NILE POLICY ON BULLYING AND HARASSMENT INCLUDING CYBER-BULLYING

Harassment and bullying involve behaviour which harms, intimidates, victimises, undermines, offends, degrades or humiliates. Such behaviour may be carried out by an individual or by a group. Whilst differences of attitude, background or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals may mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another, this does not make the conduct acceptable. The defining features are that the continuing behaviour appears or feels offensive or intimidating to the recipient and would be regarded as such by any reasonable person.

Students under the age of 18 may feel less able to protect themselves from harassment or bullying and staff need to be aware of the increased vulnerability of these students.

NILE will not tolerate harassment or bullying either by staff or by students.

Examples of harassment or bullying are:

Emotional – being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically), sending hurtful text messages (or emails, phone calls and social media), tormenting, threatening violence, belittling, intimidating, tormenting (e.g. threatening gestures)

Physical – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence or deliberately damaging someone's personal property

Racist- racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

Sexual – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments

Homophobic – because of or focusing on the issue of sexuality

Religious - through discrimination, victimisation, taunting, etc

Verbal – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

Age – unworthy of attention because of age (young or old)

Gender – physical or verbal based on male or female

NILE is committed to fostering a caring, friendly and safe environment for everyone involved in learning and teaching so they can participate in a relaxed secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in education. If bullying does occur, all students, teachers, volunteers or carers should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Bullies come from all walks of life; they bully for a variety of reasons and may even have been bullied or abused themselves. Typically bullies can have low self-esteem, be excitable, aggressive or jealous. Bullies can be boys or girls, men or women. Although bullying often takes place in schools and care homes, research shows it can and does occur anywhere where there is inadequate supervision – on the way to and from school, at a sporting event or in the changing rooms.

Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Students or staff who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving. Everyone involved in learning and teaching has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Signs and Symptoms

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to all individuals, particularly vulnerable groups. An individual may indicate, by signs or behaviour, that he or she is being bullied. Teachers and those in staffing positions should be aware of these possible signs that they should investigate, especially where an individual:

- says they are being bullied

- is unwilling to go to classes

- becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence

- regularly feels ill before lessons and social activities

- has clothes torn or possessions damaged

- has possessions go "missing"

- asks for money

- steals money or parts with their own money (to pay bully)

- has unexplained cuts, bruises or injuries

- is frightened to say what's wrong

- gives improbably excuses for any of the above

In more extreme cases:

- starts stammering and/or cries themselves to sleep at night

- has nightmares or demonstrates any other form of unusual behaviour during the evenings

- becomes aggressive

- disruptive or unreasonable

- is bullying other individuals

- stops eating

- self-harms

- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away.

Implementation

NILE will ensure that all students and staff are aware that harassment and bullying are unacceptable. Students will be encouraged to speak to the NILE DSP or any other member of staff they feel comfortable talking to, if they feel they are being harassed or bullied.

Any member of staff who witnesses or receives an allegation of bullying will take the matter seriously and report the matter to the NILE DSP. If a member of staff is concerned that bullying may be taking place, even though an allegation has not been made, it should be discussed with the DSP, who will investigate or commission an investigation with a view to disciplinary proceedings.

All victims of harassment or bullying will be supported throughout any investigation and disciplinary action and all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure no further incidents occur. An attempt will be made to help the bully understand the impact and change their behaviour.

CYBER-BULLYING

NILE embraces the advantages of modern technology in terms of the educational benefits it brings, however the school is mindful of the potential for bullying to occur through online media. NILE believes that all students have a right to not be bullied and it is unacceptable regardless of the form it takes. NILE also recognises that it must take note of bullying perpetrated outside the school but could involve students and staff.

Definition of Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend themselves.

By cyber-bullying, it is meant bullying by electronic media:

- Bullying by texts or messages or calls on mobile phones

- The use of mobile phone cameras to cause distress, fear or humiliation

- Posting threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating material on websites, to include blogs, personal websites, social networking sites

- Using someone else's email to send messages and pretending to be them

- Hijacking/cloning e-mail accounts

- Making threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating remarks in chat rooms, to include Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, etc.

