

**BSA HE3 Part 1 Coursework Submission:
DIARY**

COURSEWORK CODE: EDS015X720

**Nicolas Nelson
Housemaster
Cheltenham College**

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Rationale

‘Cruelty, bullying and violence are on the rise. Most, if not all, children could benefit from learning to focus their attention, to become less reactive, and to be more compassionate with themselves and others’.¹

Since becoming a Housemaster in September 2009, I have noticed the above trend becoming more prevalent, especially in the current culture of ‘Cypercabability’² in boarding houses. Cases of Frape³ or ‘Facebook rape’ are becoming more commonplace; a worrying indictment of how today’s students’ tend to act towards other members of their boarding community, particularly, of course, if it falls under the banner of Cyber-bullying.

It is this that I have chosen to focus on as my principal Case Study, for it is a growing concern among House parents and other pastoral carers. With the particular case in question, once the incident unfolded, I was conscious that a second area of the Certificate Course content became relevant, namely Relationships with Parents. Thus I have chosen to explore just one Case Study for all it throws up; a decision supported by both my Coursework Advisor and Course Mentor. In fact whilst this Diary primarily reflects on the two key areas of Cyber-bullying (e-Safety) and Relationships with Parents, it also draws upon modules on Supporting Vulnerable Pupils, Overseas Pupils and Homesickness.

Bullying aside, in my mind it is paramount that ‘the confidentiality and rights of boarders are appropriately respected’⁴ hence I acted as I did in this particular incident as chief carer.

For the purposes of the study, I open with some contextual background to the incident, I then focus on Cyber-bullying and e-Safety itself; how as staff we tackled the incident and what was put in place at the time to support the victim, perpetrator and staff. I then move on to the parental involvement, ending with what systems I have subsequently put in place in my House and final reflections.

¹ ‘Mindfulness: A Guide for Teachers’ Dr. Amy Saltzman, The Buddha Publications, 2012

² Karl Hopwood’s talk on e-Safety, BSA Certificate Course, June 2012

³ <http://www.internetslang.com/FRAPE-meaning-definition.asp>

⁴ NMS 3.5

Introduction

My school is a Co-Educational Independent Senior School, with a current role of a little over 600 pupils. I am Housemaster of a single-sex Boarding House of 66 boys.

Recently a Fifth Form (Yr. 11) student John from Hong Kong entered my study looking upset and somewhat angry. He stated that he had just been the subject of Frape; a term I had only recently learnt to mean Facebook rape. Having consoled him I asked if he could elaborate and he informed me that on returning from a shower, he was prevented from entering his room by a group of Lower Sixth Form boys in the same House. Once he had broken free and upon entering his room, he established the security settings had been changed on his laptop and that homosexual comments were pasted on his 'Facebook Wall'. In essence, another boy had masqueraded as John on-line, in order to make reference to what homosexual act he would allegedly like to perform.

As a pre-cursor to this, John had been the subject of an underlying current of verbal bullying in House regarding his alleged homosexuality. This had never quite come to a head, but was certainly brewing underneath, hence the Frape incident for John was effectively the breaking point. A further subtext to the incident is that one of the perpetrators, Steven, was in place to be my next Head of House.

Action

Once presented with this incident, I was immediately aware that I was dealing with a case of Cyber-bullying, whereby ‘social networking sites, blogs and video sharing sites can all be used by pupils to manipulate and publish derogatory words and images about others’.⁵ It appears that such a phenomenon has become more prevalent in recent times, yet normally exists in the form of ‘banter’ in close circles. In John’s case this was a different story, as the perpetrators were outside his peer group and he had in fact never really spoken to them. Thus for me, this was in the realm of bullying rather than banter; often a notoriously grey area for differentiation.

