



SPRATTON HALL

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is the use of the internet, chat rooms, instant messaging, email, mobile phones or other forms of ICT to intimidate, humiliate or otherwise bully someone. This is a particularly hurtful form of bullying as it opens the content up to a world wide audience. It is amazing how quickly embarrassing photos or videos can become internet must-sees.

Cyber bullies are not always the same people who will behave this way in school. The lack of face to face contact with the victim requires less physical courage and the lack of proximity and ability to use a false identity can diminish the fear of being caught.

The most damaging aspect of this form of bullying is the fact that it is permanent and without respite. If your child were bullied at school or at an activity club like Scouts, they have the relief of coming home where the bullies can no longer reach them. The availability of mobile technology such as phones or web books, coupled with the level of access children have to computers at home means that the bullies can reach their victims anywhere.

The key to dealing with these situations is to talk with your child. Treat it like any other form of bullying in terms of their care and support.

Should this bullying be web based, such as a false social networking site set up in their name, contact the service provider and demand that it be removed. If the bully is using a mobile phone then keep any texts that your child might receive and forward them to the parents of those involved or to the police should the situation warrant it.

Changing your child's mobile phone number (if they have one) is an extreme choice but it will allow you to identify the culprit more easily by tracking who has access to the new number.

For further information see

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

There are signs to watch for which may indicate that your child is being bullied or abused online.

If a child is being harassed or bullied online, he or she may:

- Be reluctant to use the computer or electronic device
- Avoid discussion about what they are doing on the computer, or other electronic device
- Look or appear nervous, anxious or jumpy when receiving an email, IM or text message
- Display unusual anger, sadness, and depression after using the computer or electronic device
- Discuss revenge
- Exit or click out of whatever they are doing, if a person walks by
- Unexpectedly quits using the computer or electronic device

- Be having trouble sleeping or have other sleeping disturbances
- Show a decline in school homework or grades
- Have an unusual interest in self-harm or in suicide
- Exhibit unusual mood swings
- Not feel well, headaches, upset stomach
- Become reclusive, anti-social and/or is losing friends
- Be unusually withdrawn or depressed
- Not want to be involved in family or school activities

There are also signs to watch for should you be concerned that your child might be bullying others online:

- He or she may use numerous online accounts or accounts that are not theirs
- When using the computer or electronic device, he or she excessively laughs
- May avoid discussion or conversations regarding online activities
- May close or click out of whatever he or she is doing when a person walks by
- May frequently use the computer, especially at night
- May become upset if computer access or other electronic device is denied