



Cyberbullying Parent Presentation

Parent session – guidance for schools

Introduction

This session is designed to give parents¹ information on how to support their children on the issue of cyberbullying.

If you are looking for more resources that you could use with parents relating to cyberbullying, please have a look at the Internet Matters website for resources and ideas: <https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/cyberbullying>

Outcomes

By the end of this session, parents will:

- Have information insights into the digital world and how children interact with it
- Be able to describe what cyberbullying is and the elements that make up bullying
- Understand different types of cyberbullying
- Understand your school's position and approach to bullying
- Know how to report bullying and what to do if they are experiencing bullying

Introducing the session:

Talking about cyberbullying with parents can sometimes be upsetting for them. Their child may have bullied online or may be experiencing cyberbullying, and they may have also experienced bullying or bullied others when they were a child. It's important to acknowledge that this can be a difficult thing to talk about. Here are some tips:

- Explain that this is a safe space and there are no right or wrong answers
- Throughout the session remind parents that if their child is being bullied it is not their fault and that they should speak to their teachers

¹ When we talk about parents we mean parents, carers and legal guardians.

- Be clear about your expectations about bullying on school transport and online – schools have the power to intervene in bullying off school site and it's good to be clear about your position on this
- Be sensitive to how parents respond to the issues. If you're concerned, try to find a way to have a chat with them quietly
- We know the impact of bullying is significant but remember to reassure parents that whilst bullying is a serious issue that doesn't mean it will happen to their children; assure them that if bullying does happen, you will work with them to sort it out together
- It's important that this is not the only time you talk about bullying to parents. There are many other opportunities across the school year to discuss the school ethos, how we treat each other and talk about bullying

Slide 2

Agenda

1. Introduction to Internet Matters
2. The digital world
3. What is cyberbullying?
4. How to protect your child
5. Dealing with Cyberbullying
6. Final thoughts

Slide 3:

Introduction to Internet Matters

Sample script: "Good morning and welcome to this session on cyberbullying created by internet safety organisation Internet Matters.

Before we get started, I want to share this video to give you some background on Internet Matters and the work they do."

Play the video (1:42) linked in the presentation.

Slide 4:

The Digital world

The next few slides give parents context to the digital landscape our children live within.

The internet is great and we don't want to stop our children from using it.

- **Education** – Access to unlimited information in one place – easy access and variety of formats to suit everyone. There are many education sites such as BBC bitesize where children can revise for curriculum exams. During the pandemic, distance

learning and other educational resources have been central to our children's success in education.

- **Social** – Children can communicate with people across the world and experience different cultures and points of view without leaving their homes. They can easily stay in contact with friends outside of school hours.
- **Express individuality** – There are many groups and organisations that exist solely in the digital world. These allow like-minded individuals to exchange information and ideas. There is also opportunity to share creativity from art to music.
- **New skills** – Children can learn new skills online from how to write a piece of computer code to how to create a new hairstyle and everything in between.

However, the internet remains a complex place which was not built intentionally for children and is not as regulated as other children's services.

Slide 5:

Research on children's use of social media;

The children of today are growing up in a very different world compared to our generation.

The digital technology has become a fundamental part of children's lives.

- 44% of 8-11 year olds and 87% of 12-15 year olds are using social media today
- 64% of 8-11 year olds and 91% of 12-15 year olds are using chat or messaging sites and apps

Therefore, it's imperative you get involved in your child's online activity and guide them through it safely.

Slide 6:

This slide gives some further insight on how children are using the internet

Most children aged 5-15 are online these days. But what are they using?

- 56% - using a device to access live broadcast TV
- 91% - accessing video-on-demand content
- 71% - gaming online
- 55% - using social media (this number is 87% for those aged 12-15; most social media platforms are restricted to users aged 13+)
- 65% - instant messaging apps and sites
- 97% - video-sharing platforms
- 45% - live streaming apps and sites (which at least partially includes those creating their own live streams)

Slide 7:

Such is the pace of change in technology that six year-olds are as digitally advanced today as 10 year olds were less than a decade ago.

