Shrewsbury School

APPENDIX A – CYBER BULLYING

The following policy document has been produced with reference initially to **'Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools'** produced by the what was at the time the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (July 2015) and Cyberbullying: Advice for head teachers and school staff produced by the Department for Education (Nov 2014) It should be read in conjunction with the Anti-Bullying, Safeguarding and Pupil Behaviour policies as well as the Pupils and Non Pupil Acceptable Use Policy.

Shrewsbury School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils in its care. As is made clear in the Anti-Bullying policy, Shrewsbury rejects any and all forms of bullying behaviour. In recent years, all schools have had to address issues associated with the use of ICT. Cyber bullying is a particularly pernicious aspect of bullying and is recognised as posing significant risk to the welfare of children. Current research into the extent of cyber bullying indicates that it is a feature of many young people's lives. Cyber bullying can have a seriously detrimental impact on a victim for a number of reasons.

- The sense of invasion of an individual's home and personal space – can happen at any point day or night
- The anonymity (at least initially) of the bully.
- The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages.
- The ability to broadcast upsetting messages and images to a potentially huge audience.
- The opportunity for others to become involved in the bullying activity.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites.

Particular examples might include;

- Threats and intimidating messages sent via computers or mobile phones.
- Derogatory remarks about a pupil or member of staff on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter.
- Cyber-stalking – repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages.
- Pupils who set up website pages and invite others to post derogatory comments about a pupil or member of staff.
- Pupils who film fights or assaults (so called 'happy-slapping') and circulate them via mobile phones.
- Pupils sending, insulting and vicious text messages or messages of a sexual nature (so called 'sexting').
- Pupils posting fake and/or obscene photographs of the victim on a social networking site.

As with other forms of bullying, some cyber bullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive. However, it is important to recognise that other incidents can be 'unintentional' and the result of a lack of thought and poor judgment regarding the consequences of their actions. What may be sent as a joke may not be received as one, and indeed the distance that technology allows in communication means the sender may not see the impact of the message on the receiver. There is also less opportunity for either party to resolve any misunderstanding directly or to feel empathy. Here at Shrewsbury, we are committed to raising the awareness of all members of the school community to the dangers associated with cyber bullying. Pupils are reminded of the fact that such activity can have severe and distressing consequences and that any form of participation will not be tolerated.

Prevention and Recording

As with all aspects of pastoral care, education lies at the heart of our approach. Issues associated with the appropriate use of ICT are discussed both inside and outside the classroom. All pupils follow a structured programme of ICT in the 3rd and 4th Year. This work includes emphasis on the appropriate and responsible use of technology. In addition to this, important and pertinent issues are raised in PSHEE and within the tutorial programme. Pupils are reminded of the need to think carefully about what private information they may have in the public domain. Occasional year group Assemblies may also be used as well as external specialists in the area of 'e-safety'. The issues are regularly raised and discussed through the school's INSET programme.

In all of the above, pupils are reminded of the positive role of ICT and its clear benefits to everyday life. However, its intrinsic nature requires a significant degree of personal responsibility and accountability.

It should be understood by all pupils that:

- Bullying behaviour of any description is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- The school reserves the right to monitor pupils' use of the internet on a routine basis and to examine mobile phones where there is reason to suspect abuse.
- Pupils will be held personally responsible for all material they have placed on a website and for all material that appears on a website of which they are the account holder.

Where incidents of cyber bullying do occur they are monitored and recorded in the same way as all other forms of bullying.

Active management of hardware, software and connectivity

Devices are removed from 3rd and 4th form boarders at bedtimes and kept in HSM possession to give younger pupils a technology break. Pupils in other years may have devices removed for periods of time if they are in breach of the pupil AUP. Wifi access is turned off after year group's bedtimes and certain apps are not available through the school network. Most social media apps are not supported by the school network e.g. Snapchat, others have time restrictions for access. Pupils need to use 3 or 4G to access apps not deemed appropriate by the school which we hope sends a strong message and asks the pupils to think twice about why we don't support them.

Responding to cyber bullying

The guiding principles and practices outlined in the school's 'Anti-Bullying Policy' will underpin our approach when responding to any and all forms of bullying. However, the invasiveness of cyber bullying and the size of the audience can be important factors when considering the school's response to such activity. The very nature of cyber bullying can also yield a clear trail of evidence that other forms of bullying do not. In addition to text messages or emails that may be retained by the victim, mobile phone companies, internet service providers and social network sites can also provide supporting material and evidence.

Sanctions

Once the person responsible has been identified, steps are taken to ensure they understand and appreciate the impact of their actions. This is particularly important when dealing with examples of cyber bullying, as the bully may not witness directly the effect their behaviour has had on the victim. Pupils are also reminded that misconduct of this kind outside school will be subject to school discipline if the welfare of other pupils or the culture or reputation of the school are placed at risk.

Misuse of ICT is subject to the school's disciplinary procedures. Sanctions may include confiscation of mobile phones or restrictions on the use of the internet. In serious cases the Headmaster may consider suspension or indeed permanent exclusion.

Where there are concerns that a criminal act has been committed or that a pupil has been subject to child abuse, the matter may need to be referred to the police and / or children's services.

Involvement of parents and guardians

Shrewsbury seeks to work closely with parents and guardians in promoting a culture of e-safety. The school will always contact parents if it has any concerns about pupils' behaviour in this area and likewise it hopes that parents will feel able to share any concerns with the school. The school recognises that not all parents and guardians may feel up to date with teenage use of MCD. The school therefore arranges parental events when an outside specialist advises about the potential hazards and the practical steps that parents can take to minimise the potential dangers to their sons and daughters without curbing their natural enthusiasm and curiosity. This is typically offered to new 3rd form parents in March when they attend 3rd form parents meeting. We will usually publish PowerPoint slides or video content of outside speakers on the parent portal to disseminate information to those not able to make it in person.

School Staff

The School recognises the fast moving world of technology and invites all staff to attend the annual parental event which aims to update on latest fads and dangers. Further Inset is provided to all as part of whole staff training, with a focus on those working in boarding houses (HSM and matrons) for annual updates. School staff are trained under child protection and safeguarding guidelines to support and report any disclosures of cyberbullying to the HSM or DSL.

Legality

Although cyber bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws that can apply in terms of harassment as well as threatening and menacing communications. Shrewsbury School will contact the police if there is evidence to suggest the law has been broken. There are a number of offences that may be committed in the course of cyber bullying. Some may be covered by more than one piece of legislation. It should be noted that the age of the perpetrator is not necessarily relevant although the general age of criminal responsibility (10 years) applies and prosecutions are unlikely for children under 14 years old.

Pupils are entitled to their freedom of expression and respect for their private lives but they must not infringe the rights of others. Infringement includes, among other things, libel and slander, bullying, harassment and victimisation, inciting hatred on racial, religious and homophobic grounds, breach of confidentiality and breach of copyright.

The following pieces of legislation may have a bearing in any of the above examples.

Obscene Publications Act 1959, Protection of Children Act 1978, Public Order Act 1986, Malicious Communications Act 1988, Computer Misuse Act 1990 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

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