I was aware that on entry into our school, all pupils must sign our *Acceptable use of ICT Policy*, which states ‘Pupils must not send any message internally or externally which is bullying, abusive, humiliating, hostile or intimidating’⁶ and, quite specifically, in my school’s *Book of Rules*: ‘They must not transmit or cause to be transmitted material which is offensive, obscene, indecent or defamatory or which infringes the copyright of another person. They must not transmit any messages or prepare files which appear to originate from anyone other than themselves’.⁷

On the electronic front I was also aware that *accessing another person’s laptop, phone or similar will be considered a serious matter under the Behaviour Policy*.⁸ And, as such, I was to treat this as a breach of security and an invasion of privacy alongside Cyber-bullying. There was also the matter of the physical restraint enforced by student Steven to restrict John from entering his own room, thus enabling student Harry to hijack John’s online status. The act of physical restraint had culminated in Steven ‘debagging’ John in the corridor in front of his peers; tantamount to abuse alongside ritual humiliation. Thus, aside from requesting written statements from all parties; ‘Separate them and get them to write an account of the alleged incident,’⁹ I was also aware of the gravitas of the situation and that, in accordance with Hawkes’ advice, I should be ‘Reporting and discussing the more serious disciplinary matters with a senior colleague,’¹⁰ hence I informed the Pastoral Deputy Head at our school. The next course of events was largely determined by the transparency of our Anti-Bullying Policy.¹¹

⁵ Running a School Boarding House: A Legal Guide for Housemasters and Housemistresses, BSA, G.B 2009, Page 28

⁶ Cheltenham College’s Acceptable Use of ICT Policy, August 2012

⁷ Cheltenham College’s Book of Rules, 2012-13

⁸ <http://www.cheltenhamcollege.org/senior-policies>

⁹ ‘Duty of Care’: A Resource Handbook for Boarding School Staff, Dr T. Hawkes, BSA, G.B 2004, Page 149

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The victim will be interviewed by the appropriate member of the pastoral team and asked to write an immediate account of events. The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them. The victim is also given the opportunity to discuss his/her own reactions and behaviour towards the bully. The victim is given support and advice and counselling is suggested if deemed appropriate. Once the member of staff is clear that a bullying offence has been committed, the bully and any others involved will be interviewed individually and asked to write an account of events. The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them. The pastoral team will decide on an appropriate course of action which will depend on the nature, seriousness and frequency of incidents. <http://www.cheltenhamcollege.org/senior-policies>

Having read Diary F as part of the online Coursework Assignment Exemplars, I felt fortunate that my school had adhered to NMS 2.2 in that ‘School should have an effective policy on countering bullying which includes a definition of bullying including bullying by electronic or digital means’.¹²

I was conscious in choosing a course of action that was punitive, educative, supportive and involved a degree of reparation.

‘Decide today to make principles *your* life-centre, or paradigm. In whatever situation you find yourself, ask ‘What is the principle in play here?’ For every problem search for the principle that will solve it’.¹³

¹² National Minimum Standard 2.2

¹³ The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers. Sean Covey. Publ. in UK 2004, Page 26

The Support Network

Who is involved?

1. The Victim
2. The Perpetrators
3. The Parents
4. The House Team

The victim, John, was advised and supported in accordance with our Anti-Bullying Policy: *'Share your feelings with someone else. Ideally, talk to any member of staff or any other trusted adult with whom you feel comfortable. If you would rather not go straight to a member of staff, talk to your friends; talk to a senior pupil, a Peer Supporter or one of the Prefects'*.¹⁴ There were, however, several factors at play here:

1. Supporting John through the immediate 'Frape' incident
2. Supporting a vulnerable pupil given the context of the underlying homophobic bullying
3. An overseas boarder not fully integrated into the broader context of the House
4. Homesickness
5. Protecting John from the perpetrators for the perceived 'snitching' or 'dobbing' re Frape

Certainly John was offered counselling at a school level: 'Referral is a process by which we maximise the potential of the support available to the benefit of the student; support with problem-coping'.¹⁵ And what I was quick to point out to the perpetrators was that for John, as an overseas student relatively new to the school, 'separation is likely to compound the feelings, often manifesting itself in signs of distress and impairment'.¹⁶ And that for him Facebook may well have been the chief mode of contact with his family overseas, for 'Pupils are in daily contact with their parents by email, phone and internet links – often chatting as much as if they lived at home'.¹⁷

Aside from what has been put in place since the incident, the victim was also offered support in the form of the Chaplaincy Team, Peer Supporters and the Matrons. I also thought it pertinent to devise an Individual Welfare Plan for John.

