

Cyberbullying: Information for Staff in Schools

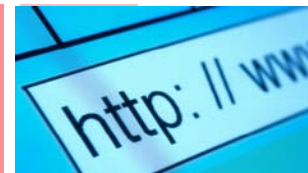


Student Welfare Directorate
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NSW Department of Education & Communities

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What is cyberbullying?

- Cyberbullying is commonly defined as the use of information and communication technologies to support repeated and deliberate hostile behaviour intended to harm others.

It is sometimes used as an extension to other forms of bullying, and can result in the target of bullying experiencing social, psychological and academic difficulties. (ACMA)



Forms of cyberbullying

- **Flaming** – heated exchange
- **Harassing** and threatening messages eg: “text wars”, “griefers”
- **Denigration** - sending nasty SMS, pictures or prank phone calls
“Slam books” (websites or negative lists)
- **Impersonation** - Using person’s screen name or password eg:
message to hate group w/ personal details
- **Outing or trickery** sharing private personal information, messages,
pictures with others
- Posting “set up” images/video e.g. “**happy slapping**”
- **Ostracism** - Intentionally excluding others from an online group eg:
knocked off buddy lists
- **Sexting** sharing explicit material by mobile phone



What students can use to bully

- SMS
- Mobile phone cams
- Webcams
- Social network sites
- Slambooks
- Wikis
- Chat rooms
- IMing
- Web polls
- Rating sites
- Video sharing

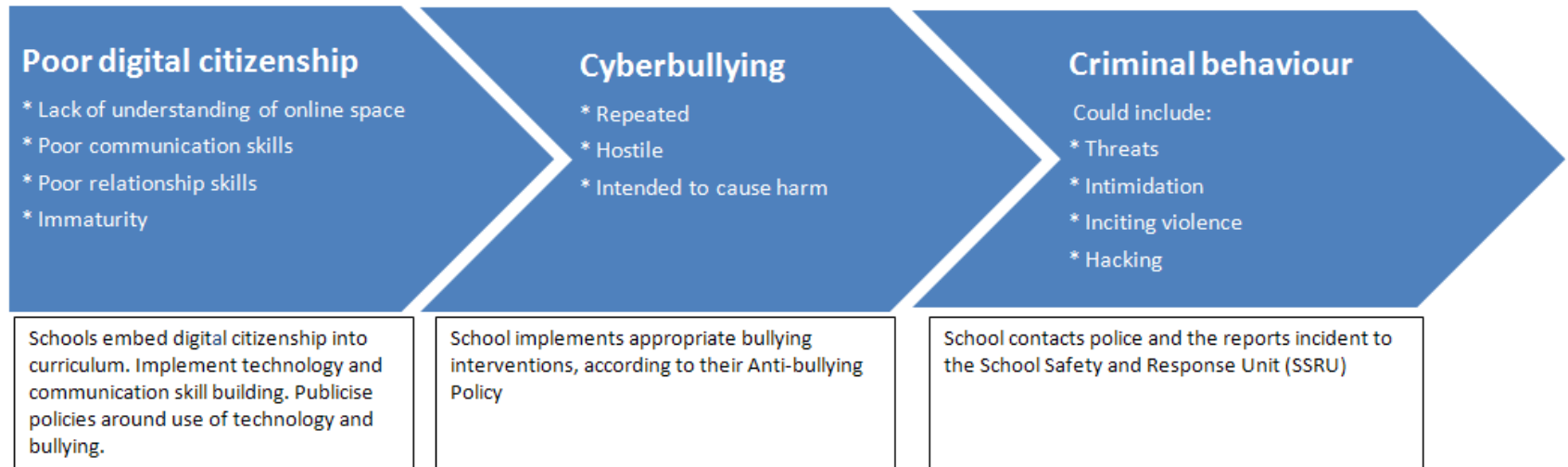


How common is it?

“We know that 50 per cent of [United States] children report they were cyberbullied. In Australia its 10 per cent and that’s tracking up two to three per cent every year.”
Donna Cross (2009).



The spectrum of behaviours schools face



NB: The spectrum of inappropriate online behaviours ranges from the naive to the malicious, but whether or not they fit the definition of cyberbullying, they need to be addressed by the school.



