



CHARTERHOUSE

CYBERBULLYING POLICY

This document complies with or has regard to the following:

[Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying \(Department for Education 2014\)](#)

[Boarding schools: national minimum standards \(Department for Education 2022\)](#)

[Cyberbullying Guidance for Schools \(Childnet.com, online\)](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education \(Department for Education 2023\)](#)

[Searching, screening and confiscation \(Department for Education 2022\)](#)

[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people \(UKCIS, 2020\)](#)

This document should be read alongside the following Charterhouse policies:

Policy on bullying, abuse and discrimination, and anti-bullying strategy

E-safety policy

IT pupil acceptable use policy

Mobile computing device policy

Safeguarding and child protection policy

Terms used in this policy

1. In this policy, '**platform**' refers to any software, website, chatroom, message facility, multimedia mobile or other app which facilitates electronic communication by voice, social networking, photo or video sharing, SMS/MMS or other instant text/image messaging, video or other online chat. Examples include (but are not limited to) Outlook, Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Chatroulette, Skype, Tumblr, Omegle, TikTok and gaming chat rooms.
2. '**Device**' refers to any electronic device capable of facilitating the kinds of communication outlined above, including (but not limited to) mobile phones, smartphones, tablets, laptops, PCs and games consoles.
3. This policy relates both to what is done in public (on websites open for others to see) or private (in closed user-groups), and to devices which are controlled both by the School and by pupils personally.

How we define 'cyberbullying' at Charterhouse

4. Cyberbullying is the use of modern electronic technology to bully other people. Although it might provide a new temptation, the technology itself is not the problem, and in one sense cyberbullying is a variety of bullying which is no different from any other. The effects on the victim are much the same: damage to self-esteem and self-confidence, with possible severe and long-lasting consequences for mental health and wellbeing, in the worst cases leading to self-harm and suicide.

5. As with conventional bullying, cyberbullying is often linked to discrimination based on perceptions about gender, race, faith, sexual identity or special educational needs and disabilities.

6. As such, everything which is said in the school's main Anti-bullying policy about the definition and procedures for dealing with conventional bullying also applies to cyberbullying. Thus, cyberbullying is behaviour which

- hurts or distresses another pupil,
- is repeated, or part of a broader movement, and
- is based on an imbalance of power.

7. However, there are clearly distinct differences, too. For example, in conventional bullying an 'imbalance of power' may mean that the bully is physically larger than the victim, whereas in cyberspace one person doesn't need to be bigger than the other — he or she just needs to have (for example) power over images or information which the other person doesn't want shared.

The aim of this policy

8. Charterhouse aims to eradicate bullying from the School community, and from the personal and professional conduct of its pupils in their lives beyond the School.

9. That aside, the reason why we need a separate cyberbullying policy is that the nature of modern technology means the School's response to the problem must be in large part educational. This means ensuring that staff and pupils are well-informed about the issues surrounding cyberbullying. A good part of the purpose of this policy, then, is not so much to define 'procedure' (although that is covered later), but to provide information for all members of the School community outlining the features of cyberbullying which are different and distinctive.

Some key differences between cyberbullying and conventional bullying

10. Unlike conventional bullying, electronic communications devices and platforms are a relatively new social phenomenon. Users are still learning how to behave, and supervisors how to respond.

11. These devices and platforms present a huge variety of temptations for one person to mistreat another, with some websites and apps even seeming positively to promote such behaviour.

12. The virtual world seems to be regarded differently, meaning that on occasion people who would not treat others badly face-to-face feel somehow able to do so in cyberspace.

13. Even though cyberbullying can be an extension of conventional bullying, the circulation of messages or images is almost too easy, meaning that people do not always think before indulging in behaviour which they might not have indulged in otherwise.

14. Electronic communication is also incredibly efficient, meaning cyberbullies can distribute messages and images rapidly to a wide audience. This in turn means that people who would normally be called 'bystanders' in conventional bullying situations now become 'accessories' to cyberbullying, often without realising it, because they are drawn into sharing the messages and images in an even wider circulation.

15. Potentially, the number of people who observe the bullying going on (or take part in it) is much larger than usual, and it may travel quickly beyond the School community. In some cases individuals are cyberbullied by people they have never met.

16. Unlike conventional bullying, the manner of distribution means that the person who created the original message or image is (potentially) invisible, and in some cases, cyberbullying is generated anonymously. Obviously, this can make it very difficult for the School (or other authorities) to identify perpetrators, especially when they are acting from remote locations or foreign countries.

17. Cyberbullying is also unusual in that, in the real world, it can be pervasive and invasive, meaning that it can potentially always reach victims and in all places, even those in which they would normally feel safe and secure.

18. Whereas in a school it is relatively difficult for a pupil to bully a member of staff in a conventional sense, it becomes much easier online, for example by leaving defamatory remarks on teacher-rating websites. Thus, in a school, members of staff can become victims of cyberbullying.