¹⁴ <http://www.cheltenhamcollege.org/senior-policies>

¹⁵ Counselling in College: Referral E. Lindlar et al 2011-12

¹⁶ Boarding Briefing Paper 20 Homesickness, C. Lyon 2007, Page 2

¹⁷ Boarding School May Harm Children, A. Asthana, The Observer, 2008

In reprimanding the perpetrators, clear sanctions were given in accordance with the school's Behavioural Policy¹⁸ and by this stage it had, of course, reached the desk of the Pastoral Deputy Head. Yet in House, I wanted the process of reprimand to be more educative and less punitive, so that I might have them marshal others in the future and 'Make offenders accountable by allowing them to take responsibility for their actions'.¹⁹ This Restorative Justice or Reparation builds community confidence that offenders are making amends for their wrongdoing. Getting offenders to write a letter of apology to the victim, for example, means taking responsibility for their actions and thus accountability. Providing this cathartic opportunity means allowing them to come to terms with what they have done and should subsequently 'reduce incidence of bullying by reparation measures towards victims'.²⁰

'Replacing retribution with restoration'²¹ will make the whole community aware of their responsibility to each other and the community as a whole. Arguably putting the victims first may help the healing process to enable the possibility of forgiveness: 'a chance to understand themselves and to stop them from committing the same kind of offence to others'.²² On reflection, though, I felt I could have tackled the problem more in this way than I did at the time. Naturally I saw victim John as my primary concern.

I found myself questioning the perpetrators' actions, for 'young people will react to pressures in a variety of ways. They may externalise their feelings, taking it out on innocent others, which will result in bullying, classroom disruption or similar behaviours'.²³ What was their level of self-esteem - of the perpetrators wanting to execute such a crime, not least that of the victim as a result?

It was also apparent that, at the time, I needed a network of support and I began to consider how effective my training was of other members of the House team: matrons, the Resident House Tutor and the Prefects. Also would an International Buddy Scheme have helped John more effectively at this time than the current scheme I run which is not origin-specific?

¹⁸ <http://www.cheltenhamcollege.org/Mainfolder/01-College/CollegeLife-Information/Policies/Behaviour-Policy.pdf>

¹⁹ Restorative Justice: Facilitating and Following Up with Confidence, Course Ref Booklet 7875, Creative Education, Surrey 2006

²⁰ *Ibid.* Page 28

²¹ *Ibid.* Page 27

²² *Ibid.* Page 5

²³ BBP 21 'Meeting the Emotional Needs of Boarders, J. Cox, 2007, Page 2

House Parent versus the Home Parent: ‘Residential care is teamwork in a competent workplace’.²⁴

I concur with Boyd’s sentiment that our ‘legal duty is to safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupil by means of good order and discipline and pastoral care’.²⁵ Now the action that I took in informing the Deputy Head Pastoral about the aforementioned Frape incident perhaps inevitably met with the disapproval of Steven’s father in particular. You will recall that at the beginning I mentioned that Steven was set to become Head of House, thus his father was mortified that this might tarnish his reputation and jeopardise his chances of said appointment being made. I felt confident that ‘Matters of behaviour and discipline and the avoidance of bullying are aspects of pastoral care and are legal duties and moral responsibilities of the HM’²⁶ yet once questioned by Steven’s father about my decision not to keep it ‘in House’ I found myself posing the question what rights to act does a Houseparent have? The answer, it seems, lies in the BSA Coursework Booklet Notes: ‘They may do what is reasonable in all the circumstances of the case for the purpose of the safeguarding and promoting the child’s welfare’²⁷ and the general guideline is that our status *in loco parentis* requires is to look after boarders as a good parent would **if they were in the school situation.**²⁸

