[We must protect our children from online bullying just as we…](#)

Our connected world can be a risky place for a child, and we have a duty to step in and help

Comment

By Nick Gibb
MINISTER FOR SCHOOL STANDARDS

All bullying is cruel and unacceptable. No one deserves to spend their childhood tormented and harassed, physically or mentally, in the playground or at home on their laptop.

On Stand Up to Bullying Day, I welcome research that shows schools are starting to see progress in stamping out violent and physical bullying.

Between 2006 and 2015 the proportion of teenagers reporting threats of violence at school – or actual violence – fell. This is due to schools introducing anti-bullying policies that protect pupils, put teachers back in charge of their classrooms and stop disruption and poor behaviour.

But today's research also highlights the threat of the relatively recent phenomenon of cyberbullying. Teenagers are increasingly reporting being abused, threatened and excluded online.

Cyberbullying is now reported as a specific concern for 10 per cent of those interviewed. The internet has opened up a world of opportunity for children. It is a network for friends to connect with each other, a learning resource to help with their studies, a stage to showcase their talents and a lens to explore the world.

But for parents, most of whom did not grow up with smartphones or social media, there exists a clear and understandable worry that the internet has brought new dangers that are often hidden from us. They may be

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unaware of the websites their children access without permission, or the addictive and violent video games they can download despite being under age. Monitoring what children access online can seem an impossible and never-ending task.

What might appear as harmless teasing to outsiders can follow a child home and become intolerable. A comment on a group chat online, or an image posted on social media, can make it all over school the following day – the old adage that "news travels fast" is especially true in today's connected world. The opportunity to participate in bullying indirectly by joining in with a joke online is greater.

In response, schools are adopting innovative approaches. Instead of trying to stop children using the net, staff at Waterloo Primary School in Merseyside focus on developing their social conscience, teaching them how to behave online and discussing how online statements might make others feel, especially when seen by a large audience. The school works closely with parents, including via a smartphone app that signposts helpful resources on the school's website.

The Government is to make internet safety compulsory in relevant lessons and we will be talking to children, parents and teachers about the best way to do this. We will look at which schools take successful approaches and we will share their best practice.

We are working hard to support schools and parents in helping young people cope with the modern world and its challenges. Our Educate Against Hate website has resources to protect children from extremism and radicalisation. The *Telegraph*'s Duty of Care campaign, launched this week, is a welcome addition to the many voices helping to protect children online.

Ultimately, it's a job in which we all share responsibility.

That's why today we will take a collective stand against bullying by supporting Stand Up to Bullying Day and help shape the kind of society we want for our future generations.

We must protect our children from online bullying just as we do offline, writes Schools Minister Nick Gibb for the Telegraph