

Article 3 – Cyberbullying

The Internet, mobile phones and other communication technologies have resulted in this new form of bullying that involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group to hurt others.

Cyberbullying may include the sending of nasty emails or text messages by one person to another. It may also include defamatory personal Web sites where one person establishes a website which includes unkind comments and photographs about another person.

As for other forms of bullying, there is no one approach that will always work for cyberbullying. You need to use a range of Internet safety approaches to provide the best overall protection against cyberbullying. Families need to work together to decide which approaches will work for them.

For younger children, in particular, parents should find out about filters, labels and safe zones so that you can restrict the sites your child can access or the materials they can receive. See the <http://www.netalert.net.au> website for useful information about Internet safety.

If possible, and especially for primary and senior secondary students, keep the computer in a public area of the house, such as the family room, so that you can see what sites are being accessed and the type of messages your child is receiving.

It is important that parents and children talk about ways they can protect themselves when using information technologies. If your child is regularly using technology tell him/her:

- to be careful who they give their telephone number to or their online handle;
- never give out or share personal information numbers (PINS);
- don't believe everything you read online – just because someone tells you they are fifteen, it doesn't mean they are telling the truth;
- never send a message to others when you are angry. Remind them that what they write becomes available in cyberspace and cannot be taken back;
- never open a message from someone they don't know;
- be polite in your online or text message dealings; and
- **never** arrange to meet someone you have met online unless you take your parents with you.

Ask your school to:

- include cyberbullying in its anti-bullying policy;
- educate students and teachers about the problem; and
- provide a contact person at the school who you can contact if your child is being bullied.