While we are in loco parentis, it is expected we are making reasoned judgements, which, in my case, are largely based on our College’s tenets of Trust, Respect, Fairness and Forgiveness. However, Miss T. Homewood in her BSA talk on Relationships with Parents²⁹ alludes to the rise in blame culture in recent years, and suddenly we start to lose that confidence. This trend is also noticeably manifest in the perceived inconsistency across Houses. Steven’s father was quick to inform me that in House X this would most undoubtedly have been ‘kept in House’ (hence the need for consistent HSM training) yet I feel that in my duty of care ‘when trying to resolve a bullying incident, initiatives need to be considered at the individual, family and community level’.³⁰

Miss T. Homewood also talks of a triangle of trust, or triologue between the pupil, parent and school. I concur wholeheartedly, and ‘Instead of posing a threat to teachers, by working with them rather than against them, pushy parents could be the answer to improving pupils’ life chances’.³¹

²⁴ Kahan 1994

²⁵ Running a School Boarding House: A Legal Guide for Housemasters and Housemistresses, BSA, G.B 2009, Page 8

²⁶ *Ibid* Page 9

²⁷ BSA Module Booklet Notes, Roehampton University, London 2010-11, Page 36

²⁸ *Ibid* Page 37

²⁹ BSA Residential Course Talk by Miss Theresa Homewood, April 2012

³⁰ Duty of Care’ A Resource Handbook for Boarding School Staff, Dr T. Hawkes BSA, G.B 2004 Page 73

³¹ F. Heine, TES Magazine, September 2009

Another ‘geometric’ approach to this interaction between parents, staff and pupils working together is posed by A. Thomson when illustrating the boarding managing role as follows:³²

PHYSICAL

PEOPLE

BOARDING

POLICIES

PUPILS

In this particular instance, I felt that there was no possible way I could *not* involve the Pastoral Deputy Head, as, ultimately I was acting in my role as safeguarding under the Childrens’ Act of 1989 and Child Protection. In addition, Cheltenham College’s Exclusion’s Policy associates Suspension with serious breaches of the ICT Acceptable Use Policy.³³ It seemed both extreme, and unreasonable, when Steven’s father chose to take his son out of the school altogether. At this point I refer again to T. Homewood and the importance of policies, to both defend and support.³⁴

³² BSA Residential Talk ‘Perspectives on Pastoral Care by Alex Thomson, Easter 2011

³³ <http://www.cheltenhamcollege.org/Mainfolder/01-College/College-Life-information/Policies/Exclusions.pdf>

³⁴ BSA Residential Course Talk by Miss Theresa Homewood, April 2012

Proactive and Preventative Pastoral Care

In dealing with this case of Cyber-bullying, which in turn led on to Relationships with Parents, I learnt the need for proactive and preventative pastoral care; the need to pre-empt prior to responding to crises. What had I put in place in my boarding House in advance of this incident and how far did it fall short of the mark now that I have actually been involved in such a situation? What had I done in ‘Encouraging students to be socially responsible?’³⁵

One specific area I felt I needed to educate the boys in my House on was security issues and settings. ‘Exercise caution – for example in Facebook if you write on a friend’s ‘wall’ all their friends can see it – even if they are not your friends – and see your photo’.³⁶ So, as a result, it is wise to: ‘Ensure that if a social networking site is used, details are not shared with children and young people and privacy settings are set at a maximum’.³⁷

I considered the area of monitoring of electronic activity; policing by Prefects. We have the necessary *Lightspeed* firewalls in place, ‘*Bonjour Browser*’ and Year Group-specific time settings to log activity, but I also tried an element of self-policing, which has, to a degree, been quite effective. However, as with all matters regarding e-Safety, it is absolutely paramount that staff, pupils and indeed parents are all educated, for, as Hopwood illustrates, the lack of boundaries at home is often incommensurate with that in the boarding House.³⁸

Detailed below and overleaf are measures or systems I recommend, both from an empirical and theoretical standpoint, in combatting Cyber-bullying and e-Safety in boarding schools:

- Anti-Bullying week
- Anti-Bullying Charter – a declaration to be signed
- An Acceptable Behaviour Contract for the House to sign
- In-House ICT Talks: security settings, e-Safety etc
- PSHCE Cyber-Bullying Module
- Formulating a Peer Support / Anti-Bullying Committee in House
- Formulating a Staff Anti-Bullying Committee
- Talks and/or Sermons in Chapel
- Assemblies – scenarios acted out by students
- Prefect Training – role play and dealing with real scenarios
- Peer Support training
- Staff Inset and ongoing training