- **General browsing** – in 2013, 46% of 10 year olds used the internet for general browsing compared to 48% of a modern 6 year old used the internet for general browsing
- **Instant message** – In 2013 31% of 10 year olds used the internet for instant messaging compared to 32% of modern 6 year olds use the internet for instant messaging
- **Social media** – in 2013, 32% of 10 years olds used social media compared to 26% of modern 6 year olds (keep in mind that unless specifically made for kids, social media will likely have a restriction for children under 13 years old)

This all shows a general trend for children becoming involved in the digital world at a younger age than ever before.

Slide 8:

With children's lives becoming more and more digital focused, there are new pressures:

Lauren Seager-Smith, CEO of Kidscape talks about:

FOMO – Fear of missing out

“The pull to be part of the ‘in’ crowd is strong and as a parent it can be easy to forget how that felt at 13 or 14 and some of the associated risks. In the online world that can include pressures to share personal images that a child might think will improve their social status.”

Dr. Linda Papadopoulos, Psychologist and Internet Matters Ambassador talks about:

Selfies and Mental health

“The selfie phenomenon is like having a mirror following you around 24 hours a day. And not just following you, but giving you a minute-by-minute account of friends, peers and celebrities.”

Katie Collett, The Diana Awards talks about:

Social media and Self-Esteem

“Many young people revealed that they would delete a selfie they’ve posted if it didn’t get enough ‘likes’ and some told me that getting fewer than even 50 ‘likes’ would make them feel upset and even ‘ashamed of myself’.”

Children in the past faced similar pressures but it manifested in a different way and did not have the instant reach that the online world can have

Slide 9:

The ABA definition of Bullying

The key elements of bullying are:

- **Hurtful:** can use violence, hurtful words or ganging up to make another person feel helpless
- **Intentional:** make someone feel bad on purpose
- **Repetitive:** hurting another person or group - more than once
- **An imbalance of power:** making the other person or group feel weaker or more stupid than you

And bullying has evolved... this can happen face to face or on the internet (Cyberbullying).

- The definition remains the same but the means of carrying it out has changed
- Cyberbullying is when someone bullies others using electronic means, this might involve social media and messaging services on the internet, accessed on a mobile phone, tablet or gaming platform.

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Internet Matters launched a cyberbullying campaign in October 2016 to demonstrate how cyberbullying has changed – using the school rhyme/analogy ‘Sticks & Stones’. This campaign video (0:30) encouraged parents to understand that bullying has changed and that we can help them get the right advice about how they should deal with cyberbullying. The old advice to ignore bullying no longer works when the bullying can follow children into their homes on their devices.

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How is cyberbullying different to real world bullying?

1. **Hard to escape** – Leaving the bullies behind in the school playground is no longer an option. The bullies are with you wherever your connected device is.
2. **24 hour access** – Children often check their devices through out the evening and sometimes during the night
3. **Instantly reach a large audience** – Messages and images can be shared quickly via messaging or social media. The audience can quickly grow to people you don't even know
4. **Anonymity** - Some platforms allow you to stay anonymous. People often say things online they would not say in real life.
5. **Lots of repetition with likes and shares** – Can quickly spread outside the child's own network of friends. We have all seen videos or images that have gone “viral”
6. **It's hard to police** – Social media networks, online games, and other online tools have report functions but only work if the children use them

Slide 12:

Cyberbullying terms

It often seems that children speak a different language. Here are some terms related to cyberbullying. Does anyone know the definitions?

Get the audience to offer definitions of the words:

- **Cyberstalking** - sending repeated and frequent messages that include real threats of physical harm
- **Outing** - publicly sharing personal, private or embarrassing information, photos or videos about someone online
- **Harassment** - targeting an individual or group with persistent and offensive messages which could develop into cyberstalking
- **Masquerading** - creating a fake identity or impersonating someone else online to harass an individual anonymously
- **Frapping** - logging into someone else's account, impersonating them or posting inappropriate content in their name
- **Roasting** - ganging up on an individual online and sending offensive abuse until the victim is seen to 'crack'
- **Dissing** - sending or posting information that's intended to damage someone's reputation
- **Flaming** - sending angry, abusive online messages to intentionally provoke someone into starting an argument
- **Griefing** - abusing and angering people through online gaming
- **Exclusion** - deliberately excluding someone from online conversations, games and activities
- **Trolling** - deliberately posting provocative and insulting messages about sensitive subjects or inflicting racism or misogyny on an individual
- **Catfishing** - stealing someone's profile or setting up fake profiles to lure people into starting online relationships

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- **Think before you post** – The choices we make online say something about who we are. Talk to your child about how the things they do online paint a picture of themselves - if they're not happy to wear it on their T-shirt, they shouldn't post it
- **Be share aware** - Talk to your child about the risks of sharing e.g. identifying where they live or go to school, and what people online might do with that information. Talk about what the risks might be of sharing personal thoughts and feelings. And help your child stay safe on social networks, apps and games.