The laws relevant to cyberbullying

19. The last significant difference is that in the UK, conventional bullying (as distinct from abuse) is not in itself illegal, but cyberbullying can be illegal, due to the variety of laws which cover online behaviour:

- The Protection of Children Act 1978 (as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 2003) makes it illegal to make, possess, show or distribute indecent images of anyone under 18.
- The Public order Act 1986 makes it an offence "to display any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening or abusive within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby."

- The Malicious Communications Act 1988 makes it illegal to send or deliver anything (including electronic communications) "for the purpose of causing distress or anxiety".
- The Computer Misuse Act 1990 makes it an offence to access or modify someone else's computer or data without their permission.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it illegal to pursue any form of persistent conduct which, in causing another person alarm or distress, amounts to harassment.
- The Data Protection Act 1998 makes it an offence to store or post certain types of information about other people (including images) without their permission.
- The Communications Act 2003 makes it illegal to send (or re-send) over a social media network any message which is grossly offensive, indecent, obscene or menacing.

20. Under the Education Act 2011, persons authorised by a head teacher can confiscate an electronic device if they think it has been used to commit an offence like one of those listed above, or otherwise break school rules. If they have good reason to do so, they can then examine any data or files the device contains.

21. Where sexual imagery is concerned, however, staff at Charterhouse work in line with guidance provided by a government agency, the UK Council for Child Internet Safety, which means that they will not view youth-produced sexual images.

22. If a member of staff believes that any kind of criminal offence has been committed, the School will inform the police.

Varieties of cyberbullying:

23. The first variety of cyberbullying is the use of any platform or device to cause someone distress or harm through the use of written text or the spoken word. This includes (but is not limited to):

- posting rumours, lies or inaccurate information
- taunting, mocking, insulting or humiliating someone
- threatening or otherwise attempting to intimidate someone
- making sexual, violent, or otherwise abusive comments directed against someone (including comments on supposed sexual behaviour, especially of girls)
- making silent calls or sending anonymous, unsolicited messages
- sending malicious messages which, although they do not directly name someone, are clearly about a person who will be recognised by a community or user group
- tagging text (including 'chat') by or about someone, or photos or films by or of them, with comments which are designed to be offensive or provocative ('trolling')
- sending messages in an apparently deliberate attempt to isolate or exclude someone, or to separate them from others

- harassing someone by (for example) deliberately trying to follow and perhaps comment on all their interests and moves online ('cyberstalking')
- attempting to force someone to do or say something by threatening to reveal something about them (blackmail)
- threatening to reveal someone's (supposed) sexual orientation without their knowledge, understanding or permission ('outing')
- attempting to trick or manipulate someone into doing, saying or revealing something ('grooming')

24. The second variety is the use of any platform or device to cause someone distress or harm through the use of image or film. This includes (but is not limited to):

- using any device to take pictures or make films of someone without their informed agreement, but with the potential for later causing them distress; for example, making and/or sharing films of attacks on others;
- digitally manipulating images to humiliate or insult someone, and/or sharing or posting such images on any platform;
- making or sharing images of someone which by their nature are threatening or intimidating;
- sending anonymous, unsolicited images or films;
- making or sharing images or films which ridicule or undermine someone to isolate or exclude them socially;
- making and/or sharing images of another person which are sexualised (see 32/33 below).

25. Third, the use of any device or platform to cause someone distress or harm by impersonating or otherwise misrepresenting them. This includes (but is not limited to):

- creating fake social networking profiles or web pages
- sending or posting information in someone else's name
- interfering with someone's own information after gaining access to it without their knowledge or permission
- 'borrowing' or stealing someone's device and using it to cause distress to a third person, to make that person believe the device's owner is responsible.

26. Fourth, the use of any platform to bombard someone else's device with information to render it slow or unusable.

The Advice we give to pupils

27. In addition to helping pupils understand the definitions and examples above, Charterhouse will give the following advice to them via dedicated PSHE sessions or form assemblies, and via well-trained and well-informed Tutors, Beaks and other staff:

28. You should be aware that a very large number of people on the internet are not who they say they are and do your best to avoid creating opportunities for others to bully or abuse you. Be extremely

careful when tempted to reveal personal information about yourself online or anywhere else (full name, date of birth, home, school or email address, mobile number), and do not post easily identifiable images of yourself in public. Never give your passwords or PINs to anyone else, and never leave an 'unlocked' device unattended.

29. You should be very careful about what you write in emails and messages, or the comments you make and images you post online, because these things can very quickly run completely out of your control. They may be used against you or come back to haunt you, even for many years in the future. Understand 'privacy settings' and use them to your advantage. If you would not feel comfortable wearing a comment or image publicly on your T-shirt, do not post it online.

