St Gabriel's RC High School
Cyberbullying Policy

Time of review: March 2024	Time of next review: March 2026
Author: Mrs Cull (Deputy Headteacher – Culture and Standards) Signed:	Date: 15th March 2024
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Approved by the Local Governing Body Signed by Chair of Governors:	Date: 25th March 2024

Our Mission Statement

At St Gabriel's, we are an **inclusive Catholic family** who embrace diverse identities, faiths and beliefs. We strive to use our God-given talents to **serve** others and to **succeed**. The Lord is our **strength**, which inspires us to make positive contributions to our school community and be valued members of our global society.

'The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.' (Psalm 28:7)

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Statement of intent

St Gabriel's RC High School understands that everyone in the school community deserves to learn and teach in a supportive and caring environment, without fear of bullying or harassment. All members of our community were created imago dei and deserve to have their dignity upheld in accordance with Catholic Social Teaching.

Communication technology plays an increasingly large and important role in the school curriculum and in the wider lives of young people. As a result, it is important to acknowledge that, sometimes, new technologies can be used for unpleasant or illegal purposes. We recognise the existence of cyberbullying and the severity of the issue.

The school is committed to:

- Educating pupils, staff and parents about cyberbullying and its consequences.
- Providing a stimulating, productive and healthy learning environment.
- Providing a robust policy in order to prevent and, if necessary, deal with any cyberbullying, should it arise at school or within the school community.
- Developing and improving the policies and procedures around cyberbullying through regular evaluation and review.

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- Providing a strong anti-bullying policy and acting upon it wherever bullying arises.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Computer Misuse Act 1990, amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006
- The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- The Education Act 2002
- The Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015
- DfE (2017) 'Preventing and tackling bullying'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2023) 'Searching, screening and confiscation'

1.2. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Acceptable Use Agreement
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Culture and Standards Agreement (Behaviour Policy)
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. The **Local Governing Body** is responsible for:

- The overall implementation and monitoring of this policy.

2.2. The **Headteacher** is responsible for:

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- The practices and procedures outlined in this policy and ensuring that their effectiveness is monitored. Ensuring that the school maintains details of agencies and resources that may assist in preventing and addressing cyberbullying.

- Reviewing procedures regarding e-safety to ensure that pupils protect themselves from cyberbullying online.

- Ensuring all incidents of cyberbullying are reported and dealt with in accordance with the school's Anti-bullying Policy.

2.3. The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** is responsible for:

- Ensuring all policies that relate to safeguarding, including cyberbullying, are reviewed and updated regularly.

- Ensuring all staff are aware that they must report any issues concerning cyberbullying and know how to do so.

- Providing training to all staff so that they feel confident identifying pupils at risk of being cyberbullied and know how to report when they suspect a pupil is at risk.

- Ensuring that parents are provided access to this policy so that they are fully aware of the school's responsibility to safeguard pupils and their welfare.

- Ensuring all pupils are taught about cyberbullying and how they should report a concern.

- Ensuring all staff are aware of their responsibilities by providing clear guidance for staff on the use of technology, both inside and outside of school.

2.4. **All members of staff** are responsible for identifying signs of cyberbullying and staying informed about the technologies that pupils commonly use.

2.5. **Teachers** are responsible for ensuring that issues surrounding cyberbullying are explored in the curriculum and pupils are aware of how to respect others.

2.6. Pupils, staff and parents/carers are responsible for complying with the Trust's **Acceptable Use Agreement**.

3. What is cyberbullying?

3.1. For the purpose of this policy, '**bullying**' is an act which is based on unequal power relations, real or perceived. It will usually be repeated and be difficult to defend against and is intended to hurt the recipient emotionally and/or physically. It can manifest verbally, in writing or images, and can be done physically, financially (including damage to property) or through social isolation. Verbal bullying is the most common form, especially within schools.

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3.2. For the purpose of this policy, '**cyberbullying**' includes sending or posting harmful or upsetting text, images or other messages using the internet, mobile phones or other ICT for the purpose of bullying.

3.3. Cyberbullying can take many forms and can go even further than face-to-face bullying by invading personal space and home life, and can target more than one person. It can also take place across age groups and target pupils, staff and others, and may take place inside school, within the wider community, at home or when travelling. It can sometimes draw bystanders into being accessories.

