Cyber Bullying Policy

Policy Document

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Liwa Education

Rationale

Bullying is a most unpleasant aspect of life in any society, and we regard it as most important to have a clear policy to prevent this. This is a policy declared by the School and is made openly available via the website to staff, pupils, and parents so that all parties are committed to upholding it. It should be read in conjunction with the School's E-safety Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy. This policy is applicable to all in the school community, including those in kindergarten.

It is important to note that with technology and its uses developing rapidly, this document will need to be under fairly constant review and will need to be consulted frequently to keep up to date.

Purpose

- ❏ To ensure that there is a clear procedure to follow which deals with incidents of cyberbullying and that this is made explicit to staff, pupils and parents.
- ❏ To prevent cyberbullying by providing opportunity for discussion by pupils and staff within the School's program of pastoral care.
- ❏ To ensure that all pupils have access to an adult in School to whom they may talk in confidence in the knowledge that something will be done immediately to redress the problem and that the matter will be handled discreetly and sensitively.
- ❏ To make the unacceptable nature of cyberbullying and the consequences of any repetition clear to the cyberbully and his/her parents/guardians.
- ❏ To follow up each incident so as to ensure that the victim is given as much support as possible and also to prevent a recurrence of the behavior.
- ❏ To make clear to parents of both victims and cyberbullies the actions which are being taken by the School, the reasons for doing so and the extent of the support which parents can offer to reinforce those actions.

Definitions

What is Bullying?

Bullying is behavior by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, special educational needs and disability, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgements about each specific case. For the school's position on bullying, please refer to the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Bullying, including racial, religious, cultural, sexist, disability bullying, is the willful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone. It can take a number of forms: physical or verbal, obvious or subtle and can take place over an extended period of time.

Bullying can cause its victim anything from short term unhappiness and anxiety to psychological damage. In extreme cases bullying has been linked directly to victim suicide. Whilst bullying is not in itself a criminal offense, there are criminal laws which relate to harassment and threatening behavior.

Cyberbullying

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyberbullying is a different form of bullying which can happen 24/7, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

Cyberbullying is the sending or posting of harmful or cruel texts or images using the internet or other (digital) communication devices.

There are many different types of cyberbullying:

- Text messages - unwelcome texts that are threatening or cause discomfort.
- Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras - images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed.
- Mobile phone calls - silent calls or abusive messages; or stealing the victim's phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible.
- Emails - threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a made-up name or someone else's name.
- Chatroom bullying - menacing or upsetting replies to children or young people when they are in a web-based chatroom.
- Instant messaging - unpleasant messages sent whilst children are having real time conversations online.
- Bullying via websites - use of blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal polling sites to spread upsetting lies about someone. This includes social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram etc.

It is important to note that many aspects of cyberbullying outlined above are illegal under UAE law, and the School has the right to read e-mail and other electronic communications and take action as a result of information obtained in this way.

The School's view on cyberbullying is that the School will take action to prevent cyberbullying wherever possible and take action to stop such bullying from occurring, whenever the School is involved however peripherally.

