

CYBERBULLYING INCIDENTS FLOWCHART

1 Immediate Response

Monitor and Identify

Schools/kura and educators need to be vigilant about online platforms where cyberbullying may occur. In many cases, incidents will be hard to notice unless brought directly to the attention of an adult.

Where possible, quickly record the incident and gather any available evidence, such as screenshots that have been provided.

Provide emotional support

Depending on the situation, the victim coming to the adult may require emotional support. In serious situations, this may require a school counsellor or a psychologist to help deal with the emotional response or potential trauma.

Notify relevant parties

Inform staff, administrators, and any relevant support staff about the incident. Encourage ākongā to tell report cyberbullying to adults they trust. Serious cyberbullying incidents will require parents/caregivers to be notified.

2 Communication & support

Communicate with ākongā involved

- Speak with the victim and perpetrator separately and gather context and information. Often, cyberbullying incidents can be an extension of in-person behaviour and traditional bullying, and the precipitating events may have lasted for weeks or months.
- Encourage open, honest communication without judgement. Note that quickly resorting to punishment can make behaviour worse or lead to retaliation if not managed appropriately.
- Take note of the evidence and contextual information. Accurate records will rely on information not being distorted.

Involve parents and caregivers

- Once there is a record of the incident, communicate with parents, caregivers, and whānau where appropriate. Whānau are often concerned that they do not hear about incidents until long after they occur and would value transparent conversations about concerning ākongā behaviour.
- Share information about the incident as it has been reported and what is supported with evidence, and discuss strategies for a resolution.
- Cyberbullying can be particularly difficult to manage as the behaviour can occur outside of the awareness of adults. For example, after an incident, the cyberbullying may then perpetuate retaliation for reporting the behaviour with threats to not tell anyone. This requires that the parents and caregivers know how they can help, such as monitoring phone and computer use, limiting social media activity, and continuing restorative conversations at home.
- Communicating with parents and caregivers is a good time to assess the digital technologies at home and how they are used. Parents and caregivers may need some advice about how to limit certain websites, enable child controls, disable Internet during certain times. Parents may also be unaware of how the Internet can be used for aggressive behaviour or may not attribute such behaviours to their own children. Candid, judgement-free conversations will help build awareness and understanding.

3 Documentation

Record incident details

Schools and kura should maintain detailed records of cyberbullying incidents, in line with digital citizenship policies or similar, including how issues are resolved. Details may include dates, times, ākongā involved, platforms used, contextual information for why the incident occurred, and how the issue was resolved.

Records should specify when an incident is followed up on and what the findings were of this follow-up.

4 Educational interventions

Provide guidance

Sessions on digital citizenship may be used with individuals or groups to deal with cyberbullying incidents and teach responsible online behaviour. This should emphasise the fact that the Internet cannot provide complete anonymity, and if necessary, their actions can be traced back to them.

Digital footprints denote what people leave behind on the Internet – the permanence of communications and actions performed online, even despite efforts to hide this activity. As ākongā learn about this, they may learn to understand the consequences of their actions online, not only for victims, but for themselves.

Offer teaching and resources on empathy, tolerance, and the impact of bullying. Relate these back to the school/kura values, such as respect, kindness, or community (whatever is relevant). A values-based approach will help ākongā put themselves in others' shoes and understand how cyberbullying affects people.

Peer support

One means of allowing ākongā to take initiative is to create a peer support programme or similar that allows ākongā to support one another, lead change, and stand up to cyberbullying. They can be messengers of the school vision and values and help develop the culture of digital citizenship as part of their peer support work. This would ideally be co-created with ākongā so there is a shared agreement on what the responsibility of the peer support group is and how they offer support. This could allow for leadership opportunities for ākongā, and linkages could be made to the Digital Technologies Curriculum | Hangarau Matihiko.

5 Follow-up

Ongoing monitoring

Staff should continuously monitor the online activities of ākongā involved in cyberbullying incidents and their behaviour when using digital technologies. Any recurring issues or misuse of technology should be addressed promptly and consistently.

Behavioural contracts

Behavioural contracts may be an effective form of behaviour management. This would be created with input from the perpetrator on what behaviour is appropriate with regard to digital technology usage and communications with others. This would be signed by the ākongā with a clear expectation that they are to follow the contract, and a breach of the contract would result in a disciplinary action, such as a loss of a privilege.

Evaluate interventions

Assess the effectiveness of interventions and determine whether the actions resulted in the cyberbullying ending. Where necessary, make adjustments to the interventions, adjust the school policies or programmes as needed and address issues head on. Repeated incidents highlight areas where digital citizenship may need to be strengthened, and this can be planned for by senior leadership.