3.4. Cyberbullying can include, but is not exhaustive to, the following:

- Threatening, intimidating or upsetting text messages

- Threatening or embarrassing pictures and video clips sent via mobile phone cameras

- Disclosure of private sexual photographs or videos with the intent to cause distress

- Silent or abusive phone calls or using the victim's phone to harass others, to make them think the victim is responsible

- Threatening or bullying emails, possibly sent using a pseudonym or someone else's name

- Menacing or upsetting responses to someone in a chatroom

- Unpleasant messages sent via instant messaging

- Unpleasant or defamatory information posted to blogs, personal websites and social networking sites

3.5. All cases of cyberbullying are considered to be as serious as any other form of bullying.

3.6. Cyberbullying issues are dealt with in an appropriate manner dependent on the severity and frequency of the issue, in accordance with the school's **Anti-bullying Policy**.

4. Legal issues

4.1. Cyberbullying is generally criminal in character.

4.2. It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information in any media, including via websites.

4.3. Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by public means of a public electronic communications network, a message or other matter that is grossly offensive, or one of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.

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4.4. In addition, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.

4.5. At the school, cyberbullying is considered as serious as any other form of bullying. Cyberbullying issues are dealt with in an appropriate manner dependent on the severity and frequency of the issue and the age of the pupil.

5. Preventing cyberbullying

5.1. The school recognises that both staff and pupils may experience cyberbullying and will commit to preventing any instances that may occur by creating a learning and teaching environment which is free from harassment and bullying.

5.2. Staff, pupils and parents will be regularly educated about cyberbullying and the importance of staying safe online in accordance with the school's approaches to supporting e-safety.

5.3. Teachers will discuss cyberbullying as part of the curriculum and diversity, difference, human dignity, love of neighbour and respect for others will be promoted and celebrated through various lessons.

5.4. Pupils will be educated about the importance of reporting instances of cyberbullying and will be fully informed of who they should report any concerns to.

5.5. Staff will be regularly educated about the signs of cyberbullying in order to promote early identification and intervention.

5.6. It is made clear in staff meetings and the staff handbook that members of staff should not have contact with current pupils on social networking sites. In addition, staff are discouraged from having past pupils as friends / having contact with past pupils on social networking sites.

5.7. The delivery of PSHCE is important and will include discussing keeping personal information safe and the appropriate use of the internet. In addition, pupils will be educated about e-safety through projects in other subjects, such as computing and digital literacy.

5.8. Outside the curriculum, pupils will receive pastoral sessions about e-safety and cyberbullying through assemblies, form time and Anti-Bullying Week.

5.9. Pupils will have a voice through the Student Development Team and Student Senior Leadership Team to ensure they are able to raise any points around cyberbullying for discussion.

6. Signs of being cyberbullied

6.1. As part of annual safeguarding training, all members of staff will be made aware of the signs of cyberbullying, in order to identify pupils who may be experiencing issues and intervene effectively.

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6.2. Staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a pupil is being cyberbullied:

- Becoming withdrawn or shy
- Showing signs of depression
- Becoming extremely moody or agitated
- Becoming anxious or overly stressed
- Displaying signs of aggressive behaviour
- Avoiding use of the computer
- Changing eating and/or sleeping habits
- Avoiding participating in activities they once enjoyed
- Engaging in self-harm, or threatening/attempting suicide
- Changing their group of friends suddenly

6.3. Staff will also be alert to the following signs which may indicate that a pupil is cyberbullying others:

- Avoiding using the computer or turning off the screen when someone is near
- Appearing nervous when using the computer or mobile phone
- Acting in a secretive manner when using the computer or mobile phone
- Spending excessive amounts of time on the computer or mobile phone
- Becoming upset or angry when the computer or mobile phone is taken away

7. Procedures for dealing with cyberbullying

7.1. All issues of cyberbullying should be reported according to the procedures outlined in the **Anti-bullying Policy**.

7.2. If staff are concerned that a pupil might be at risk of cyberbullying, they will report this to the pastoral team as soon as possible.