Differences between cyber and offline bullying

- Cyberbullying can reach a much wider audience.
- Written words seem more real than spoken words.
- Abuse published online can be read over and over again.
- Online bullying can be 24/7 - anywhere and at any time.
- Anonymity emboldens some students to cyberbully who wouldn't bully face-to-face.
- Images can be published to devastating effect.



A major U.K. study (National Children's Home) in 2002 found nearly 30% of cyberbullied students told no-one.

Why?

- They feel humiliated and embarrassed.
- They're worried parents will "freak out" and make it worse.
- They think adults won't believe them, will trivialise the bullying or will blame them for it.
- They don't think adults know what to do about it.
- They're worried parents/adults will take the technology away from them.



Research from the Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study

(ACBPS, 2009)

- Cross-sectional survey - describe the nature and prevalence of covert bullying
- Two stage probability sample design (schools and classes within schools)
- Stratified by state, location (metro, non-metro), sector (govt, CEO, Independent schools), primary/secondary
- 106 schools (55 primary and 51 secondary)
- 7,500 students



<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/research.aspx>

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Cyber bullied - specific behaviours (every few weeks or more often)

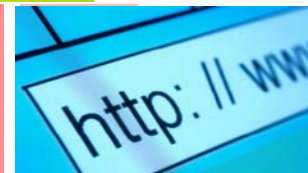
| | Year 4 | Year 5 | Year 6 | Year 7- Primary* | Year 7- Secondary* | Year 8 | Year 9 | Total |
|---|--------|--------|--------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Sent nasty messages on the internet | 6.6% | 8.3% | 8.3% | 6.0% | 17.6% | 15.7% | 28.6% | 13.5% |
| Deliberately ignored or left out of things over the net | 6.0% | 3.5% | 8.4% | 10.8% | 15.5% | 18.5% | 15.4% | 11.2% |
| Sent nasty text messages or prank calls to your mobile phone | 1.9% | 6.2% | 4.8% | 2.7% | 7.3% | 13.7% | 19.6% | 8.8% |
| Sent threatening emails | 4.3% | 10.0% | 4.8% | 4.1% | 6.1% | 6.3% | 21.7% | 8.5% |
| Used your screen name or passwords | 2.5% | 11.0% | 10.6% | 1.3% | 6.6% | .9% | 10.4% | 6.4% |
| Posted mean or nasty comments or pictures on websites | 1.9% | 2.2% | 5.0% | 3.4% | 21.2% | 4.2% | 10.6% | 6.4% |
| Sent your private emails, messages, pictures or videos to others | 2.2% | 4.6% | 1.9% | 1.0% | 2.8% | 2.3% | 8.8% | 3.5% |
| Sent mean or nasty messages or pictures about you to others mobile phones | .9% | 2.1% | 1.4% | .1% | 3.7% | .6% | 10.6% | 2.8% |

Highest rates by grade level highlighted

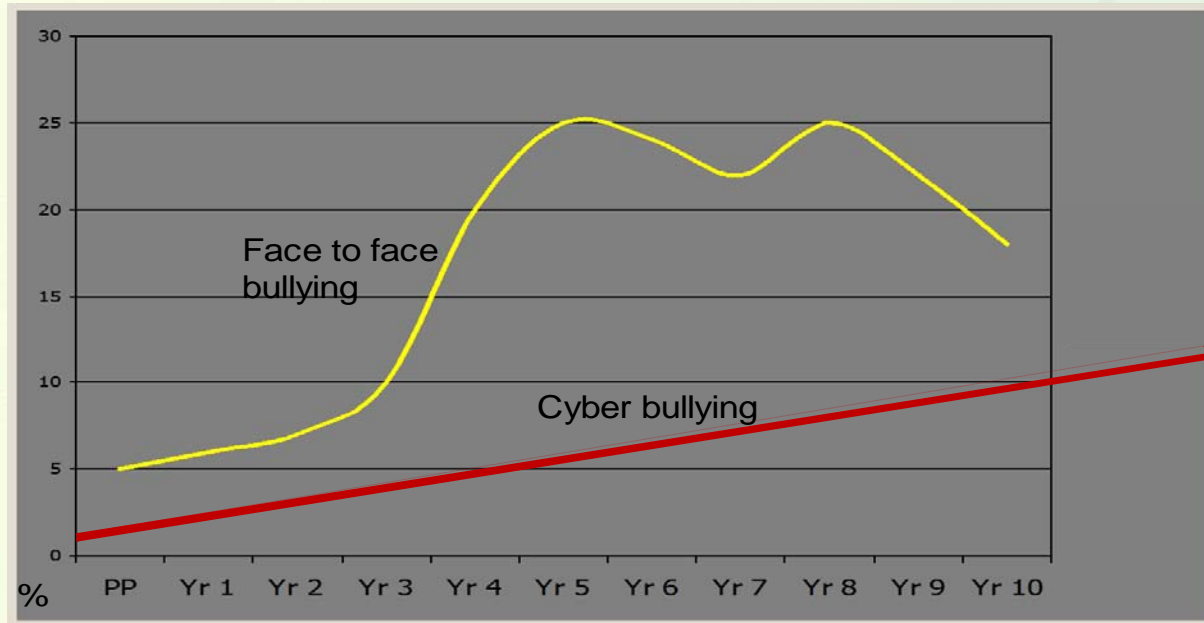
Child Health Promotion Research
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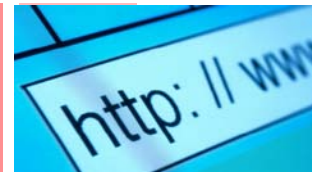
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Australian prevalence X age