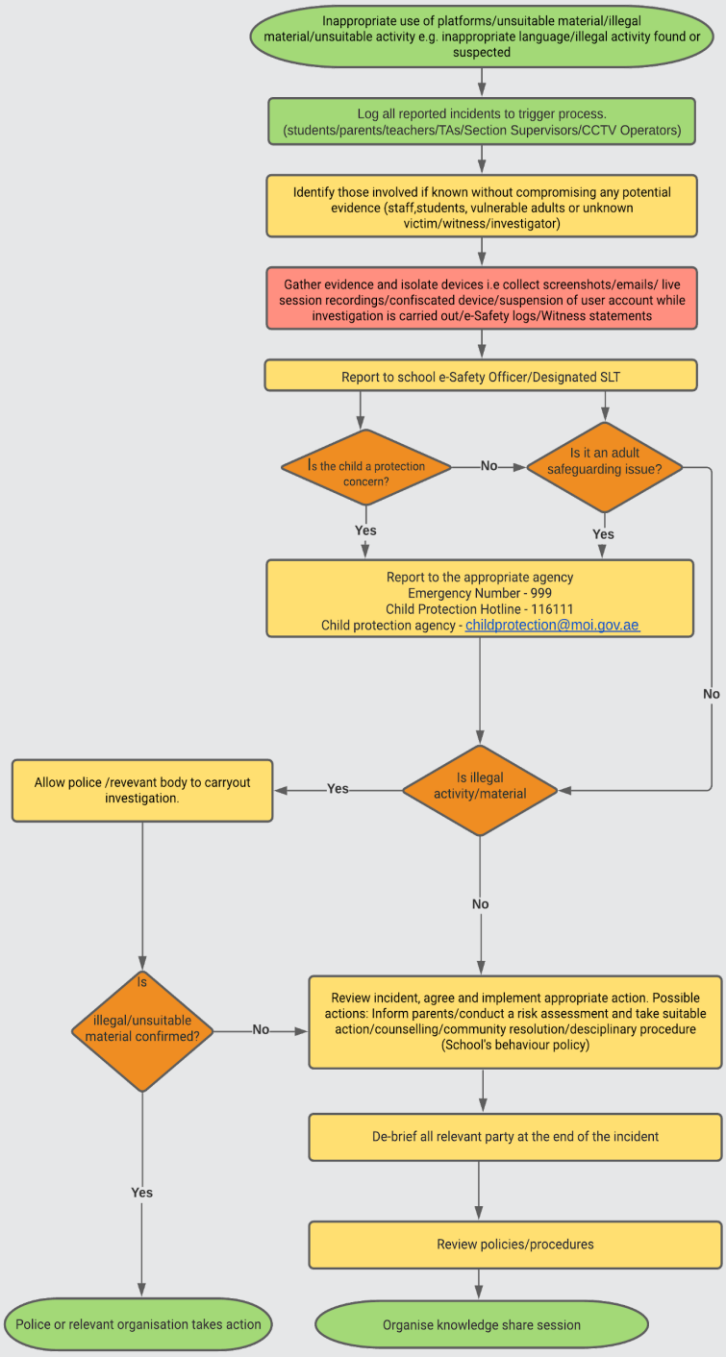
Parents and Guardians

- Parents play an essential role in the education of their children and in the monitoring / regulation of the children's on-line behaviors.
- Through the School's website and portal; e-Safety information is shared as appropriate.
- The School provides information and awareness to parents through seminars and other methods as appropriate.

Sanctions

1. The Principal, via the e-safety officer, will ensure that any misuse or incident has been dealt with appropriately, according to the school's behavior policy, and that appropriate action is taken.
2. Sanctions to be applied as appropriate include suspension of an individual's internet access at School and/or suspension of an individual's user account for a period of time.
3. In serious cases (and where cyberbullying by an individual continues) the Principal may decide to exclude from School the person or persons responsible.
4. Through regular communication between the e-safety officer, social workers, and teachers, it is hoped that any pupil who either seems to be a victim of cyberbullying or is repeatedly being a cyberbully will be quickly identified.
5. When it is deemed necessary, by the social worker, written accounts will be required from all those involved. The social worker will contact the parents of those pupils involved.
6. Should there be an incident of cyber bullying, or other e-safety incidents covered by this policy, which may take place out of school, but is linked to membership of the school, the Principal can impose disciplinary penalties for inappropriate behavior where this is reasonable.
7. The school will deal with such incidents within this policy and associated behaviors and anti-bullying and will, where known, inform parents / carers of incidents of inappropriate e-safety behavior that takes place out of school.
8. Failure to adhere to the policy will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Rewards and Sanctions Policy, the School's Code of Conduct and when necessary, the Child Protection Policy.

E-Safety Incident Report Procedure



Policy Owner Department

Educational Technology Department

Key Stakeholders		
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