spread of the

content and the relative permanency of the message sent. Because of this, these types of incidents still need to be treated seriously.

How does Cyber Bullying Differ from face-to-face Bullying?

While cyber bullying is similar to face-to-face bullying, it also differs in the following ways:

- it can give the person doing the bullying a sense of being anonymous, so they may behave in ways they wouldn't offline
- it can occur 24/7 and be difficult to escape
- it is invasive, impacting students' social worlds at school and home, online and offline
- it can have a large audience—readily shared with groups or posted on public forum it is very difficult to delete bullying comments and images.

Aims

At Oak Park Primary School, we aim to provide students with the necessary skills and tools required for them to be responsible users of technology by implementing the following strategies:

- Educate our students to be safe and responsible users of digital technologies.
- Supervise students when using digital technologies for educational purposes.
- To reinforce within the school community what cyber bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at Oak Park Primary School.
- Provide students, parents/guardians and teachers with access to cyber safety course/forums.
- To identify bullying, where and when it occurred and who the victims and offenders are.
- To encourage everyone within the school community to be alert to signs and evidence of cyber bullying and to take on the responsibility to report it to staff whether as an observer or victim. Reports to the school can be made on the school's website in the student section.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of cyber bullying are followed up appropriately and that support is given to both victims and offenders.
- To reinforce with students, safe behaviour with regard to preventing cyber bullying e.g. privacy with regard to logging-in, passwords, and this will include teachers' duty of care when using the Internet/Intranet.
- To reinforce the necessity to save emails, messages, screenshots, images etc., that could be used as evidence to support cyber-bullying claims.

Potential signs of Cyber Bullying

Research has indicated that students are reluctant to report cyber bullying incidents, as they feel adult intervention may make the situation worse. It is important therefore to understand the following potential signs of cyber bullying and other social or mental health issues. These can include:

- decline in academic performance and social interaction
- increased social exclusion and peer rejection
- dislike and avoidance of school—sometimes resulting in higher absenteeism

- increased reluctance to participate in regular school activities, including classroom discussions
- poorer physical health and sleepiness
- complaints of feeling unwell although parents report no specific illness
- increased negative self perception
- becoming withdrawn, appearing depressed or anxious, having mood swings, crying for no apparent reason
- suicidal thoughts—this should be reported to administration and parents/carers immediately for appropriate action

Any significant concerns should be discussed with the student and their parents or carers. Students should be provided with options for psychological support including school counseling or anonymous counseling through the [Kids Helpline](#) on 1800 551 800, or the [eSafety Website](#). Students and parents are also encouraged to use the school's 'Report Bullying' page on our school's website.

Prevention of Cyber Bullying

The best way to ensure that all students at Oak Park primary school never become the victims of cyber bullying, is to provide them with in class and home education regarding cyber bullying. All students at Oak Park will be provided with lessons that focus on the acceptable use of ICT within and outside of the school each and every year. Parent/student forums will also be provided by the school in order to help reduce incidents of cyber bullying. There are also many online resources that are available to parents and students which are listed at the end of this document. These resources will assist parents and students with being responsible users when using ICT to communicate with others.

Responding to Cyber Bullying at OPPS

Cyber bullying will be taken very seriously at Oak Park Primary. In serious cases, the police may need to be involved and students may lose their ICT privileges at the school. However, in most cases cyber bullying will be dealt with internally by the school. Parents, students, teachers, the school Principal and other administration staff may be involved in discussions and investigations regarding reports of cyber bullying. All cases will be dealt with on an individual basis. The school Principal will be responsible for deciding on what disciplinary actions will be taken against students who engage in cyber bullying. Parents are encouraged to support the school by taking similar action at home to reinforce the unacceptability of cyber bullying.

If you suspect that your child is being cyber bullied, it is imperative that you notify the school Principal or another staff member immediately. Any evidence that can be gathered such as screen shots or printed copies of the alleged bullying will be useful in the investigation process.

We also have a 'Report Bullying' Portal on our school's website (on the Student's Page), where students/parents can report bullying behavior.

Useful Cyber Bullying Websites

Bullying. No Way!

Bullying No Way! promotes working together to create environments where every student and school community member is safe, supported, respected, valued—and free from bullying. The site provides a wide range of games, classroom resources, downloads and facts.

Visit: www.bullyingnoway.com.au

Digizen

Provides information for educators, parents, carers and young people to strengthen their awareness and understanding of digital citizenship. It encourages technology users to become responsible digital citizens.

Visit: www.digizen.org

Kids Matter

Aims to strengthen the mental health and wellbeing of children and achieve greater support for children experiencing mental health difficulties, and their families. Kids Matter provides resources, program guides and school stories for early childhood, primary and the transition to school.

Visit: www.kidsmatter.edu.au/

Mind Matters

A national mental health initiative for secondary schools, this site provides resources and a professional development program that supports Australian secondary schools in promoting and protecting the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of school communities.

Visit: www.mindmatters.edu.au

National Centre Against Bullying—Alannah and Madeline Foundation

News, research, information and resources to combat bullying.

Also links to the new e-Smart program which provides a framework to help Australian schools manage cybersafety and deal with bullying.

Visit: www.ncab.org.au