30. You should remember that most social media sites nowadays have a facility for reporting unwelcome or generally offensive behaviour online. Make use of that facility if you need to. Stand up and be counted for the sake of a decent community — many sites require only two or three complaints to block or sanction a user behaving unpleasantly.

31. However, if you see a message, image or film which goes beyond 'unwelcome' and causes you or someone else personal distress, do not reply, or retaliate, or delete, or forward it. What to do next depends on what kind of message or image it is.

32. You must remember that making, forwarding, copying, posting or printing out a sexually suggestive image of someone under 18 (including nude or semi-nude images and videos) is a criminal offence. This is true even if the people involved think they have consented to it. In theory, to "make, possess, show or distribute an indecent image" can amount to no more than clicking on it to view it (or extreme adult pornography such as bestiality, rape or torture).

33. If you think you may have received such an image, tell an adult as soon as possible. Remember that if the message, image or film is particularly distressing to you (perhaps because it is sexualised), you can ask that no one amongst the School staff views it. Alternatively, all Charterhouse pupils have a 'Click CEOP' button on their Intranet home page, which allows them directly to contact CEOP (the national police agency which deals with online abuse). There are many other sources of information for pupils, several of which are listed in paragraphs 43 and 44 below.

34. If you think you are the victim of some other kind of cyberbullying, try to keep a copy of the message or image if you are able — perhaps using screenshot or 'Print Screen' copy to clipboard. Make a note of any relevant information such as time, content and caller ID.

35. You have the right not to be bullied, but we cannot help you if we have no way of knowing. If you are being bullied online, or you believe someone else is, speak to someone about it: perhaps your parent, your Tutor, a peer-supporter, your Head of House or House Assistant. If you tell a member of School staff, we will ask you how you would prefer to handle it, and work with you to find a solution.

36. If distressing messages or images have been sent to you from outside the School system or posted about you on the internet, we can help you put an end to it. For example, the I.T. Department will be

able to offer detailed technical advice on contacting specific service providers, and (if necessary) the School will work with your parents to make this contact on your behalf.

37. Be particularly careful about inadvertently creating opportunities for other pupils to be cyberbullied by making casual comments or joining in with conversations which appear to be harmless fun. The nature of electronic communication means that these situations can quickly spiral out of control and drag you into something you would not normally choose to be involved with.

38. You should be aware, also, that posting comments about (or images of) another pupil from a remote location using 3G, 4G or 5G, or a device at home or even in another country, will not render you immune from the charge of cyberbullying back at School.

Charterhouse's expectations of staff, and further information

39. Charterhouse staff are required to be familiar with the definitions and examples of cyberbullying outlined in this policy, and to support the School in its efforts to eliminate all kinds of bullying. They are also required to report any suspicions about cyberbullying or potential instances of it in the same manner as described in the School's Anti-bullying policy, and to record their concerns on CPOMS. It is especially important that the Deputy Head (Pastoral) is made aware of every case of potential cyberbullying, so that all concerns can be appropriately logged and form part of a broader overview.

40. All members of staff are required to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or the police, or local authority, as appropriate) immediately of any instances of cyberbullying which could involve sexualised or physically violent comments, images and films, or anything which could potentially amount to abuse as defined in the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. In such cases, staff should not try to investigate or make a judgement, but simply pass on their concerns quickly and clearly, as detailed in that document.

41. Staff should be aware that the police require to be informed of any incident which might constitute a hate crime, here meaning any message, image or film which is perceived by the victim (or any other person) to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's disability or perceived disability; race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; or transgender identity or perceived transgender identity.

42. The School will always follow the advice of the police or local authority. When the School is dealing with instances of cyberbullying internally, it will provide support for the victim which will include assisting them to remove the offending material, and (if necessary) contacting service providers. The School may seek general (not pupil-specific) advice from the [UK Safer Internet Centre's professionals' online safety helpline](#).

43. All staff should be aware that "just turn it off!" is usually not helpful advice to offer a child or young person. Staff should be able to offer pupils guidance on who to contact if they believe they are being cyberbullied, especially during School holidays:

[Childline's "get support" page](#) (Childline is run by the NSPCC)

[CEOP's "make a report" page](#) (This is a police agency, but offers advice directly to children)

[Internet Watch Foundation's "make a report" page](#) (Pupils can use this if they stumble across something they think might be illegal)

44. In addition, the following all offer good sources of information for pupils, parents and staff:

[Anti-Bullying Alliance's pages on cyberbullying](#)

[Family Lives' pages on cyberbullying](#)

[Childnet.com's pages on cyberbullying](#)

[Internet Matters' pages on cyberbullying](#)

[NSPCC's pages on online safety](#)

[UK Council on Child Internet Safety's pages on online safety](#)

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Designated Safeguarding Lead

15 February 2017

Reviewed and updated with minor corrections by AL Colclough 22 August 2023