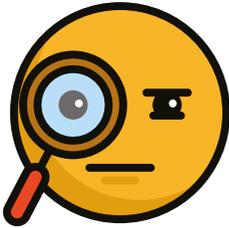


# how to deal with cyberbullying

guidelines for senior management team





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# what is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is one particular form of bullying, but it doesn't sit on its own. It is bullying that is enabled, enhanced, or in some way, mediated through digital technology. Due to the increase in the use of social media, students may find themselves more easily drawn into initiating or being part of bullying behaviour in the digital environment. The ease of using technology and the influence of their peers can be a factor in this, and can create a disruptive environment within the schools.

Some argue that schools should not be responsible for what happens outside of school. However if the students being bullied and bullying others are attending the same or different schools, then it seems inevitable that some of the problems will leak over during class time or occur on school property. Cyberbullying presents new challenges because it can start outside of school and carries on in school or vice versa. Thus, it is important that both parents/guardians and educators in schools have to do their utmost to avoid these undesired behaviours. It is the parents/guardians' responsibility to monitor the technological use of their children once away from school, whilst it is the teaching staff's duties to take note and pass on any information regarding any incidents concerning cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying also presents different challenges because it manifests itself differently from face to face bullying.

For example:

1. repetition — can be influenced by the ability of a single action to spread and be repeated rapidly to a wider audience and with a degree of permanence (e.g. forwarding texts/videos/pictures)
2. power imbalance — is created through the anonymity of the person initiating the cyberbullying; or the person's ability to use technology in a manipulative way
3. anonymity — can involve people who have never physically met; do not know each other and / or people who share no common acquaintances.
4. pervasive — it is very difficult for the victim to get away from the abusive situation

## Purpose of these guidelines

Schools already deal with cyberbullying through the Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy under the umbrella the 'Respect for all Framework' and can make use of the procedures found on:

<https://goo.gl/t4DtYD>

However the ever increasing number of cyberbullying cases is causing diverse challenges to schools and their staff.

Evidence from the recent International Civic and Citizenship Education National Study (ICCS) 2016; National Report Malta 2016 shows that Senior Management Teams (SMT) might not always be aware of how to respond to incidents of cyberbullying.

The aim of these guidelines is to provide a definite guide to the Senior Management Team to deal effectively with this phenomena for the wellbeing of all students.

## Definition of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a form of aggression conducted by an individual or a group against others. Such behaviour is committed via electronic means. A person can be also ostracised from electronic communities or interactions.

Cyberbullying includes (but is not limited to) communicating via electronic means with the objective of causing hurt, fear, embarrassment, humiliation, alarm and/or distress to one or more persons.

Cyberbullying can be carried out on commonly used devices such as smart phones and any electronic device that is connected to the internet.

Examples of cyberbullying include:

- A deliberate act of leaving a person out from online conversations and tagging other friends but the person in question (exclusion).
- Intentionally sending abusive or threatening messages (harassment).
- Logging onto a person's social networking account and impersonating him/her by posting inappropriate content (fraping).
- Sending or posting cruel information about someone to damage their reputation (dissing).
- Stealing someone's online identity, usually photos, and re-creating them on social networking profiles for deceptive purposes (catfishing).

# Standards of Procedures



## Educators reporting cyberbullying

- ◉ Educators should report immediately to SMT.
- ◉ SMT informs the parents/guardians of the student concerned; and asks student to get the necessary evidence.
- ◉ SMT should also involve guidance teachers or counsellors in the initial stages.
- ◉ The SMT is to keep a record of the meetings with the parents/guardians and any decisions taken.
- ◉ The SMT is to inform parents/guardians that cyberbullying may constitute a crime and they may therefore resort to filing a police report.
- ◉ The SMT should record the incident in the School report book using the incident report template, found online or as a hard copy in the Addressing Bullying behaviour in schools: Procedures Appendix B.
- ◉ SMT must ensure that the guidance teachers or counsellor provides the necessary support for the students involved and to parents/guardians where necessary.
- ◉ The SMT can decide to take disciplinary action against the person that is responsible for cyber bullying in accordance with the school or college disciplinary policy.
- ◉ When the SMT is further concerned about the safety of the student/s, they are to inform APPOGĠ about this incident.



