

Fact sheet

Cyberbullying and school aged students

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying conducted with the use of technology, like mobile phones or the internet.

This is the [national definition of bullying](#) for Australian schools.

Bullying is the ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Responsibilities

All incidents that directly affect the good order and management of a school will be managed in line with the school's **Student Code of Conduct**. Principals and school staff have the same responsibility to respond to allegations of cyberbullying as they would any other incident of bullying reported.

Principals

- ensure that their school's **Student Code of Conduct** clearly articulates the school's approach for responding to allegations of cyberbullying and includes the **cyberbullying response flowchart**
- ensure the school community is aware of the school's approach for responding to and managing allegations of cyberbullying
- develop individual school-based policies regarding the use of mobile phones and other technology as part of the school's **Student Code of Conduct** (refer to Student Code of Conduct template)
- provide clear guidance to students and parents about the appropriate use of mobiles and other electronic devices — at school and outside of school (refer to Guidance document).
- share information appropriately and as necessary with staff about any incidents of alleged cyberbullying
- where appropriate, take statutory disciplinary action to address cyberbullying:
 - that occurs outside of school hours or school grounds that also negatively affects the good order and management of the school (e.g. where the conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse have created, or would likely create a risk of, substantial disruption within the school environment, or where the conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse has or might reach school premises); OR
 - that is undertaken on or originating from school premises during school hours, or by means of use of school ICT, concerning other students, staff or members of the school community.
- use non-statutory options to deal with the matter, for example:
 - discussion with student's parents;
 - student mediation;
 - apology;

- ICT / mobile technology ban;
- guidance referral.

- must if at any point a reasonable suspicion is formed that a student has been harmed or is at risk of harm, respond in accordance with the [Student protection procedure](#).
- must regardless of whether or not the cyberbullying is a matter that must be dealt with by the school Principal as per this document, support the wellbeing of any student who is displaying apparent negative effects from cyberbullying by means of offering the appropriate support.

State school staff (including principals)

- treat cyberbullying with the same level of seriousness as other forms of bullying
- follow processes outlined in the school's **Student Code of Conduct** and the **cyberbullying response flowchart** to respond to allegations and incidents of cyberbullying
- ensure records in OneSchool are maintained accurately in relation to any allegations of cyberbullying
- support the wellbeing of any student who is displaying apparent negative effects from cyberbullying by discussing guidance officer support.
- do not open, search or otherwise deal with the property of a student (such as a mobile device) without the consent of the student or parent (refer to [Temporary removal of student property by school staff procedure](#))
- remove property, including mobile phones, from a student if it is necessary to promote the caring, safe and supportive learning environment of the school, to maintain and foster mutual respect between all state school staff, students and visitors (refer to [Temporary removal of student property by school staff procedure](#)).

Students must be advised:

- how to use technology appropriately
- to make a report about cyberbullying by approaching a familiar or trusted teacher
- that if they engage in cyberbullying they will likely face statutory or non-statutory disciplinary action
- if they have concerns about cyberbullying incidents that occur outside of school hours, including weekends or school holidays that they should immediately seek assistance through the [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#) or the [Queensland Police Service](#)
- if they are suffering negative effects from cyberbullying that they can seek guidance support from the school or other support services such as headspace or Kids Helpline.

Resources

- [Online incident management guidelines for school leaders](#)
- [Cybersafety in Queensland state schools](#)
- [Supporting students' mental health and wellbeing procedure](#)
- [Temporary removal of student property by school staff procedure](#)
- [Bullying. No Way!](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [headspace](#)
- [Be You](#)



Queensland
Government

How to manage online incidents that impact your school

Student protection

If at any point the principal forms a reasonable suspicion that a student has been harmed or is at risk of harm, they have a responsibility to respond in accordance with the [Student protection procedure](#).

Explicit images

If the investigation involves naked or explicit images of children, staff should not save, copy, forward or otherwise deal with the content, as per the [Temporary removal of student property by school staff procedure](#). This includes onto OneSchool records. Refer to the investigative process outlined in 'Responding to incidents involving naked or explicit images of children' from the [Online Incident management guidelines](#).

Report

Refer to the [Online incident management guidelines](#) for more details or, if assistance is required, submit a [request to remove harmful online content](#) through the Services Catalogue Online. For further support, contact the Cybersafety and Reputation Management team on 3034 5035 or email Cybersafety@qed.qld.gov.au.

Does the online behaviour/incident **negatively impact the good order and management** of the school?

