A critical investigation of the nature and extent of cyberbullying in two post-primary schools in Northern Ireland

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## Sample

443 pupils in Years 9, 11 and 13 (aged 12 to 17 years) attending two schools in Northern Ireland

# Abstract

This study aimed to investigate internet usage among post-primary
pupils in years 9, 11 and 13 in two contrasting post-primary schools
in Northern Ireland, the nature and incidence of cyberbullying
among these pupils, and the ways in which their schools are currently
addressing the problem. A mixed methodological approach was
adopted: a paper questionnaire was completed by pupils in Years 9,
11 and 13 (n = 425) in the two post-primary schools; focus group
interviews were conducted with pupils from each year group (n = 18);
and individual semi-structured interviews were carried out with the
pastoral care coordinators (deputy heads with responsibility for pupil
wellbeing) of each school (n = 2). The findings confirm that the postprimary pupils in these two schools own a range of internet-capable
media devices and spend considerable time online. The incidence of
cyberbullying among these pupils was relatively low, and most often
consisted of hurtful or nasty comments sent via texts or posted on
social networking sites. The study reveals inconsistencies between
the approaches taken by the two schools, but also generally low
levels of staff training, little engagement with parents, a lack of pupil
confidence in the school’s ability to discuss cyberbullying openly, and
a worrying absence of any systematic evaluation of the effectiveness
of the schools’ current strategies for tackling this complex issue.

# Outcome

93% of children own a smartphone and 84% have a laptop. About half of the children play online games, the proportion is higher for boys than girls in all year groups. Only 14% knew the people they played with and the proportion decreased with age. 89% have a social media profile. 3.7% (n = 15) of pupils reported having been cyberbullied within the last two months. The majority did not report the incidents.