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Further Education Centre
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Anti-CyberBullying Policy

Introduction

Cyberbullying can be very damaging to individuals, and disruptive to centre life. Though new technology brings incredible opportunities for educators as well as young people, it is crucial that everyone knows how to use this technology responsibly and that policies are in place to support and encourage responsible use.

Scope

This document is aimed at combating cyberbullying. Cyberbullying includes (but is not limited to) communicating via electronic means with the objective of causing hurt, fear, embarrassment, humiliation, alarm and/or distress to one or more persons. Cyberbullying includes the use of mobile phones and the internet with the objective of upsetting someone. It may take the form of general insults or impersonation, defamation or prejudice-based bullying.

While this policy addresses issues related to the cyberbullying of students (i.e. situations in which one or more students are the victim(s) of bullying), the policy also applies to teaching and other centre staff, parents/guardians, and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them.

This policy applies to activities and events that take place:

- During centre hours (including break times)
- Going to and from centre
- On centre tours/trips
- During extra-curricular activities

Furthermore, Youthreach Ballinrobe reserves the right to take action against bullying perpetrated outside the centre which spills over into the centre.

Objectives

This policy aims to ensure that:

1. Students, staff and parents know about cyberbullying and its effects; Members of the centre community have the knowledge, policies and procedures to prevent and, if necessary, to deal with cyberbullying in centre or within the centre community; and
2. The centre monitors the effectiveness of its procedures and amends them where necessary.

Youthreach Ballinrobe is committed, to the extent permissible by available resources, to helping members of the centre community to enhance their learning experiences through the use of modern technology. The centre acknowledges that Information and Communication Technologies can play an important role in supporting learning, but also that they can be misused and can present risks.

The Centre aims to equip members of the centre community with the skills and knowledge needed to use these technologies in a safe and responsible manner and to assisting those that encounter difficulties. The Centre also recognises that it must be vigilant towards bullying perpetrated outside Centre which spills over into the Centre.

Youthreach Ballinrobe aims to create a caring environment where those in the centre community can work and learn without fear of being bullied. Youthreach Ballinrobe aims to educate and inform its students as to how to use communications technology responsibly and about the serious consequences of cyberbullying and will continue to inform and educate its students in these fast changing areas.

Goals

1. To create a centre ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of cyberbullying behaviour.
2. To raise awareness of cyberbullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour with centre management, teachers, students, parents/guardians.
3. To ensure that the centre's Social, Personal and Health Education programme raises awareness of the factors associated with cyberbullying behaviour and develops students' appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours.

4. To take practical actions to prevent incidents of cyberbullying behaviour e.g. to ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of centre activity are kept under observation.
5. To develop procedures for reporting and recording incidents of cyberbullying behaviour.
6. To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of cyberbullying behaviour.
7. To develop a programme of support for those affected by cyberbullying behaviour and those involved in cyberbullying behaviour.
8. To work with, and through, the various local agencies in countering all forms of cyber-bullying and anti-social behaviour.

Key Measures

- The Principal will act, or will appoint a staff member to act, as a Cybersafety Officer, to oversee the practices and procedures outlined in this policy and monitor their effectiveness.
- The Cybersafety Officer will ensure that the centre maintains details of agencies and resources that may assist in preventing and addressing bullying.
- Staff will be trained to identify signs of cyberbullying and will be helped to keep informed about the technologies that children commonly use. This is normally carried out at staff annual conferences.
- Students will be informed about cyberbullying in the course of their education at the Centre. An information notice board is located in the centre. Other possible ways of informing students about cyber-bullying are through the Life and Social Skills programme, CSPE classes, SPHE classes and SPHE classes. This will help students to protect themselves from being involved in bullying (as perpetrator or victim) and to advise them on reporting any incidents.
- Students and staff are expected to comply with the centre's policy on the use of computers in the Centre.
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on cyber-bullying. This is provided at the start of the course and also on our website.

Definition of Cyber-Bullying:

Cyberbullying is aggression conducted by an individual or a group against others -such aggressive behaviour being committed via electronic means or via exclusion from electronic communities or interactions.

Cyberbullying includes (but is not limited to) the communicating via electronic means with the objective of causing hurt, fear, embarrassment, humiliation, alarm and/or distress to one or more persons. Cyberbullying includes is the use of mobile phones and the internet with the objective of upsetting someone. It may take the form of general insults or impersonation, defamation or prejudice-based bullying.

Types of behaviour involved

These guidelines provide assistance in identifying and describing the types of behaviour involved in cyber-bullying. The means of cyber-bullying are constantly changing and the following list of types of bullying behaviour can be expanded in light of the experience of the centre community:

Hate sites

Building websites that are dedicated to making fun out of someone.

Encouraging other people to join the bullying by publishing someone's personal details or linking to their social network page.

Abusive messages

Transmitting abusive and/or threatening messages.

Chat rooms and discussion forums

Posting cruel and/or or abusive comments about someone.

Mobile phone

Sending humiliating and abusive video, photographic or text images/messages.

Making silent or abusive phone calls

Sending abusive text messages.

Interactive gaming

Locking victims out of games.

Spreading false rumours about someone

Hacking into someone's account.

Sending viruses

Sending hacking programs to another person.
Unauthorised interference with a computer device.

Abusing personal information

Transmitting personal photos, videos or emails.

Blogs

Posting blogs where others could see them without the owner of the blog's permission.

Prevention and Response

The centre informs students about cyber bullying and also takes available steps to counter and respond to it.

The following measures represent the core of the Centre's anti cyber-bullying activities:

- A positive centre culture and climate;
 - Centre-wide approach;
 - Effective leadership;
 - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
 - Anti-bullying policies;
 - Consistent recording of reported bullying behaviour;
 - Education and training;
 - Prevention strategies including awareness raising;
 - Intervention strategies.

Youthreach Ballinrobe trains its staff to respond effectively to reports of cyberbullying or harassment and has systems in place to respond to it.

Youthreach Ballinrobe record all reported incidents of bullying behaviour including anonymous bullying reports.

Youthreach Ballinrobe provides information on cyber-bullying to all members of the centre community.

Youthreach Ballinrobe engages prevention and awareness raising measures and implements strategies to engage students in addressing problems when they see them.

Youthreach Ballinrobe is a “telling centre”. If a member of the centre community “speaks out” and reports an incident of cyber-bullying appropriate action will be taken.

Youthreach Ballinrobe endeavours to block access to inappropriate web sites, using firewalls, antivirus protection and filtering systems and no pupil is allowed to work on the Internet in the Computer Room, or any other location within the centre which may from time to time be used for such work, without a member of staff present.

Whilst education and guidance remain at the centre of what we do, Youthreach Ballinrobe reserves the right to take disciplinary action (up to and including suspension and expulsion) against those who take part in cyber-bullying.

Youthreach Ballinrobe supports victims and, when necessary, will work with the Gardaí and other State agencies to identify those involved in criminal acts and to support victims.

Youthreach Ballinrobe will use, as appropriate, the full range of sanctions to correct, punish or remove pupils who bully fellow pupils or harass staff in this way, both inside and outside the centre.

All members of the Centre community are aware they have a duty to bring to the attention of the Principal any example of cyberbullying or harassment that they know about or suspect.