Resource: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/>

- **Be a good role model** – Children learn by example. Make sure you are using the digital world in a positive way to teach them good habits
- **Limit their time online** – Reduce time spent online by setting limits.

Resource: create a 'Family agreement' like this one by Childnet:
<http://www.childnet.com/blog/family-agreement>

- **Get involved** - The best way to keep your child safe online is to take an active interest right from the start. They need your love and protection online as much as

they do in the real world. Stay up to date and keep your child safe in today's digital world with NetAware: <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

Slide 14-15:

Another way to get involved is to teach your child to have good **internet manners**. You can download the guide on the Internet Matters website and share it with your children:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/guidance/top-internet-manners/>

1. Treat people how you would like to be treated
2. If you wouldn't say it to someone in person, don't say it online
3. Be aware that people can't see your body language, facial expressions or hear the tone of voice online
4. Don't make situations worse by provoking people
5. Don't start rumors or spread gossip about someone
6. Don't make fun of someone in an online chat
7. Post things that will inspire and motivate people in a positive way
8. Make sure you don't create a negative environment in an online world or game through name-calling
9. Include people in online games and social forums, and don't intentionally leave people out
10. You can't retrieve material once it's sent or posted online so if it might embarrass you or someone else, don't put it online
11. Respect each other's privacy
12. Respect other people's time and avoid posting too much information

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It's really important to help your child set up safe social media profiles as these are often open for anyone to see. **For a safe social media profile:**

1. **Use a strong password** – to avoid hacking
2. **Use an alias and avoid personal pictures** – so your child cannot be easily identified
3. **Don't include date of birth and other personal information like their school** - so your child cannot be easily identified
4. **Show your child how to block and report** – In case they experience unwanted messages or bullying
5. **Change settings to private** – to prevent strangers being able to become friends or send messages
6. **Consider the minimum age** – age 13 for most social media platforms
7. **Don't accept friend requests from strangers** – this gives them access to your child's information
8. **Switch off location services** – So your child's movements cannot be monitored
9. **Tell them to think before they post** – Think about who will see the information they post and what impact that might have

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Visit www.internetmatters.org for loads of help and advice

Broadband Parental Controls – Your broadband provider has built-in controls. See the Internet Matters website for step-by-step instructions

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/networks-wifi/>

Network controls – Some mobile networks provide content blocking

Device settings

- Restrict downloads to age-appropriate apps and games
- Disable locations services so your child's movements cannot be tracked
- Password-control in-app purchases
- Download apps for your child that you are happy for them to use

Talk about staying safe

- Use the Internet Matters app to learn about how to stay safe online
- Check privacy settings of apps, social media, and online games

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Spotting the signs

54% of parents say they are concerned about cyberbullying. This is the same level of concern as online grooming and seeing inappropriate content.

1 in 10 of parents are aware their child has been cyberbullied despite numerous surveys suggesting that the number of children cyberbullied ranges from **20-40%**.

According to Ofcom's 2020-2021 "Children and parents: media use and attitudes report," children may fail to report bullying because:

- They are embarrassed
- They don't want to be labelled a snitch by their peers
- They might worry it will get worse
- They worry they won't be taken seriously
- They reported incidents in the past, but nothing was done

Spotting the signs is really important. These could include:

- Changes in attitude and behaviour
- Obsessive about being online
- Unexplained physical symptoms
- Stopping using their electronic devices suddenly or unexpectedly
- Seeming nervous or jumpy when using their devices
- Any changes in behaviour such as becoming sad, withdrawn, angry, or lashing out, reluctance to go to school or take part in usual social activities
- Avoiding discussions about what they're doing online or who they're talking to

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Talk about it

Dr. Linda Papadopoulos (Child psychologist & Internet Matters Ambassador) talks about the impact of bullying and how to help your child if they are cyberbullied (1:50)

- Find the right time to have a conversation
- Stay calm
- Ask open questions
- Reassure them that you are on their side

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There are a number of things you can do to help your child.

