

SOUTHERN ENGLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

CYBER BULLYING

Following numerous cases of Cyber Bullying, the latest reported to SERC, directly after this year's Oireachtas, the Southern England Regional Council has decided to take a pro-active stance in trying to eliminate bullying, in particular "Cyber Bullying" from our region.

The aim of the Council is to raise awareness amongst the regions dance schools that this form of bullying exists, the effect it can have, advise of tell tails signs when bullying is occurring and advising dancers, parents and teachers on how to deal with it.

The Council does not have the expertise or means to deal with cases on an individual basis but it is hoped that by developing a Policy that can be used by dance schools throughout the region the Council can provide some direction to its members.

Therefore as a first step the Council have created a "Anti Bullying Policy".

This Policy will be posted on the Councils website and emailed to all teachers within the region.

To allow teachers to emphasise the Policy with their classes SERC are to sponsor a poster competition aimed specifically at Cyber Bullying in Irish Dance.

The winner of this competition will see their poster reproduced and sent to all dance schools within our region. The winner will also receive a £100 gift voucher supplied Feiswear to assist with their dance expenses.

It is hoped that CLRG will adopt this poster, and maybe run a similar scheme.

CURRENT LEGISLATION

All teachers within the region should be aware of the current “Defamation” legislation going through Parliament.

The next reading of the new act is later this month (25th February).

Summary of the Defamation Bill 2012-13

The aim of the Bill is to reform the law of defamation to ensure that a fair balance is struck between the right to freedom of expression and the protection of reputation. The Bill makes a number of substantive changes to the law of defamation, but is not designed to codify the law into a single statute.

Key areas

- includes a requirement for claimants to show that they have suffered serious harm before suing for defamation
- removes the current presumption in favour of a jury trial
- introduces a defence of "responsible publication on matters of public interest"
- provides increased protection to operators of websites that host user-generated content, providing they comply with the procedure to enable the complainant to resolve disputes directly with the author of the material concerned
- introduces new statutory defences of truth and honest opinion to replace the common law defences of justification and fair comment.

Cyber Bullying – An Introduction

Cyber bullying is when a person or a group of people uses the internet, mobile phones, online games or any other kind of digital technology to threaten, tease, upset or humiliate someone else.

What makes cyber bullying different from other types of bullying?

Cyber bullying is a form of bullying but because it happens online or on mobile phones it can happen 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you are being bullied at school you can usually get away from the bullies when you are at home but with cyber bullying it can feel like there is no escape.

Cyber bullying can be done anonymously. For example, they might set up fake accounts and hide their IP address or block their mobile number. When bullying happens at school it is usually one person or a small group of people. Cyber bullying can be really scary as it could involve a lot more people - you might feel that people are ganging up on you.

I'm being cyber bullied, how can I make it stop?

Cyber bullying is very serious. It can make you feel scared, upset, and embarrassed. You might feel like it will never end.

No one has the right to make you feel this way. We want you to know there are things you can do to make it stop.

You shouldn't have to deal with bullying alone - think about talking to someone you trust like a parent, or teacher. They can help you report the bullying and be there to listen to you. Having someone to talk things through with is really important - it can make you feel less alone and more confident to deal with the situation.

Remember to keep a copy of any abusive texts, emails, comments or messages that you receive and record the date and time they were sent. With cyber bullying there is always a trail and keeping records can be very useful when it comes to reporting the bullying.

Try not to reply to any messages you receive. It can encourage the bullies and end up upsetting you more.

If you're being cyber bullied you can always talk to Childline on [1-2-1 chat](#) or by calling 0800 1111.

My Friend is being Cyber Bullied – How can I help?

Being cyber bullied can be a difficult experience for anyone - it can be really helpful to have a good friend to listen and offer support.

If you have a friend, or even someone you know who is being cyber bullied you there's lots you can do to help. You can:-

Be there is listen to your friend. If they are bullied they might be going through a lot of emotions and it can be really helpful for them to have someone to talk things through with.

Support your friend by offering to go with them to report the bullying and help them think about what they want to say.

Think about writing supportive comments when other people are putting up negative posts. This may make them feel like they are not so alone.

Do things together that may take their mind off things for a short while, for example watching a DVD or going to the cinema.

If someone you know is being cyber bullied it can be tough for you to deal with - you might also feel upset and unsure what to do. You don't need to try and solve this on your own. You could think about talking to someone you can trust or contacting Childline on the number listed above.

Southern England Regional Council

Anti Bullying Policy

Statement of Intent

The Southern England Regional Council are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all dancers so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying or racism of any kind is unacceptable. If bullying does occur, all dancers should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell their dance teacher. This policy although entitled "***The Southern Regional Council – Anti Bullying Policy***" is designed to be adopted and managed by the regions dance schools.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional** being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting
- **Physical** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
- **Racist** racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.
- **Sexual** unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
- **Homophobic** because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality.
- **Verbal** Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.
- **Cyber** All areas of internet, such as e-mail and internet chat room misuse. Mobile threats by text messaging and calls. Misuse of associated technology i.e. camera and video facilities.

Why is it important to respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

All dance schools within the region have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Objectives of this Policy

- All Council Members, Dance Teachers (and non qualified teaching staff), dancers and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All Teachers (and non qualified teaching staff) should know what the school policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All dancers and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.

- Each dance school we take bullying seriously. Dancers and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- **Bullying will not be tolerated.**

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs or behavior that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- Is frightened attending dance class
- Changes their usual routine
- Is unwilling to go to dance class
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away.
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill before dance class
- Begins to do poorly at dance class (or in their normal academic school life).
- Comes home with clothes torn
- Has possessions which are damaged or “go missing”
- Asks for money and starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- Has monies continually “lost”
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises.
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Stops eating
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Gives improbable excuses if any of the above.
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone.
- Is nervous and jumpy when a cyber message is received.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Procedures

1. Report bullying incidents to a friend, parent or teacher.
2. Actively encourage open discussion about the topic.
3. Explain that on-line forums should only be used as an “informational channel” and discourage dancers from commenting on results of competitions etc.
4. In serious cases parents should be informed and will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.
5. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.
6. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.
7. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour.

Outcomes

1. The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise.
2. Highlight to dancers that methods of tracing anonymous posts and texts is soon to become a legal requirement on all website allowing the victim to actively pursue the bully on a legal basis.
3. In serious cases, suspension or even exclusion will be considered.
4. If possible, the pupils will be reconciled.
5. After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.