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**DEALING WITH CYBERBULLYING BY PUPILS**

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Cyberbullying refers to the transmission by electronic means of demeaning, distressing, threatening and abusive messages and images which target a particular individual or a group of individuals. It is now a major problem and source of distress for many schoolchildren.

 Cyberbullying can take various forms: messages, images, recordings; it can make use of closed networks such as Facebook or open networks such as YouTube; messages and images can be sent directly or indirectly to the victim and to the cyberbully’s peer group, or simply posted anonymously on a site where the victim and others may come across it.

 It differs from face-to-face bullying in a number of important respects. Anyone can become a victim (they may not even know each other). The size of the audience can be huge. The cyberbully has less inhibitions and less empathy for the victim, as they do not see the victim’s distress face-to-face. The cyberbully does not have to be in a position of power over the victim. Once the material is posted, it can be read/seen repeatedly and re-distributed by others. It is also much harder for bystanders to berate the cyberbully or comfort the victim.

 There are a range of different types of cyberbullies: the *social* (who is just having fun with their friends), the *narcissistic* (who enjoys the exercise of power), the *morally driven* (who envies the victim or wants to take revenge), the *loner* (who sees it as an interesting pastime); and the *sadistic* (who wants to cause pain).

 Action that can be taken to reduce cyberbullying involving schoolchildren include: dealing with it in personal and social education lessons; promoting e-safety; dealing with specific cases appropriately; helping the cyberbully to understand that cyberbullying is unacceptable behaviour and helping them to devise other ways in which to deal with the reasons that promoted such behaviour; involving peers, so that those who know about the cyberbullying can discourage the cyberbully and support the victim; developing electronic solutions through software that blocks certain types of messages/images being sent or received, and creating on-line educational material on anti-cyberbullying.

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