

Blue Reef Biz Talk

Cyber Bullying in Schools

What is “Cyber Bullying” and how can it affect me as a School Principal under my Duty of Care obligations?

What is Cyber Bullying?

Bullying is a perennial problem for schools but the advent of the internet has seen such behaviour take on more sinister and intrusive dimensions. Inappropriate behaviour such as harassment, stalking, sexual abuse, and rumour spreading are made easier by internet access and social networking media.

Bullying, a phenomenon not new to educators, has traditionally been dealt with through supervision, oversight and encouragement of victims to report bullying in anonymous and discreet ways. However, the proliferation of internet services in schools has opened a new landscape of unsupervised media and virtual locations which facilitate cyber bullying. The challenge for educators is to find out if it is possible to supervise and control this new phenomenon? And, if so, how?



Challenges

The challenges schools face can be divided into three groups: Governance, Policy Management, and Enforcement Technology. The following questions need to be addressed:

Governance:

1. How can we best train and educate students and custodians to be aware of this problem?
2. How can we set up anonymous reporting and escalation paths?
3. How can we audit compliance with appropriate controls and measures?
4. How do we set up approval and review workflows and processes for potential problematic collaborations?
5. What are our detention and limitation policies and processes for bullies?

Policy Management:

1. What keywords and phrases should we consider as constituting cyber bullying?
2. What patterns and behaviours should we consider as cyber bullying?
3. What are our definitions of bullying thresholds e.g. how many recipients do we consider rumour spreading?
4. Which types of senders do we consider a problem?

Technology Enforcement:

1. How can we effectively and efficiently filter emails, “messenger” posts and web traffic?
2. How can we block, notify, or redirect inappropriate messaging?
3. How can we report and monitor trend behaviour?
4. How can we conditionally limit perpetrators?

Blue Reef Solution

A good solution is always a combination of governance, policy definition and technology enforcement, coupled with a phased approach to achieve maximum effectiveness. Our solution advocates the following:

1. Discussing and defining what is considered cyber bullying in your educational organisation and understanding its implications.
2. Defining the thresholds of behaviour that constitute a student being regarded as a cyber bully and detailing the types of actions and consequences that will be taken to educate the bully.
3. Defining the content and collection of cyber behaviours considered to be cyber offences and gain acceptance for them amongst staff and parents.
4. Devising a communication and awareness campaign that informs students that cyber bullying is inappropriate and monitored.
5. Implementing a passive monitoring technology to establish a baseline for the phenomena in your organisation.
6. Implementing enforcement technologies as part of an active enforcement strategy.

Blue Reef Best Practice



Blue Reef is the first choice Internet Management Provider to over 300 educational institutions throughout Australia. We have been assisting schools achieve solutions to issues like cyber bullying for over a decade. Our extensive experience in the development of tools, policies and technology to address these types of educational needs is unsurpassed.

Blue Reef's holistic approach to providing a solution for cyber bullying includes providing the school with:

1. A Cyber Bullying Acceptable Usage policy document template
2. Categories of keywords which are considered offensive
3. The Sonar Internet Management Technology which offers:
 - a. Active filtering of email and web traffic.
 - b. Per user reporting which flags students whose activity is indicative of inappropriate activity.
 - c. Ability to dynamically limit (and or quarantine) students whose profile is considered offensive or suspicious without cutting them off the internet.
 - d. Notification of suspicious student behaviour.

More information is available at www.blureef.com.au

About the Author

Guy Lupo, VP Products & Services, Blue Reef Pty. Ltd. has 20 years experience in governance, compliance and security in the enterprise and education spaces, and is continuously working with educational organisations to improve their processes and supporting technologies to achieve better educational outcomes.

Guy's career history includes strategic product and management roles with worldwide international leaders such as Check Point, CA, Microsoft, Cisco, BMC Software and other start-ups in the Governance, Compliance and Security space.