7.3. All pupils will be informed that they can disclose cyberbullying concerns about themselves or others to any member of staff. Staff will not promise confidentiality and will inform the pastoral team of the disclosure as soon as possible.

7.4. Responses to cyberbullying incidents, including the necessary sanctions, will be dealt with in accordance with the school's **Anti-bullying Policy**.

7.5. A cyberbullying incident might include features different to other forms of bullying, prompting a particular response. Significant differences may include the following:

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- **Impact**: possible extensive scale and scope
- **Location**: the anytime and anywhere nature of cyberbullying
- **Anonymity**: the person being bullied might not know who the perpetrator is
- **Motivation**: the perpetrator might not realise that their actions are bullying
- **Evidence**: the subject of the bullying may have evidence of what has happened

7.6. Any cyberbullying incidents that involve members of staff will be dealt with in accordance with the school's **Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy**.

7.7. Staff are required to report any concerns to the **pastoral team**, who will investigate the matter and will initiate an appropriate response.

7.8. All incidents of cyberbullying, including any concerns, will be recorded and securely held.

7.9. A member of the **pastoral team** will arrange a discussion with the victimised pupil in order to gain knowledge about the situation, and will use this to inform a discussion with the pupil who has been accused of cyberbullying.

7.10. The **member of the pastoral team** will consider the nature of the cyberbullying incident and the way in which it has been conducted, including if it is evident that it was intentional or if the pupil's age and knowledge of cyberbullying is a contributing factor to the incident, when deciding on the appropriate sanction.

7.11. If necessary, it may be decided to involve the police in an appropriate response to the cyberbullying incident.

7.12. If necessary, appropriate sanctions, such as removing internet access, monitoring the pupil's internet use, etc. will be implemented.

8. Support for the pupil being bullied

8.1. The **pastoral team** will discuss the support available with the victim and, therefore, their feelings and requests are paramount to the support provided.

8.2. Possible support available includes:

- Emotional support and reassurance from the **pastoral team**.
- Reassurance that it was right to report the incident and that appropriate action will be taken.
- Liaison with the pupil's parents/carers to ensure a continuous dialogue of support.

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- Advice not to retaliate or reply, but to keep the evidence and show or give it to their parent or a member of staff.

- Advice on other aspects of e-safety procedures to prevent reoccurrence.

- Discussion with the pupil's parents/carers to evaluate their online habits.

- Age-appropriate advice on how the perpetrator might be blocked online.

- Actions, where possible and appropriate, to have offending material removed.

- Discussion with the pupil's parents/carers on whether police action is required (except in serious cases of child exploitation where the police may be contacted without discussion with parents/carers).

9. Investigation and legal powers

9.1. The nature of any investigation will depend on the circumstances. It may include the following:

- Preserving evidence.

- Efforts to identify the perpetrator, which may include looking at the media, systems and sites used.

- Authorised members of staff (i.e. the Headteacher, Deputy Headteachers, DSL and DDSL) reserve the right to look at the content of electronic devices if they reasonably believe the suspect poses a risk to others and/or the device contains evidence in relation to an offence.

- Identifying and questioning witnesses.

- Contacting the CEOP centre if images might be illegal or raise child protection issues.

- Confiscating a phone and contacting the police and/or LADO.

- Legal action, e.g. where private sexual videos or images of an individual under 16-years-old are disclosed with the intent to cause distress

10.   Working with the perpetrator

10.1. How the school will work with the perpetrator and any sanctions given will be determined on an individual basis in accordance with the **Anti-Bullying Policy**, with the intention of:

- Helping the victim to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop.

- Holding the perpetrator to account, so they recognise the harm caused and do not repeat the behaviour.

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- Helping bullies to recognise the consequences of their actions and facilitating change in their attitude and behaviour.

- Demonstrating that cyberbullying, as with any other form of bullying, is unacceptable, and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it.

11. Monitoring and review

11.1. This policy will be reviewed on a two-year basis by the Deputy Headteacher (pastoral) in conjunction with the DSL, who will make any changes necessary, taking into account previous cyberbullying.

11.2. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction programme.

11.3. The next scheduled review date for this policy is **March 2026.**

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