³⁵ Duty of Care’ A Resource Handbook for Boarding School Staff, Dr T. Hawkes BSA, G.B 2004, Page 152

³⁶ BBP 24 ‘e-Safety’, Karl Hopwood, Page 7

³⁷ *Ibid.* Page 8

³⁸ BSA Study Day Talk on e-Safety by Karl Hopwood, June 2012

- Set up a digital Council
- Collect in pupils' laptops at night
- House Displays (Childline etc) incl. school's Anti-Bullying Policy
- Keep updating (policies etc) as this is a fast-moving world
- Pupils have to sign an Acceptable Use of ICT Policy on joining a school
- To actually go through the policies with them to enhance awareness

Regarding Parents: 'Try to keep dealings with parents as transparent as possible'³⁹

- Details, notes, guidance and support in the parents' handbook
- Transparent policies on the parents' Portal of the school's website⁴⁰
- E-Safety talks for parents in House or centrally
- Set up a Parent Committee, with an arm devoted to e-Safety: encouraging openness and sharing of thoughts to disarm the culture of blame
- Posters / flyers or fact sheets detailing recommended websites, information such as *The Safer Internet Centre* designed to tackle cyber-bullying

For pupils, however, it is best 'to aim at providing children with examples – things from their real life that actually means something to them'.⁴¹

³⁹ BBP 26 'A Guide for Schools on Parental Responsibility' 2011, Page 40

⁴⁰ BSA Residential Course Talk by Miss Theresa Homewood, April 2012

⁴¹ BBP 24 'e-Safety', Karl Hopwood, Page 5

Reflections

‘The NSPCC wants secondary schools and the communications industry to give young people better protection through education which promotes considerate, respectful relationships. And parents must talk to their children about this issue and the potentially serious ramifications of their actions’.⁴²

This is the key to tackling this thorny issue of Cyber-bullying and e-Safety. Whilst schools tend to draw endlessly upon the benefits of today’s technology: ‘Today, of course, instant communication, particularly through e-mail, is very much the norm’,⁴³ it comes with a warning: ‘However, it was not long before a downside of this technological breakthrough was discovered’.⁴⁴

What I find a fascinating paradox is that ‘Home and school are places that we need children to feel safe and secure in. However, in doing so, we encourage children to approach their use of the internet with a false sense of security’.⁴⁵ Hopwood also talks of how parents feel disempowered as their offspring know more than the parent: a role-reversal whereby the pupils teach *us*.

And, in essence, as House parents we may occasionally have to tread water when implementing e-Safety in Houses, for we are prone to that variable, the parent, and consistency can waiver as regards what pupils may get up to not on our watch, as it were.

Conclusion

‘At the root of all good pastoral care there are three simple basics: to see, to know and to record’.⁴⁶

Using the ECM acronym SHEEP (Safe, healthy, enjoy and achieve, economic wellbeing, participation)⁴⁷ we are shepherds, making our flock ready for life, both perpetrator and victim. I like to see myself in today’s climate as a cyber shepherd, if you will.

‘Increased access to the internet via laptops.... and the associated increased use of social networking sites ultimately increases the risk to children. Consequently it is incumbent on all staff to be aware of the benefits and risks and to take appropriate steps to protect children. It is also important that schools help children protect themselves. The key message is to make children and staff risk aware’.⁴⁸

⁴² Article in Alumni Life Magazine, November 2012.

⁴³ World Class: Meeting the Needs of International Students in British Schools, C. Greenfield & P. Hardaker, BSA, G.B 2005, Page 93

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ BBP 24 ‘e-Safety’, Karl Hopwood, Page 4

⁴⁶ Article by Chris Seal, Conference & Common Room, Autumn 2012

⁴⁷ BSA Residential Talk ‘Perspectives on Pastoral Care by Alex Thomson, Easter 2011

⁴⁸ BBP 24 ‘e-Safety’, Karl Hopwood, Page 11

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