As access to the technology increases so does cyber bullying.



Effects - being bullied

Students who are bullied are more likely than students who are not bullied to experience:

- impaired social and emotional adjustment (Nansel et al., 2001)
- poor academic achievement (Beran & Lupart, 2009; Nansel et al., 2001)
- anxiety, depression and suicidality (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999)
- poorer physical health (Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2001)
- higher absenteeism (Strabstein & Piazza, 2008)
- increased loneliness and low self esteem (Jankauskiene, Kardelis, Sukys, & Kardeliene, 2008)



Effects – bullying others

- Statistics show that students repeatedly bullying others were likely to have the same symptoms as the students experiencing the abuse.
- The students bullying were just as likely to have elevated levels of anxiety, to be disconnected from school and to have higher levels of depression as the students who were being bullied (Prof Donna Cross).



The behaviour of bystanders matters

Most bullying takes place when bystanders are present; although most bystanders do not act to discourage it, when any one of them does there is a good chance (around 50%) that the bullying will stop; teachers generally do not have the opportunity to take any action because they are typically **not** present and are not told about it and a large proportion of students would like to see bullying stopped .(Rigby, 2006)

Students who are “defended” are better adjusted and report less peer victimisation one year later. (Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing, & Salmivalli, 2009)



The behaviour of bystanders matters

Reconciliation occurred even more when bystanders intervened than when teachers intervened. (Fujisawa et al, 2005)

Approximately 20-30% of students actively assist or reinforce the bullying, another 20-30% will be outsiders, and less than 20% of students intervene as defenders of the student being bullied. (Donna Cross)

The majority of peer interventions are effective, with the bullying stopping within 10 seconds of peer intervention (Hawkins et al, 2001)



Bullying and cyberbullying discussion



Discuss the behaviours that might be regarded as cyberbullying.

Have any incidents of cyberbullying happened in your school community recently?

How do you think the consequences of cyberbullying compare to bullying that takes place offline?



Is it a school responsibility?

The *Student Discipline in Government Schools Policy* makes plain “*the school discipline policy may apply outside of school hours and off school premises where there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students*”.

The *Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures* provides that behaviour that may warrant suspension includes: “*hostile behaviour directed towards students, members of staff or other persons including verbal abuse and abuse transmitted electronically such as by email or SMS text message*”.



Anti-bullying Plan

The Anti-bullying Plan is a key part of every school's planning for student wellbeing and effective learning.

The support materials will assist schools to build on their current practice and revise their Anti-bullying Plans to comply with the new 2011 *Bullying: Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying Policy*. The *Bullying: Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying guidelines* provide a framework for schools to use in developing and implementing an Anti-bullying Plan which includes protection, prevention, early intervention and response strategies for student bullying.





Discussion

- What role might the school play in these scenarios?

A group of students who live near each other and attend schools in the local area, including your school, meet at one of their houses and construct a hate website for a student who attends your school.

A group of students who play sport together on the weekend and all attend your school send each other threatening text messages about an incident that occurred during the game on the weekend.



Don't blame the technology!

Technology –

- has a positive role in the lives of children and young peoples. However, technology is also open to misuse and has some risks associated with its use.
- is embedded in all aspects of life, including teaching and learning.

