

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It has come to our attention that there has been some inappropriate use of electronic devices by our pupils out of school hours, which has caused distress to some of our pupils.

Our behaviour policy is as always based on our Christian values. It does, however, fully encompass the statutory guidelines for schools. Please see the excerpt below.

From the DfE document 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying. Advice for Head teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies. 2014

Criminal law

*Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that **some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications** – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986. **If school staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police.** For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence **for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety** or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.*

Bullying outside school premises

Teachers have the power to discipline pupils for misbehaving outside the school premises "to such an extent as is reasonable". This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre. Where bullying outside school is reported to school staff, it should be investigated and acted on. The headteacher should also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or anti-social behaviour coordinator in their local authority of the action taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed.

What is bullying?

*Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or **emotionally**. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, **cyber-bullying via text messages or the internet**), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgements about each specific case.*

As ever we want to work with you to ensure all our children are safe from any instances where they are vulnerable to physical and, as outlined above, emotional harm.

Our door is always open if you feel you need to discuss anything with a member of staff.

Yours Sincerely

K Hardman