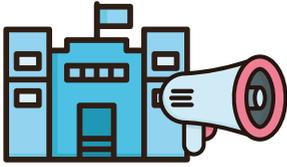
## Parents/guardians reporting cyberbullying to school

- ◉ The SMT should encourage parents/guardians to report to the school. Parents/guardians should be advised about the possibility that they can report the incident to the police would they wish to proceed legally against the alleged perpetrator and/or wish to remove any illicit material from social sites. Parents/guardians can also contact Aгензija Appoġġ on beSmartonline helpline.
- ◉ Parents/guardians can also report directly to the Anti-bullying service.
- ◉ The SMT should encourage the person receiving the report to keep a record of the incident using the report template, found online or as a hard copy in the Addressing Bullying behaviour in schools: Procedures Appendix B.
- ◉ If cyberbullying is being carried out by an adult onto a child, this is a criminal offence and parents/guardians are to be immediately informed and to file a report with the police.
- ◉ If cyberbullying is being carried out by a teacher onto a student the SMT should inform the College Principal/ or Church Secretariat and decide on a course of action.
- ◉ If the cyberbullying is being carried out by a person or educator employed by MEDE, the Disciplinary Regulations of the Public Service should be followed.
- ◉ When SMT is further concerned about the safety of the student/s, they are to inform APPOĠĠ about this incident.



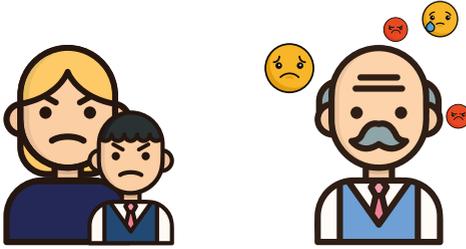
## Students reporting cyberbullying themselves

- ◉ The SMT collates these reports to inform parents/guardians of students concerned.
- ◉ SMT asks student to get the necessary evidence.
- ◉ SMT should also involve guidance teachers or counsellors in the initial stages. The SMT must also ensure that the guidance teachers or counsellor provides the support for the students involved and to parents/guardians where necessary.
- ◉ The SMT should encourage the person receiving the report to keep a record of the incident using the report template, found online or as a hard copy in the Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools: Procedures Appendix B.
- ◉ The SMT is to keep a record of the meetings with the parents/guardians and any decisions taken.
- ◉ When SMT is further concerned about the safety of the student/s, they are to inform APPOGĠ about this incident.
- ◉ The SMT can decide to take disciplinary action against the person that is responsible for cyberbullying in accordance with the school or college disciplinary policy.



## Outside agencies reporting cyberbullying

- ◉ The SMT should involve the guidance teachers and counsellors and/or the Anti-Bullying Service.
- ◉ The SMT informs the parents/guardians of the student concerned; and asks student to get the necessary evidence.
- ◉ The SMT is to keep a record of the meetings with the parents/guardians and any decisions taken.
- ◉ The SMT is to advise the parents/guardians to file a report with the police.
- ◉ The SMT should record the incident in the School report book using the incident report template, found online or as a hard copy in the Addressing Bullying behaviour in schools: Procedures Appendix B.
- ◉ SMT must ensure that the guidance teachers or counsellor provides the support for the students involved and to parents/guardians where necessary.
- ◉ When SMT is further concerned about the safety of the student/s, they are to inform APPOGG about this incident.
- ◉ The SMT can decide to take disciplinary action against the person that is responsible for cyber bullying in accordance with the school or college disciplinary policy.



## Cyberbullying of Educators by parents/ guardians/caregivers or students

- The SMT should encourage the Educator concerned to keep any evidence of cyber bullying .
- The SMT is to advise the educator concerned to file a report at the nearest police station police.
- The SMT can decide to take disciplinary action against students (within the school) who are responsible for cyber bullying in accordance with the school or college disciplinary policy.
- The SMT is to keep a record of the meetings held with the educator, parents/ guardians, students and any decisions taken.

Schools or colleges who require information sessions for educators, parents/guardians or/and students about issues related to cyberbullying may book a session on <http://www.besmartonline.org.mt/requesttalk>



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