Education: Internet: Bullying

Written Answer

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to tackle cyber-bullying.

Edward Timpson (The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education; Crewe and Nantwich, Conservative)

The Government believes that internet providers, schools and parents all have a role to play in keeping children and young people safe online.

All schools must have a behaviour policy which includes measures to prevent all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. The "Keeping Children Safe in Education" guidance outlines the importance of tackling cyber-bullying, which can be found online at:


Schools have the flexibility to develop their own measures to prevent and tackle bullying, but are held to account by Ofsted.

The Government recognises that educating young people about online safety is key to tackling cyber-bullying. As part of changes to the new computing programmes of study which will be taught from September 2014, e-safety will be taught at all four key stages. This will empower young people to tackle cyber-bullying through responsible, respectful and secure use of technology, as well as ensuring that pupils understand age-appropriate ways of reporting any concerns they may have about what they see or encounter online.

The new curriculum also offers opportunities to tackle the underlying causes of bullying; for example the new citizenship programme of study sets out a requirement for pupils to be taught about the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.

The Department for Education is providing Â£4 million of funding over two years from 2013 to four anti-bullying organisations: Beatbullying, the Diana Award, Kidscape and the National Children’s Bureau consortium. While this funding has been awarded to specific projects to reduce bullying in general, this can, and does, include work to tackle cyber-bullying.

The Department has produced case studies showing good practice in how to manage behaviour and bullying. These include a case study about how a school deals with cyber-bullying. Also through funding provided by the Department the Anti-Bullying Alliance has produced specific advice on cyber-bullying for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. We provide a link to this in our own advice on preventing and tackling bullying.

Government ministers have regular meetings with internet providers, social media platforms
and search engines on matters related to internet safety, including cyber-bullying. Ministers from the Department for Education, Home Office and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport also co-chair the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) which brings together a range of experts across government, law enforcement, industry, academia and charities to consider the best ways to minimise the risk of harm to children when online.

In July 2013 the Prime Minister announced measures to support parents to install free and easy to use internet filters which can block access to harmful websites. The Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have now rolled out easy to use filtering to all new customers and will confirm that, by the end of 2014, 95% of all homes with an existing internet connection will be required to choose whether to switch on a whole home family friendly internet filter. The filters are constantly being refined and updated by the ISPs to keep families as safe as possible in the fast changing digital world. The ISPs have also announced a new £25 million internet safety campaign over three years that will reach out to millions of parents on how best to protect their children and make good use of filters.

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