Addressing cyberbullying is a whole-of-community responsibility, and requires a whole-of-community response.



Cyberbullying: What can schools do?

- Maintain a school climate where bullying is less likely to take place and students feel comfortable reporting cyber bullying.
- Implement a sustained curriculum approach to address:
 - appropriate use of technology (Digital Citizenship)
 - bullying (including cyberbullying issues)



Cyberbullying: What can schools do?

- Develop, with their school community, clear, well publicised policies addressing:
 - use of technology
 - preventing, reporting and managing bullying and cyber bullying.
- Develop programs for those students in need of additional support with the development of communication, social and relationship skills, or digital citizenship.



Cyberbullying: What can schools do?

- Where incidents of cyberbullying are impacting on the learning of any student, schools will need to respond to these incidents, even if they occur out of school hours or on private equipment. The appropriate response will depend on the circumstances of the cyberbullying.

Schools will need to provide support to:

- any student who is experiencing bullying
- any student with bullying behaviours
- any bystanders.

School executives, Learning Support Teams or Student Welfare Teams will decide on which intervention, or combination of interventions, is appropriate to each individual circumstance of cyberbullying.



Cyberbullying: What can schools do?

- Contact the Police and the School Safety and Response Unit where incidents of cyberbullying include possible criminal behaviour.
- Keep accurate records of incidents and their management .
- Survey students regularly to monitor bullying and cyberbullying rates.
- Ensure all members of the school community including casual staff are familiar with the school's anti-bullying plan.
- Identify students with bullying behaviour or who have experienced bullying both on and after enrolment and develop strategies to support them.
- Promote anti-bullying messages throughout the school community.



Possible interventions

Note: No method of addressing bullying has been reported as 100% effective

Bystander Training This intervention is a proactive strategy that trains bystander students to behave in a supportive way to students who are being bullied, to intervene where feasible or to report the incident to a teacher.

Buddy systems can help to promote friendship and support between older and younger peers through regular collaboration between their classes, which fosters a sense of whole-school community.



Possible interventions

The method of shared concern or the Pikas Method

Empowering the students with bullying behaviour to assist in resolving the problem through the use of individual and group meetings with the participants. The ability to demonstrate empathy is essential for all participants in this method.

The method of shared concern should only be implemented by people who are trained in the intervention and who understand the circumstances in which it may be of benefit.



Possible interventions

Mediation - Assisting the students involved in incidents of bullying to resolve their differences and helping them find a peaceful win-win solution or compromise. Mediation is a suitable intervention only when the imbalance of power between the students involved is not great and when each party has something to gain and to concede. It should always be voluntary and should never be used in cases of major disputes, serious bullying or assault.

Restorative practice - Stimulating genuine remorse; helping the student displaying bullying take steps to restore damaged relationships. This intervention is usually effective only in the context of a whole school restorative practices approach.



Possible interventions

Strengthening the victim or assertiveness training - Helping and coaching students to confront a student displaying bullying behaviour assertively; to stand firm and discourage the bullying behaviour through calm and controlled language to redress the balance of perceived power. This intervention should never be the only response to bullying incidents. The behavior of the student displaying bullying must also be addressed and support should be provided to any bystanders.

Traditional disciplinary approach - Setting out clear behaviour standards and using punishment to prevent and deter the student from repeating their behaviour; punishment could include detention, loss of privileges, chores to be undertaken and even suspension. Research has shown that using punishment as the only intervention is not effective in preventing bullying.



What can teachers do?

- Know your students.
- Don't ignore or discount their situation by suggesting they ignore it or that it will stop on its own.
- Know your schools anti-bullying policies and reporting structures and establish an understanding of the existing evidence based approaches to dealing with cyber bullying.
- Develop an understanding of the role of *bystanders* in cyber space.
- Use the curriculum to support an investigation into cyber bullying
- Adopt a critical literacy perspective: to question and challenge attitudes, values and beliefs that lie beneath the surface.



Important Messages

No method of addressing bullying has been reported as 100% effective.

Interventions need to be matched to the particular incident of bullying. More than one intervention may need to be implemented.

Not all hurtful behaviours are cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying may involve varying levels of severity, ranging from occasional messages to frequently repeated and highly disturbing threats to a person's life. Threats should be reported to the Police and the School Safety and Response Unit.

