CYBER BULLYING INFORMATION

Cyber bullying is causing hurt via modern technologies such as the Internet and other forms of social media, and through the use of smart phones and other mobile devices.

Cyber bullying is a growing problem in society. Modern technologies empower the individual, even the most unlikely of individuals, with an immense capacity to cause harm. It is also an attractive means of bullying for it can, under certain conditions, be carried out with relative anonymity.

Cyber bullying can be particularly damaging because of the capacity it has to humiliate, hurt and harm a person in front of a huge 'audience'.

A dangerous feature of cyber bullying is that it can be done quickly and easily. On an impulse, a person can create emotional havoc for another and do so before the voice of reason hints at the inappropriateness of the action.

A further problem with cyber bullying is that the bully is often unaware of the extent of the harm they are causing because cyber bullying seldom occurs face-to-face. The feedback is muted by distance so that the bully is protected from an understanding of the awfulness of their behaviour.

Cyber bullying represents unlawful activity that may result in police laying charges. Cyber bullying has been linked to depression, self-harm and even suicide.

Examples of Cyber bullying:

- Sending hateful or threatening comments or pictures via MSN, mobile phone or the Internet and by social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook.
- Using modern technologies to engage in the social exclusion of someone and in hate group recruitment.
- Posting rude, explicit or embarrassing messages or pictures about someone on the Net.
- Stealing someone's identity in order to harm them in some way.
- Putting pressure on a person to send revealing or compromising pictures of themselves.
- Covertly filming, recording or taking a picture of someone and posting the images on the Net to cause hurt.
- 'Outing' and disseminating confidential information about someone.
- 'Flaming' and multi-messaging to clog up a person's electronic system and to cause them distress.
- Using aliases and pseudonyms in chat rooms and on social networking sites in order to harass and upset.
- Engaging in cyber-stalking and the invading of privacy.
- Referring to your school in a negative or disparaging way on the Net.

Sexting

Another expression of cyber bullying is sexting.

Sexting is taking sexually explicit photos and making them available for others to see via a carriage service such as mobile phone or computer.

Sending explicit images of anyone, including yourself, is a crime if you are under the age of 18 years. If the person in the picture is under 16 years, it can be a very serious crime resulting in charges of paedophilia.

Cyber anonymity

Students need to remember that something sent electronically can never be entirely removed even with a press of the 'delete' button. The image may emerge at any stage in their future life and lead to serious consequences.

Using pseudonyms, passwords and avatars does not protect the identity of a cyber bully. Technologies exist to identify those who mis-use modern technologies to harm others.

It should also be noted that even if cyber bullying is engaged in while not at school, the matter will be taken up by the School because the moral welfare of its students is of importance to Runcorn State High School as is anything that brings the School into disrepute.

Students can protect themselves from some forms of cyber harm by noting the following advice:

1. Never tell anyone, even your friends, your passwords, private details or access codes.
2. When speaking to someone you do not know on the Net, be aware they may not be who they say they are.
3. Be aware that there are predators who use the internet to lure young people into inappropriate sexual relationships. Others use tricks, such as pretending to be a bank, to get the victim to share their confidential financial details. This usually results in identity fraud and the stealing of money.
4. Never tell people you do not know well what your address is, or how they can meet up with you.
5. Always be careful what you say or what you show a person in confidence on the Net for it is never guaranteed to remain confidential. The information may be sent on to others.
6. Know that the most frequent use of the Net is for illegal activities such as scams, pornography and gambling.

Finally, if you find yourself the victim of cyber bullying, keep the evidence and report the bullying to an appropriate adult. It is generally best not to respond to the cyber bully, or give them any satisfaction they have caused you hurt. If you do respond to the bully, do not do so while hot with anger. This can result in mutual cyber bullying, which means both parties become guilty of bullying.