

# Student Services

Leading adolescent and child psychologist Dr Michael Carr-Gregg has put together six webisodes to give parents practical tips to deal with bullying. Below is a transcript of his practical advice about 'What is cyber-bullying? The webisode is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcYK7A2JS1s>

## What is cyber-bullying?

Modern technology is a wonderful thing. It improves the way we communicate, but it also has a downside in cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying is like traditional bullying, but instead of being face to face, it's done online or over the phone.

It can include spreading rumours online or via text as well as threatening emails and phone calls.

Increasingly, the majority of young people's social communication is done digitally - both at school and at home.

Research suggests that about 1 in 10 students are being cyber-bullied either at home, or while traveling to and from school, and that it's on the rise.

As with face to face bullying, the signs can be subtle and can include:

- being hesitant to be online
- seeming nervous when an instant message, text message or email appears
- being visibly upset after using the computer or mobile phone, or suddenly avoiding it
- minimising the computer screen, or hiding the mobile phone when you enter the room
- spending unusually long hours online in a more tense, pensive tone
- withdrawing from friends, falling behind in schoolwork, or avoiding school
- becoming suddenly sullen, evasive, withdrawn, or showing a marked change in personality or behaviour
- having trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, excessive moodiness or crying, or seeming depressed
- receiving suspicious phone calls, emails or packages
- and a decline in academic performance.

If your child shows any of these signs, this does not necessarily mean that he or she is being bullied, but it is a possibility worth exploring with them.

So often I am asked at what age should a parent let their child have a mobile phone or computer in their bedroom.

I think parents need to ask themselves three questions:

- does my child have a track record of making good decisions, and keeping themselves safe?

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- do the young people that my child hangs out with have a track record of making good decisions and keeping themselves safe?
- and is my child a sensation seeker by temperament?

If the answers are yes, yes and no, I'd feel much happier about them having access to this technology.

But parents still need to supervise their children's access to computers and phones.

Take the opportunity to go online with your children and talk about what they're doing.