Legal Issues

Cyber-bullying is generally criminal in character. The law applies to cyberspace.

- It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information in any media including internet sites.

- *Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003* makes it an offence to send, by public means of a public electronic communications network, a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or one of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.

- The *Protection from Harassment Act 1997* makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.

Policy

NILE expects its staff to respond effectively to reports of cyber-bullying or harassment and has a reporting procedure as part of its overall bullying and harassment policy.

NILE endeavours to block access to inappropriate web sites, using firewalls, antivirus protection and filtering systems which are managed by our IT management company, In Touch Systems. In Touch Systems monitors and reports any access to malicious sites in a fortnightly meeting or immediately when appropriate. The NILE Moodle Platform and NILE Online including chat rooms and forums are moderated by course tutors. Any inappropriate behaviour is immediately reported to the NILE Online Academic Manager.

NILE reserves the right to take action against those who take part in cyber-bullying.

- All bullying is damaging but cyber-bullying and harassment can be invasive of privacy at all times. These acts may also be criminal acts.

- NILE supports victims and, when necessary, will work with the Police to detect those involved in criminal acts

- NILE will use, as appropriate, the full range of sanctions to correct, punish or remove students who bully or harass staff in this way, both in and out of school.

- NILE will confiscate when necessary to prevent students and staff from committing crimes or misusing equipment.

- All members of NILE staff and tutors are aware they have a duty to bring to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Person any example of cyber-bullying or harassment that they know about or suspect.

Guidance for Staff

If staff suspect or are told about a cyber-bullying incident, follow the protocol outlined below:

Mobile Phones

- Ask the student or staff to show you the mobile phone

- Note clearly everything on the screen relating to an inappropriate text message or image, to include the date, time and names

- Make a transcript of a spoken message, again record date, times and names

- Tell the student or staff to save the message/image

- Go with the student/staff member to the Designated Safeguarding Person or in their absence, a member of the Safeguarding Team

Computers

- Ask the student or staff member to get up on-screen the material in question

- Ask the student or staff member to save the material

- Print off the offending material straight away

- Make sure pages are in the right order and that there are no omissions

- Accompany the student or staff member, taking the offending material, to see the Designated Safeguarding Person or in their absence, a member of the Safeguarding Team

- Normal procedures to interview students or staff member to take statements will then be followed particularly if a child protection issue is presented

Guidance for Students

If a student believes they or someone else is the victim of cyber-bullying, they need to speak to someone as soon as possible. This person could be a host, tutor, member of staff or Designated Safeguarding Person.

The student should:

- Not answer abusive messages but log and report them

- Not delete anything until it has been shown to a tutor, group leader, or Designated Safeguarding Person (even if it is upsetting, the material is important evidence which may need to be used later as proof of cyber-bullying)

- Not give out personal IT details

- Never reply to abusive e-mails

- Never reply to someone they do not know

- Stay in public areas in chat rooms

Under 18s - Guidance for Parents Tutors and Group Leaders

It is vital that parents, group leaders and NILE work together to ensure that all students are aware of the serious consequences of getting involved in anything that might be seen to be cyber-bullying. NILE informs parents of the cyber-bullying policy and the procedures in place to deal with cyber-bullying.

- Parents and Group Leaders can help by making sure the students understand NILE's policy and, above all, how seriously NILE takes incidents of cyber-bullying

- Parents and Group Leaders should support NILE in the students understanding of the legal issues relating to cyber-bullying

- If parents or group leaders believe their child is the victim of cyber-bullying, they should save the offending material (if need be by saving an offensive text on their or their child's mobile phone) and make sure they have all relevant information before deleting anything

- Parents and Group Leaders should contact the Designated Safeguarding Person at NILE as soon as possible. A meeting can then be arranged with Designated Safeguarding Person, which may involve other relevant members of staff