

The Facts

- The number of people who engage in this silly and hurtful activity is very small.
- **There are far more good messages than bad. Don't let this spoil the internet for you.**
- Upset children need an adult with a calm head and encouraging manner. You need to radiate the confidence they lack.
- **By engaging with your child's school, you are bringing many resources into play. The school may be able to investigate, they will certainly be able to ensure your child gets extra support and care.**
- To a child, the nasty messages themselves are bad enough... if you lose your temper and get angry, you are only reinforcing their fear. In their eyes, the nightmare on the screen now becomes an angry and shouting parent/carer
- **You, your child and your family not the cyber-bully is in control here.**
- Every adult in your school will help you to resolve this.
- **If you handle this well, you can turn it into a very empowering experience... for all of you.**

Further information

- If your child has responded to the bully – maybe using threats and bad language of their own, remember, the primary aim is to deal with the bully – not your child's language. (You can address that later.)
- Cyber bullying is not like real world bullying. It tends NOT to stop instantly – it can take time.
- Once the cyber bully knows people are watching, they usually stop.
- The key approach, no matter how upset you and your child are is calmness. Cyber bullies can be stopped, but it is far better if they can be shown a positive outcome too in such a way that they never want to do it again.
- Children do not see the internet as "real". All too often they see it merely as a playground.
- Cyberbullying can have devastating effects – for everyone involved. **It is vital that both your child and you get the support you need.**

Your child tells you they have been receiving nasty messages

(A guide for parents and carers)

Remember!!!

Children are very comfortable in the world of the internet, emails, instant messaging and mobile phones. (sometimes called cyberspace) In many ways, they behave online in a similar way to they way they behave on the playground at school. **But there are far more good things that happen using the technology than bad things.** Please try and remember this as you talk to your child about what has happened.

Keep a cool head.

Children say **“We don’t want to tell adults because they always over-react.”** If your child has been bullied online then it is totally understandable that you may be upset and possibly angry too. **What your child needs is for you to be very calm and supporting.** They need you to listen carefully as they tell you about what has been happening. Try not to interrupt them.

Praise, Praise, Praise.

Once they have told you what has been happening, they need reassurance. **Make a huge fuss of them.** Tell them how grown up you think they are because they have told you. Let them know that you understand how hard it has been, and that you are so proud of them. Then reassure them that you will help to make it stop. There are several ways to do this.

What if the messages are still on the computer? Strange as it may sound, **DON’T** delete them. They may help to track

down whoever has been doing this. Usually, with children, it is quite low-level bullying. Upsetting to be sure, but mainly hot air. Even so, it should not be happening and must be stopped. If (and this is a very VERY rare) it is more serious, then should other agencies be involved like the Police, they will need the messages in order to track the offender.

Discuss with your child what needs to happen next. Don’t forget, they already feel powerless to some degree... this has been happening to them. If you leap to your feet and start saying what you are going to do and what is going to happen, perhaps in an agitated way, this will put them right back where they started, particularly if you show your anger at the situation. Talk calmly and if possible, in a negotiating manner with your child. “I would like to tell your headteacher this has been happening to you” in a calm voice is better than “Right! I’m going to the school and demand action!” It is quite possible to arrive at the course of action you want, but with your child understanding that it is their choice too.

So, DO I go into school? Absolutely! The school will want to support you and to help you deal with this. Even if the person sending the offensive material is not at the school, your child’s teacher and head teacher will want to help. They care about your child’s wellbeing too. Tell the head teacher what has been happening, producing emails/messages if possible.

Making sure your child’s school knows helps to send a clear message into your community that cyber bullying will not be tolerated and will be challenged every time it happens.

What now?

Once you have shared the problem it is time to deal with it. For the time being there are things you can do in the home. You may decide to :-

- Block the sender of nasty emails.
- Remove them as “friends” from any social networking sites your child has. Most of these sites allow you to “block user” That means you cannot see them online and they cannot see you.
- Move the computer into a communal area of the house and keep an eye on it when your child is online.

You can also take a pro-active stance and make some time to help your child rediscover their love of the internet. (You may find yourself back on cbeebies, but it will be worth it.) All the time monitor, monitor, monitor.

It hasn’t stopped.... Now what?

Most cyberbullying stops very quickly once it is reported, but if it doesn’t, then meet with your child’s headteacher and discuss the next steps. This may involve reporting the matter to the police or other agency. **Keep talking about it until it stops.**