PICNIC POINT PUBLIC SCHOOL

CYBERBULLYING POLICY

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Rational:

At **Picnic Point Public School** we aim to ensure a safe and happy learning environment for all members of the school community. We recognise that bullying does occur and we work to promote a culture which rejects bullying and provides support to any members of the school community who are bullied.

Bullying that is carried out through an internet service, such as email, social media, internet, chat room, discussion group or instant messaging or through mobile phone technologies such as short messaging service (SMS) is Cyberbullying. Cyberbullying will not be tolerated at any level, and consequences exist for students who choose to bully others.

Procedures are outlined in this policy for reporting cyberbullying and responding to incidents.

The school also aims to work with students, teachers and the community to raise awareness, encourage reporting, prevent cyberbullying and to promote the values of tolerance and respect as well as the valuing of difference and diversity.

This policy applies to all members of the school community which includes students, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents/caregivers and visitors to the school.

All members of the school community have a responsibility to support and promote these objectives. They also have the right to be involved in ongoing collaboration to develop strategies to support the cyberbullying plan.

DEC Approach to Cybersafety

The NSW Department of Education and Communities recognises that technology plays an important role in education. However the Department also acknowledges the inherent risks of young people having access to a range of sites, particularly where such access is not carefully monitored.

It is important to educate young people and teacher/parents on responsible technology use and equip them with the skills to keep safe. Schools and families must work together to ensure that students know that bullying by any means is not acceptable and that young people use technology appropriately and can resolve conflict without violence .

The Department has policies, programs and support in place to help raise awareness and counter inappropriate use of technology

Cyberbullying

Definition

Cyberbullying is commonly defined as the use of information and communication technologies to support repeated and deliberate hostile behaviour intended to harm others. It is sometimes used as an extension to other forms of bullying, and can result in the target of bullying experiencing social, psychological and academic difficulties.

Key Characteristics and Forms of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can be conducted in many ways, using different media including:

- the sending of abusive texts or emails;
- taking and sharing unflattering or private images;
- posing unkind messages or inappropriate images on social networking sites; and
- excluding individuals from online chats or other communication.

While is similar to real life bullying it also differs in the following ways:
- it can be difficult to escape and invasive ~ it can occur 24/7 and a person can be targeted while at home;
- it can involve harmful material being widely and rapidly disseminated to a large audience, for example rumours and images can be posted on public forums or sent to many people at once; and
- it can provide the bully with a sense of relative anonymity and distance from the victim, so there is a lack of immediate feedback or consequences.

Shared Responsibilities

Professional Development for Teachers

Cyberbullying poses unique challenges because, while it is more likely to occur outside the school environment, staff may be more likely to observe the impact more than parents or caregivers. This is because staff see students with their peers and may be able to identify changes in behaviour.

As part of ACMA's (Australian Communications and Media Authority) Cybersafety Outreach Program the staff attend a free presentation on general internet safety awareness every two years.

These presentations cover a range of issues including:
- the ways students use the internet and emerging technologies;
- potential risks faced by students when online such as cyberbullying, identity thief, inappropriate contact and exposure to inappropriate content; and
- tips and strategies to help students stay safe online.

Specific Education for Student

Through the RFF program at school the students will spend a term every year focussing on direct explicit teaching that deals with being a Digital Citizen.

This covers a range of issues including:

- Cyberbullying
- Cybersafety
- Password protection
- Social networking
- Digital footprints
- Copyright

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Education for Parents

To deal holistically and effectively with problems involving cyberbullying, the partnership between parents and the school is vital to support all students involved, whether they are victims, bystanders or offenders.

The parents are invited to attend ACMA's Cybersafety Outreach Program in the evening after the students have attended during the day. They will find out information on how their children are using the internet.

Identifying Incidents of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can happen to anybody, not just those considered vulnerable. Confident, outgoing individuals can also be targeted.

One or more of the following signs and changes in behaviour could indicate that a student is being cyberbullied.

- Decline in academic performance and social interactions.
- Dislike and avoidance of school, sometimes resulting in higher absenteeism.
- Complaints of feeling unwell though parents report no specific illness.
- Having less to do with friends.
- Increased social exclusion and peer rejection.
- Falling behind in homework.
- Poor physical health and sleepiness.
- Increased negative self-perception.
- Increased reluctance to participate in regular school activities, including classroom discussion.
- Becoming withdrawn, appearing depressed or anxious, having mood swings, crying for no apparent reason.

The above signs should be considered in light of the student's usual behaviour.

Responding to Incidents of Cyberbullying:

When an incident of cyberbullying has been reported the following procedures shall be put in place:

1. Ensure that the student is safe and arrange support.
2. Contacts the student's parents and alert them to the issue, and ongoing concerns regarding the welfare of the student, and request a meeting to discuss the issue and how best to deal with it.
3. Reassure the student that the school is taking the incident seriously and that the reported cyberbullying will be acted on.
4. Gather the basic facts about the suspected bullying and, if possible, identify the students involved.
5. Implement appropriate procedures to address the cyberbullying using responses such as restorative justice approaches to conflict resolution. These approaches seek to address cyberbullying issues while providing support to both the victim and the bully.
6. Bear in mind that advising the student to completely disengage from their online activities is not always helpful as this can also isolate them from supportive friends.
7. Consequences as per School Discipline Policy or as appropriate for student displaying cyberbullying behaviour.

Support for Students Being Cyberbullied

Strategies for students and parent to assist with managing cyberbullying:
- Don't respond to any further messages/postings from the bully and, if possible, block further correspondence from them;
- Report any further correspondences from the bully;
- Keep any evidence of cyberbullying to assist with tracking down the and potentially reporting the matter to the police (screen captures, bully's screen name, texts and messages). If the parents are concerned that the student will continue to look at the saved material and become more distressed, ask them to store the material in a folder that is password protected;
- Advise the parents to let the administrator of the service used, including mobile phone provider (if SMS is involved) website administrator (if social networking or chat services are involved), or internet service provider, as most have measures to assist with tracking and blocking the bully. Some block the bully's access to their services entirely as bullying is often a breach of website terms of use; and
- If the student is distressed by the bullying, ensure they are provided with options for support including the school counsellor and the Kids Help Line (phone 1800 551 800).

Reference

Australian Government, ACMA's (Australian Communications and Media Authority) cyber[smart:], (17, August, 2012) http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Schools.aspx (September 2012)