

**National Support School**

designated by



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Dear Parents and Carers,

## **ONLINE SAFETY – 4T**

This week, on Safer Internet Day, 4T focused on how to be respectful online and to use the internet positively. We also thought about what do if somebody uses mean or scary language on the internet. We discussed that it was a bad idea to send something mean because these messages or comments can make the person who receives them upset or scared. Online messages can be even more confusing because we cannot see the person's facial expression or hear their tone of voice. We decided that if we ever receive a cyberbullying message, we can:

- 1) Calm down and take a deep breath;
- 2) Tell a friend or a trusted adult who can help develop a plan to handle the situation;
- 3) Ignore the bully;
- 4) Keep a copy of the communication with the bully.

**From 4T and Miss Taylor**

# Common Sense on Cyberbullying



## What's the Issue?

Spreading rumours and bullying is nothing new. Children have always found ways to be cruel to one another, but computers, mobiles and digital technologies make bullying easier and more common. Children now use their mobiles and computers to hurt, humiliate and harass each other. Cyberbullying is defined as repeatedly sending or posting harmful or mean messages, images or videos about someone else using the internet, mobiles or other digital technologies. Children may call each other names, say nasty things about one another, threaten each other or make others feel uncomfortable or scared.

Although cyberbullying is typically associated with tweens and teens, more cases are now being reported with younger children. Younger children may bully to get attention, because they think it will make them popular or because they want to look tough and make others afraid of them. Because it happens online, it can easily go undetected by parents and teachers. Cyberbullying can be constant, inescapable and very public. It can happen at any time – at school or at home – and can involve large groups of children. Being anonymous, and the desire to be seen as cool, can cause a child who normally wouldn't say anything mean face-to-face to show off to other children by cyberbullying someone.

## Why Does It Matter?

Younger children are starting to use online communication and, at the same time, are exploring ways to test other people's reactions. Children who send a mean message might not fully understand how another person might react to that message. What's more, hurtful information posted on the internet is extremely difficult to prevent or remove, and anyone can see it. Imagine being publicly humiliated in front of everyone you know. This behaviour usually happens when adults aren't around, so parents and teachers often see only the anxiety or depression that results from their children being hurt or bullied. Parents can help by becoming aware of the issue, learning to identify the warning signs of bullying, and helping children to understand how to be respectful to others online.

## What Families Can Do

**Make a list together of how talking online is different from talking face-to-face.** Get children to think about how it might be easier to say things online that you wouldn't say in person, and how this may be good sometimes and bad at other times.

**Practise writing a text or message to a friend.** Model for your child how to compliment people and how to avoid mean words or behaviours.

**Point out that it's important to stick up for others.** Discuss ways in which they can support their friends who are bullied and report bad behaviour they see online or offline.

# The Power of Words

## \* DID YOU KNOW ...

Author Mark Twain said, "Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can read."

## Match the words to their definition

digital citizen	Information that can't be used to identify you such as your age, gender, how many brothers and sisters you have, your favourite food etc.
personal information	a member of a worldwide community linked by the Internet
private information	when a thief steals someone's private information in order to pretend to be that person
identity theft	Information that can be used to identify you such as your National Insurance number, home address, email address, phone number etc.

## \* WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why is it a bad idea to send mean or scary messages online? How is this like what Mark Twain said?

## 1. Family Activity

With a family member, create a comic strip about a cyberbullying situation. In the first frame, show the cyberbullying scenario: Who says something mean and hurtful, to whom is it said, and what exactly is said? In the next frame, show how the recipient might feel when receiving the message. In the last frame, show a positive outcome of the situation, which might involve confiding in a trusted adult.

### \* DO YOU REMEMBER ...

What you should do when someone uses mean or scary language on the Internet?

## 2. Tech It Up!

Use Make Beliefs Comix ([www.makebeliefscomix.com](http://www.makebeliefscomix.com)) or Comic Life ([Comiclfe.com](http://Comiclfe.com)), free online tools, to make your comic online.

## 3. Common Sense Says ...

Cyberbullying is using technology tools such as the Internet and cell phones to deliberately upset someone else, and cyberbullying is NOT OK. Never say something online that would hurt someone's feelings if you said it to his or her face.