Online Bullying

Online bullying (also known as Cyberbullying) is when a person or a group of people use online digital technology to threaten, tease, harass, upset or humiliate someone else. In many cases, a single act can 'go viral' resulting in a feeling of repeated bullying as wider audiences are involved. The person being bullied will not always know who is doing it. The victim's privacy can be invaded 24/7. Children and school staff can be vulnerable to online bullying at any time or place via:

Email, Instant messaging (IM) and chat rooms - Sending abusive or nasty messages, including sending emails to others who join in the bullying.

Social networking sites, blogs - Writing upsetting comments on someone's profile and/or about people on your own status updates or tweets. Uploading hurtful images or videos. Setting up a fake profile dedicated to bullying someone else.

Online gaming – Abuse or harassment through multi-player gaming sites.

Mobile phones - Sending abusive texts, video or photo messages; encouraging someone to share intimate pictures or videos of themselves and then sending these onto other people (sexting). *Note:* where the images are of someone under 18, this is a criminal offence.

Advice on what to do if bullied:

- **Keep copies** of any abusive texts, emails, comments, messages received; record date and time sent. **Don't retaliate or reply**.
- **Block the bully**/bullies using the block tools available.
- **Follow school policy**. The online safety / anti-bullying policies should detail who to inform (such as your school Child Protection Officer, Head Teacher) and the action to take. This may include the following:
  - o **Support** those affected by the bullying.
  - o **Contact** parents/carers and the (Local) Authority as appropriate.
  - o **Report** to the police if a serious case, e.g. involving threat or intimidation or suspected criminal activity. Report any illegal material to the Internet Watch Foundation

Be proactive. Taking a whole-school community, consistent and inclusive approach is key to effectively preventing and dealing with cases and ensuring all understand the issues, policy and sanctions. The school should be discussing bullying with pupils, to encourage positive behaviours and so pupils know what to do if bullied.

Monitor incidents. Typically, schools log bullying incidents, such as in a Behaviour Management system and use that data to inform teaching or staff and community training.

Legal position. Schools have a duty to promote good behaviour, protect children from risk of 'significant harm' under the Children Act 1989 and comply with the Equality Act 2010.

The age of criminal responsibility in the UK starts at 10.

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications such as "*sending via a public network a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character*" or "*making anonymous or abusive calls*" could be criminal offences under a range of different laws, including the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, section 43 of the Telecommunications Act 1984, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 and the Public Order Act 1986.

UK Safer Internet Centre
Helpline for professionals
0844 381 4772
www.saferinternet.org.uk/

Childline
Helpline for children
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk/explore/bullying/pages/cyberbullying.aspx

Childnet resources
www.childnet.com/resources

Childnet is maintaining a useful guide on how to report abuse for a range of social networking sites at:
http://www.childnet.com/resources/how-to-make-a-report

Phonebrain
www.phonebrain.org.uk/contacts/contact-your-phone-network/

Think u Know resources
www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

Anti Bullying alliance
www.antibullyingalliance.org.uk/

Dept. for Education
www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying

Internet Watch Foundation
www.iwf.org.uk/

LGfL school resources
www.lgfl.net/esafety/Pages/education.aspx