Cyberbullying of School Staff: Information for Parents

Social Media is a wonderful tool for communication, including communications between pupils and between home and school. It can make our lives richer and help us to network with people we would never meet in 'real life'.

Sadly though, like any form of communication, this tool can be misused. Children can suffer cyberbullying from peers, and teachers and other school staff can suffer cyberbullying from pupils and even parents.

Schools can take steps to address cyberbullying by pupils through their 'acceptable use' policies and by educating pupils as to how to engage with social media safely and responsibly. However, it can be more difficult to address cyberbullying of teachers and other staff by parents.

The Department for Education (DfE) has indicated that 20% of teachers have experienced cyber bullying from pupils and/or parents. DfE statistics also show problems with retaining teachers; four out of ten leave within a year of qualifying.

Teachers are our greatest resource in Education and it is in everyone's interests, especially our children's, to ensure we value them and protect them from harassment and abuse. This is also the case for support staff in Education.

Of course, there are times when parents have legitimate concerns about their child's education and/or times when a teacher, or other staff member, gets it wrong. Every school has established processes for addressing concerns and most complaints will be dealt with under the school complaints procedure. If parents still feel unhappy after using this process, they can also refer their complaint to the DfE.

In our school, most parents behave responsibly, but sadly there are rare occasions when parents actively abuse teachers and other school staff on social media. This has an extremely damaging impact on the wellbeing of those staff, which will in turn impact on their ability to perform at their best. This is likely to impact on the education of all children in our care, including the child of the abusive parent. In effect it can be something of a 'home goal' to attack the staff or institution that provides for your child's education as you actively undermine its performance. It also sets a very poor example to children as to the responsible use of social media.

Please can we all ensure that we use the proper channels to address any issues with our school? And please can we instruct our children, by example, that abusive posts and messages are simply not acceptable?

Many thanks for your support.