

# Handling online bullying and harassment incident in schools

## Incident occurs

Staff member reports online bullying or harassment related to their work

## Initial response

Support affected staff by directing them to appropriate support (employee assistance programme or trade union representative)

Check relevant policy:

- Staff member is alleged perpetrator → staff behaviour policy or code of conduct
- Pupil is alleged perpetrator → school behaviour policy
- Parent is alleged perpetrator → parental code of conduct or home school agreement or social media policy
- Perpetrator is not known → go to 'Decide who leads the investigation'

Determine if incident meets bullying or harassment criteria in school's policies

**Consider whether police involvement is required** (refer to [NPCC guidance](#) or [Police.uk](#))

## Decide investigation lead

- If victim **is not** the headteacher or nominated lead, they can manage the case, guided by the governing body and trustees
- If victim is the headteacher or nominated lead, a governor or trustee should manage the case

## Consider next steps

Action depends on the type of online bullying or harassment experienced - consider one or more of the steps below

### For abusive phone calls:

refer to [Ofcom's advice on abusive and threatening calls](#)

**If the abuse constitutes a criminal offence, report it to the police**

### For online sexual harassment:

refer to [SWGfL's guidance for schools and colleges on responding to online sexual harassment of staff](#)

**If the abuse constitutes a criminal offence, report it to the police**

### To remove harmful content:

1. If perpetrator is known, designated lead asks perpetrator to remove content
2. If unsuccessful, or not known, report on social media (if applicable) or seek advice from [Report Harmful Content](#)

**If content is illegal, contact the police.**

**If content does not meet the threshold for intervention from the platform or police:**

refer to the [POSH guidance on how to approach resolution](#)