

AVOCA BEACH PRIMARY SCHOOL

CYBERBULLYING

At last Monday night's P&C meeting a parent reported the inappropriate use of Facebook by some children. They were using the social network site **at home** to send inappropriate text messages to other children.

We are all aware now that children using the internet can be cyber bullied or harassed through internet services like email, chat rooms, instant messaging, social networks or through websites. Bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS is also considered cyber bullying.

Cyber bullying includes teasing, spreading online rumours and sending unwanted or threatening messages or defamatory material. While it can have a damaging effect on children and young people, parents can encourage their child to take control of the situation. This may be done by:

- advising children not to reply to any messages from a bully. Often if bullies don't receive a response they will give up;
- learning how to block a bully, so they can't make contact;
- denying access by their children to sites like Facebook until they have reached the appropriate age;
- keeping a record of the harassing messages and any replies. This may help parents, or the authorities, if necessary, to find out who is sending them;
- keeping usernames and passwords secret. If someone misuses a username and password to post damaging information about a child it can be difficult to remove;
- children recognising that if messages are threatening, a parent or carer should be told immediately. Cyber bullying, if threatening, is illegal and can be reported to the police.

As a parent, you can play an important role in helping your children have safe and positive experiences online. By becoming aware of how children use the internet, what they use it for, the risks in being online and some of the strategies to manage these risks, you can help guide them in the online world. There are a number of informative websites on the internet dealing with the topic of bullying. One such website is bullyingnoway.com.au which has useful brochures and articles for parents and carers.

Under "Latest News" on the homepage of our School Website, there is a hyperlink to a website called "Cyber-safety tools" with excellent information for both parents and teachers.

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ACCEPTABLE USAGE OF THE INTERNET AT SCHOOL

Students will:

- not disable settings for virus protection, spam and filtering that have been applied as a DET standard;
- ensure that communication through internet and online communication services is related to learning;
- keep passwords confidential, and change them when prompted, or when known by another user;
- use passwords that are not obvious or easily guessed;
- never allow others to use their personal e-learning account;
- log off at the end of each session to ensure that nobody else can use their e-learning account;
- promptly tell their supervising teacher if they suspect they have received a computer virus or spam (i.e. unsolicited email) or if they receive a message that is inappropriate or makes them feel uncomfortable;
- seek advice if another user seeks excessive personal information, asks to be telephoned, offers gifts by email or wants to meet a student. Never knowingly initiate or forward emails or other messages containing:
 - . a message that was sent to them in confidence;
 - . a computer virus or attachment that is capable of damaging recipients' computers;
 - . chain letters and hoax emails;
 - . spam, e.g. unsolicited advertising material;
- never send or publish:
 - . unacceptable or unlawful material or remarks, including offensive, abusive or discriminatory comments;
 - . threatening, bullying or harassing another person or making excessive or unreasonable demands upon another person;
 - . sexually explicit or sexually suggestive material or correspondence;
 - . false or defamatory information about a person or organisation;
- ensure that personal use is kept to a minimum and internet and online communication services is generally used for school related purposes. Use of unauthorised programs and intentionally downloading unauthorised software, graphics or music that is not associated with learning, is not permitted;
- never damage or disable computers;
- be aware that all use of internet and online communication services can be audited and traced to the e-learning accounts of specific users.