

Newcastle upon Tyne Royal Grammar School

Anti-cyberbullying policy

This policy applies to the whole School and is published to parents and students

Updated September 2017

Author: Sue Baillie



Introduction

Royal Grammar School Newcastle (RGS) has a duty to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment and in doing so recognises that technology plays an important and positive role in everyone's lives, both educationally and socially. The School is committed to helping all members of the school community to understand both the benefits and the risks, and to equip students with the knowledge and skills to be able to use technology safely and responsibly.

See also:

- Safeguarding policy
- Anti-bullying policy

See also RGS documents regarding:

- Photography of students
- IT filtering, monitoring of internet usage and use of portable devices
- Acceptable use policies (AUPs) for students and staff
- Cyber-bullying of members of staff
- **How to respond to incidents of sexting**

What is cyber-bullying?

Bill Belsey, creator of the website www.cyber-bullying.org defined this in the following terms:

"Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others."

Cyber-bullying can involve social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, emails and mobile devices used for SMS messages and cameras. It can be used to perpetuate face-to-face bullying. It can also go further in that it can invade home/personal space and can involve a greater number of people across age groups and school staff and other adults can be targeted. It can draw bystanders into being accessories and includes:

- Threats and intimidation
- Harassment or *cyber-stalking*
- Vilification/defamation
- Exclusion or peer rejection
- Impersonation
- Unauthorised publication of private information of images
- Manipulation of images.

All of these actions are part of peer-on-peer abuse. Some cyber-bullying activities could be criminal offences under a range of different laws including Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

Sexting

Sexting is the sharing of images or videos generated by children under 18 or of children under 18 which are of a sexual nature or are indecent. It is a crime under **Section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 and Section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988** to take, distribute or possess indecent images of children (under 18). Decisions regarding prosecution are made by the CPS but it is unlikely that it is in the public interest to prosecute children. However, children who break the law may be visited by the police; the ACPO position is that it doesn't support the criminalisation of children for taking indecent images of themselves and sharing them. The nature of the incident is likely to determine the outcome with regards to reporting the offence but in every case the School will consider the circumstances within its safeguarding and child protection procedures and act accordingly. There are many different types of sexting and it is likely that no two cases will be the same. Therefore each case is considered on its own merit within a consistent approach which protects the student, school staff and the school itself. The way the School will respond is outlined below in Appendix A and follows established guidelines from the Newcastle Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the UKCCIS.

Preventing cyber-bullying

The School uses a variety of opportunities, in and out of the classroom, to promote safe use of technology and provide guidance on dealing with and reporting cyber-bullying. The School encourages its students to be involved in a response to cyber-bullying e.g. through School Council and PSHE lessons. Students sign an **Acceptable use policy** before they are allowed to use school computer equipment, the internet and Wi-Fi in school, and parents are encouraged to discuss its contents with their children. Parents are provided with information and advice on e-safety and cyber-bullying.

Where there are concerns about misuse of technology, senior staff (e.g. Heads of Year and Pastoral Director), may request a student to reveal a message or other content and may confiscate equipment. If they consider that equipment may contain evidence of bullying, or a crime, or the potential of a crime they may investigate the specific contents relating to that act.

As technology changes very quickly, the School seeks to provide opportunities for policies to be reviewed and for students to be involved in the process of updating and improving them, for example through consultation with the School Council.

The IT Department uses filtering, firewall, anti-spyware software, anti-virus software and secure connections to safeguard the students.

Students may contact beatbullying@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk if they are concerned about a bullying issue. All members of the school community are informed about the various ways in which bullying can be reported and in addition there is

reassurance that the School will deal sensitively with students who report concerns.

The School trains staff to ensure that they can recognise non-verbal signs and indications of cyber-bullying.

As part of the annual safeguarding audit there is an evaluation and a review of recorded bullying incidents. A survey of student and staff experiences also includes opportunities to record their views on bullying and cyber-bullying in particular.

Responding to cyber-bullying

Most cases of cyber-bullying will be dealt with through the School's existing **Anti-bullying strategy** and this must remain the framework within which incidents of bullying are investigated. However, some features of cyber-bullying differ from other forms of bullying, for example the scale and scope of cyber-bullying can be greater than other forms of bullying and the people involved may have a different profile to traditional bullies and their targets. The *24/7 and anywhere* nature of cyber-bullying means that the person being bullied will not always know who is bullying them and some students may not be aware that what they are doing is bullying.

Support for the student being bullied – the school will:

- Offer emotional support; reassure students that they have done the right thing in telling.
- Advise students not to retaliate or reply. Instead, keep the evidence. In some cases, the victim may be able to block the person bullying from their sites and services.
- Unless the victim sees it as a punishment, they may be advised to change e.g. mobile phone number.
- If hurtful or embarrassing content is being distributed, try to get it removed from the internet. If the person who posted it is known, ensure they understand why it is wrong and ask them to remove it. Alternatively, contact the host provider and make a report to get the content taken down.

Investigation

- If any member of the community suspects cyber-bullying is taking place, they should contact the Head of Year or Pastoral Director in all cases and the investigation will begin in accordance with the RGS Anti-bullying policy.
- Victims will be asked to preserve evidence and a record of abuse. For example; save phone messages, record or save-and-print instant messenger conversations, print or produce a screenshot of social network pages, print, save and forward to staff whole email messages **providing they are not of an indecent nature**.
- If images are involved and they might be illegal or raise child protection concerns, the Pastoral Director (as Designated Person for Safeguarding) may involve the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the police in cases of actual/suspected illegal content, or CEOP.

- Any allegations against staff will be handled as other allegations following guidance in Safeguarding Students and Safer Recruitment in Education and the School's Safeguarding and Whistleblowing policies.
- The School will confiscate mobile phones, laptops, tablets and other electronic devices where appropriate.
- The School may suspend use of the school network and Wi-Fi until the investigation is complete.

Working with the bully and applying sanctions

The aims of the sanctions are:

- To help the person harmed to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop
- To hold the perpetrator to account, getting them to recognise the harm caused and deter them from repeating the behaviour
- To demonstrate to the school community that cyber-bullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it, so deterring others from behaving in a similar way.

How sanctions are applied:

- Sanctions for any breaches of AUPs or internet/mobile phone agreements will be applied
- In applying sanctions, consideration will be given to type and impact of bullying and the possibility that it was unintentional or was in retaliation
- The outcome will include helping the bully to recognise the consequence of their actions and providing support to enable the attitude and behaviour of the bully to change
- A key part of the sanction may well involve ensuring that the student deletes files
- Parents will always be informed about sanctions imposed.

APPENDIX A – Responding to an incident of sexting

N.B. Where a child is under 13 years of age or has additional vulnerabilities an incident of sexting will usually be referred to the School's safeguarding advisors, social care or the police.

The following guidelines from the UKCCIS inform the actions of the school:

Considerations – risk assessment:

- Vulnerability of the child
- Coercion
- How shared and where
- Impact on children
- Age of the children

The school must identify the risk and at this initial stage the safeguarding team review the information and consider the 5 points for immediate referral. They make an initial decision about whether the incident can be dealt with in house.

5 points which indicate the need for referral:

1. Adult involvement
2. Coercion or blackmail
3. Extreme or violent
4. Under 13
5. Immediate risk of harm

Ensure parents are informed and the incident recorded following all child protection and safeguarding procedures.