



FACT SHEET ONE: How to assist your child when they are experiencing online bullying

Introduction

Communicating through digital means has become prevalent in children and young people's lives, and an acceptable part of their social interaction and development. As parents, this brings concerns around student vulnerability. Sydney Catholic Schools (SCS) has developed this document to assist parents in identifying and responding to inappropriate, harmful and/or illegal online content or activity experienced by children.

SCS is committed to ensuring students understand their responsibilities when using technology. 'Responsible use of Technology' guidelines and protocols are in place and students are educated in these requirements. All schools respond immediately to instances of cyberbullying that fall within the school's jurisdiction (i.e. during school time and using school's internet and communication platforms).

For matters arising outside of school, the school and SCS has limited ability to provide redress, and parents are encouraged to seek advice from the NSW Police and/or the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) if they have concerns for their child's wellbeing. However, schools will endeavour to provide pastoral and emotional support to your child in school, if they are experiencing high levels of distress.

Identifying cyberbullying

Cyberbullying involves, "*the use of technology to bully a person or group with the intent to hurt them socially, psychologically or even physically.*" This form of bullying does not require the bully or the victim to share the same physical space. Sometimes, the bully can create fake usernames or accounts to perpetrate online abuse. Cyberbullying can occur at any time or place and it is not necessary for the person subject of the bullying to know the bully.

Types of cyberbullying behaviour¹ that commonly occur are detailed in the table below.

Harassment	Repeatedly sending offensive messages to a target.
Cyberstalking	Intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear in the victim. Harassment becomes cyberstalking when a victim fears for their personal safety.
Denigration	Making derogatory comments about a target. This can occur using words or can involve dissemination of a derogatory, sexual or non-sexual image.
Happy Slapping	The filming of a physical assault on a victim and the subsequent distribution of the film to humiliate the victim publicly.
Exclusion	Purposely excluding a victim from entering online domains such as a chat room discussion group.
Outlining and Trickery	Situations where a perpetrator manipulates the victim into disclosing information that the perpetrator then publicises in order to humiliate the victim.
Impersonation or Masquerading	Involves a perpetrator pretending to be the victim and sending an offensive message that appears to come from the victim.
Indirect Threat	A form of cyberbullying related to cyberstalking in that it refers to an online communication of impeding physical harm. Unlike cyberstalking, this form relates to a single threat of physical harm made indirectly in the public online domain.

¹ Flinders Law Journal (2014), as referenced in the New South Wales Parliament's paper, NSW Parliamentary Research Service (March 2016 e-brief 2/2016).



How to respond to cyberbullying

If your child is experiencing distress from particular comments and or images posted about them or others, you may be able to take the following steps to have the offensive content removed.

1. **Report all online activity of a criminal nature directly to the police.** The activity may include drug use, sexually explicit content, physical assault, or threats of violence and content that raises concerns about your or another person's safety.
2. **Take a copy of the offensive content as evidence.** This can be done through screenshots, using a mobile device to take a photo, and/or securing the evidence (for example, saving an email and/or emailing the content where possible). You should keep a record of the date and time of the offensive content. Please note, if you come across any images of a sexual nature involving a minor, **do not** make any copies as evidence as this may constitute a crime in itself. You **must** report the matter to the police, as soon as possible.
3. **Ask the person to delete it.** If you know the identity of the person who has posted the offensive content, and you feel safe to do so, you can contact them directly and request them to delete it. You can tell them that their actions could be against the law and you may consider going to the police if they do not remove the post.
4. **Report it to the social media platform.** You can report cyberbullying to the platform where it is posted, for example: Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, TickTok (formerly known as Musical.Ly) and YouTube. Most websites and social media platform providers have an ability to remove content if it violates their terms and conditions. Often, there is a function to report offensive content to the provider, within the actual post.
5. **Report it to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.** If the social media service provider fails to remove the content within 48 hours of you reporting it to them, you can [make a complaint](#) to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.² This is an effective avenue to pursue as the eSafety Commissioner has powers under legislation allowing them to give instruction to social media providers to remove content or take other action where a child's emotional and/or physical safety is at risk of harm. You can contact them directly on 1800 880 176 for additional advice.
6. **Other matters.** In some cases, it may take some time for the offensive content to be removed from the social medial platform. Organisations that can support you and your child include:
 - a. **Kids Helpline:** this service provides persons aged between 5 to 25 years with free and confidential online and phone counselling 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 1800 55 1800.
 - b. **eheadspace:** This service supports young people aged 12 to 25 years with mental health and wellbeing issues, and their families. They are available by phone on 1800 650 890.

² <https://www.esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting/cyberbullying-complaints/i-want-to-report-cyberbullying>.