

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

CYBER BULLYING



Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour where more powerful individuals or groups abuse those who are less powerful. The attacks are usually repeated against the targeted individuals.

When bullies use information technology to harass, threaten, embarrass or target another person, it's called cyber bullying. It can involve sending cruel text messages to, or posting nasty comments about, a person on or via the internet.

Because this type of bullying can happen when the aggressor and the victim are far apart, it's not restricted to school time or the school grounds. It can happen 24 hours a day; schools should include cyber bullying as a form of misconduct in their codes of conduct.

A school's code of conduct should state that the school may take disciplinary action against a wrongdoer, even where an incident happens outside of school hours and not on school grounds, if their actions have a harmful effect on the victim while they are a learner at the school.

Cyber bullying can take many forms and can happen in a number of ways, including via instant short messaging, password stealing, blogs, websites, sexting, internet polling and interactive gaming.

Let's have a look at each of these.

1. Instant short messaging

This type of cyber bullying takes place when one person sends hurtful or hateful text messages to another, such as calling

them names or sending death threats. This includes text wards, where a large number of children victimise an individual, sending them thousands of text messages and forcing them to use data and run up a high cellphone bill.

2. Password stealing

Password stealing happens when one person steals another's password and then pretends to be the other person or locks them out of their account. Cyber bullying of this kind occurs when the impostor:

- Does things that harm the other's dignity or reputation, or
- Prevents the other person from using their account

3. Blogs

Blogs are similar to an online journal that can be used to post information on the internet for lots of people to see. Cyber bullies use blogs to invade another person's privacy or say things that will damage their reputation or dignity.

4. Websites

In more extreme cases, cyber bullies might create a website aimed at insulting another person. This could include listing the victim's personal information so that they can be easily contacted and insulted by others.

5. Sexting

Sexting refers to sending messages containing sexual references, or nude or sexually explicit photos. This could happen

where someone circulates a private message, or takes a nude picture of an unknowing person and circulates it via email, text message, MMS or another channel.

6. Internet polling

Sometimes bullies might create an internet poll and invite others to vote on something that harms another's dignity or reputation, for example: who is the biggest slut in grade 9?

7. Interactive gaming

There are a few ways that children can be bullied with interactive gaming. Cyber bullies might lock a victim out of a game or go into chat rooms and spread nasty rumours about them. They could even verbally harass them during game play if headsets are used for the game.

Cyber bullying is a real problem and can lead to mental health issues for the victim. Parents should teach children how to use social media safely and encourage them to speak up if they are being bullied.

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