

Case study

Talking about and responding to school cyberbullying

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How St Gregory's Catholic Science College educates pupils and parents about cyberbullying through newsletters, Parent Zone and curriculum.



St Gregory's Catholic Science College (Harrow) is a larger than average, inner-city London comprehensive for 11- to 18-year-olds. The school has a high proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities and the percentage of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. In October 2013, the school was rated by Ofsted as 'outstanding' in behaviour.

Resources for parents

The school has a range of measures in place to raise awareness of cyberbullying for parents. For example, the termly school newsletter has a regular item about online safety, which helps to inform parents about social media and other online activities. It also encourages them to talk to their child about acceptable online behaviour and privacy settings.

The school tailors information according to what the school thinks parents need to know. For example, the newsletter recently had a feature on Facebook, which explained that pupils must be at least 13 to have a Facebook account and gave advice on privacy.

The school has a partnership with the Parent Zone (<http://www.theparentzone.co.uk/>) and TalkTalk (<http://www.talktalk.co.uk/homesafechallenge/>) who have worked with staff to develop free resources about online safety for parents. The resources cover a range of issues, including:

- online grooming
- parental controls
- cyberbullying

and are available on the school's website.

The school knows these resources have been useful to parents and pupils from feedback via the parent forum and school council. Additionally, e-safety materials are shown to parents in small groups during parents' evenings. It is essential to include parents in the programme to effectively safeguard children outside school hours.

Behaviour policy

The school's behaviour policy is clear: pupils will be disciplined for unacceptable behaviour that takes place outside school, and that this includes cyberbullying. Pupils are encouraged to save and print evidence of online bullying to help the school investigate the incident. If possible, the school will work with the parents of the perpetrator to show them what has been happening, which can be effective as it removes the protection provided by online anonymity.

Mobile phones

The school also has banned mobile phones, originally to improve pupil safety and reduce their vulnerability to theft when travelling to and from school. However, an unintended consequence of this has been to limit opportunities for cyberbullying during the school day.