Richard Lander School

Cyber-Bullying Policy

Policy Effective From: September 2026

Responsibility: Head/Assistant Head/Deputy Head/Governing Body

Reviewed and monitored by: Head/Assistant Head/Deputy Head/ Governing Body

Review Date: September 2027

What is Cyber-Bullying?

Cyber-bullying is an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.

Seven categories of cyber-bullying have been identified:

- Text message bullying involves sending unwelcome texts that are threatening or cause discomfort.
- Picture/video-clip bullying via mobile phone cameras is used to make the person being bullied feel threatened or embarrassed, with images usually sent to other people. 'Happy slapping' involves filming and sharing physical attacks.
- Phone call bullying via mobile phone uses silent calls or abusive messages. Sometimes the bullied person's phone is stolen and used to harass others, who then think the phone owner is responsible. As with all mobile phone bullying, the perpetrators often disguise their numbers, sometimes using someone else's phone to avoid being identified.
- Email bullying uses email to send bullying or threatening messages, often using a pseudonym for anonymity or using someone else's name to pin the blame on them.
- Chat room bullying involves sending menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
- Bullying through instant messaging (IM) is an Internet-based form of bullying where children and young people are sent unpleasant messages as they conduct real-time conversations online.
- Bullying via websites includes the use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal polling sites. There has also been a significant increase in social networking sites for young people, which can provide new opportunities for Cyber-bullying.

What can schools do about it?

While other forms of bullying remain prevalent, Cyber-bullying is an increasingly significant issue for many young people.

Richard Lander School recognises that staff, parents and young people need to work together to prevent this and to tackle it whenever it occurs. Richard Lander School ensures that:

- the curriculum teaches students about the risks of new communications technologies, the consequences of their misuse, and how to use them safely including personal rights
- all e-communications used on the school site or as part of school activities off-site are monitored
- clear policies are set about the use of mobile phones at school and at other times when young people are under the school's authority
- Internet blocking technologies are continually updated and harmful sites blocked
- they work with students and parents to make sure new communications technologies are used safely, taking account of local and national guidance and good practice
- security systems are in place to prevent images and information about students and staff being accessed improperly from outside school
- they work with police and other partners on managing Cyber-bullying.
- If a Cyber-bullying incident directed at a child occurs using e-mail or mobile phone technology, either inside or outside school time, the School will take appropriate action which may involve school sanctions.

It will also:

- Advise the child not to respond to the message
- Refer to relevant policies, e.g. e-safety/acceptable use, anti-bullying and apply appropriate sanctions
- Secure and preserve any evidence
- Inform the sender's e-mail service provider
- Notify parents of the children involved
- Consider delivering a parent workshop for the school community
- Consider informing the police depending on the severity or repetitious nature of the offence. The school recognises that some Cyber-bullying activities could be a criminal offence under a range of different laws including: the Protection from Harassment Act 1997; the Malicious Communication Act 1988; section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 and the Public Order Act 1986

If malicious or threatening comments are posted on an Internet site or Social Networking Site about a student of member of staff, Richard Lander School will also:

- Inform and request that the comments be removed if the site is administered externally
- Secure and preserve any evidence
- Send all the evidence to www.ceop.gov.uk/contact_us.html if of a sexual nature
- Endeavour to trace the origin and inform the police as appropriate.

Working with Parents

Richard Lander School has developed a home-school agreement that includes clear statements about e-communications. The school seeks to regularly update parents on:

- What to do if problems arise
- E-communication standards and practices in school
- Internet Safety in the curriculum
- Supporting parents and students if Cyber-bullying occurs by:

1. Assessing the harm done
2. Identifying those involved
3. Taking steps to repair harm and prevent recurrence

Code of Conduct

At Richard Lander School we have developed an Acceptable Use Policy with our students. This is available in IT rooms/classrooms and on Moodle.