The do's:

1. **Block** – you can block individuals on most social media platforms and messaging services. This will stop them from being able to privately message you
2. **Report** – Most social media platforms have a reporting mechanism. Content can be reported and reviewed by a monitor who may remove it if it's deemed inappropriate
3. **Keep the evidence** – It's important to keep evidence of bullying by taking screenshots of the offending material. You can refer back to this later and have an accurate record of the offence
4. **Know when to take it further** – in extreme cases and if you feel your child is in danger, involve your local police

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The don'ts:

- **Retaliate** - Advise your child not to respond to abusive messages and leave conversations if they feel uncomfortable
- **Stop them going online** – Removing access is punishment to the bullied child and can lead to further isolation.
- **Deal with it alone** – Talk to your friends for support. Every school has a bullying policy and can help you deal with cases of cyberbullying.
- **Stop when the bullying stops** – Keep talking to your child and consider whether counselling could help them deal with the consequences

Slide 22:

What if my child is the bully?

Nobody wants to think that their child is a bully, but it happens

This video shows a parent, Nicola Jenkins, talking about her experiences. (2:05)

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The do's:

- **Find out why** - Try and establish the facts around the incident and keep an open mind. Often as parents we are blind to the behaviour of our own children so try not to be on the defensive. Think about areas of your child's life that may be causing them distress or anger and leading to them expressing these feelings online
- **Talk it through** - Talk about the blurred line between uploading and sharing content because it's funny or might get lots of 'likes', versus the potential to cause offence or hurt. Tell them that bullying others online is unacceptable behaviour which could get them into trouble with the school or police and they could end up losing friends
- **Stay calm** - Bullying is very emotional. Try to keep calm and not get angry with the bullies. Ask how you can help
- **Teach by example** - Model and encourage positive behaviour in your child and praise them as they take this on board
- **Learn from it** - Above all, help your child learn from what has happened. Think about what you could do differently as a parent or as a family and share your learning with other parents and carers

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The don'ts:

- **Don't ignore it** - Take the situation seriously and don't blame someone else. As a role model, it is best to show your child that taking responsibility for your own actions is the right thing to do
- **Don't get upset** - Stay calm when discussing it with your child and try to talk with other adults to work through any emotions you have about the situation
- **Don't be judgmental** – Avoid jumping to conclusions or labels. Consider your child's role and the role of others without anger
- **Don't condone it** - If your child was cyberbullying in retaliation, you should tell them that two wrongs cannot make a right and it will just encourage the bully's behaviour
- **Don't take away their devices** - This could make the situation worse and encourage them to find other ways to get online. Think about restricting access and take away some privileges if they don't stop the behaviour

Slide 25:

School's approach

This is a chance for you to share with parents your school's approach to cyberbullying: how do you monitor levels? do you have a teacher responsible for bullying? how do you respond to a cyberbullying incident? where is your anti-bullying policy? etc.

Slide 26:

How can you help?

Go through this list about some of the things parents can do to support their child if they are being bullied. It's also worth acknowledging that it is normal to want to protect your children and also normal that you would be extremely angry at anyone who may be harming your child. But it doesn't mean you should encourage them to retaliate in an aggressive way. This is likely to make matters worse for your child, potentially putting them at risk of more harm, and could get them into trouble.

Slide 27:

Always report cyberbullying to the school

The most important thing you or your child should do if they or a friend are being cyberbullied is report it!

Confirm why it is important to encourage your children to tell someone if they are being bullied or cyberbullied and ensure that they do not suffer in silence.

Outline the different ways they can report to the school.

Slide 28-29:

Final thoughts

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- Engage with your child's digital life
- Visit internetmatters.org for even further support

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More resources are available at:

- Internet Matters - <https://www.Internetmatters.org>
- NSPCC - <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>
- Anti-bullying alliance - <http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/>
- Childnet International - <http://www.childnet.com/>