Cyber-Bullying

Introduction

The Internet plays an increasingly important role in the social lives of young people, and almost all young people in Britain have regular access to a computer or a smartphone. This article looks at how children are more vulnerable to cyber-bullying as a result. Whilst protective measures like installing filters do help to protect young Internet users, many parents feel ill-equipped to deal with cyber-bullying and its effects. Before reading the article, ask pupils how many hours a day they spend on the Internet.

Answers

1. E.g. Because the newspaper wants to emphasise how shocking this statistic is.
2. E.g. He wants the Government to make sure cyber-bullying is taught in schools.
3. E.g. That cyber-bullying often involves someone writing a nasty comment in an email, text message or on social media. Because these comments are written down, they don’t “disappear” like verbal abuse.
4. E.g. Yes, because bullies are less likely to be punished if nobody knows who they are.
5. E.g. Because the Internet is such a huge part of young people’s lives that there’s no way a victim could truly “unplug”. Also, switching off devices doesn’t solve the problem, it just ignores it.
6. Any appropriate answer. E.g. No, because people should be allowed to express themselves freely on the Internet and there will always be people who bully others. OR E.g. Yes, because people are becoming more aware of cyber-bullying and introducing new ways to stop it.

Extra Activities

- Tell pupils that a lot of non-fiction writing includes facts and statistics. Explain the difference between them, then, as a class, identify examples of each from the extract. Discuss why writers might include facts and statistics in their writing. (E.g. to make their arguments more persuasive, to back up their claims.)
- As a class, discuss different strategies pupils can use to deal with cyber-bullying and how to stay safe online (telling a parent or teacher, blocking bullies on social media, not giving out personal details etc.). Using their ideas, ask pupils to make a leaflet aimed at younger students to help them stay safe online.
- Show pupils a short clip about cyber-bullying, e.g. ‘Cyber Bullying Virus’ made by the charity Cybersmile. Ask pupils whether they liked it or not, and whether they thought it was effective. Divide pupils into small groups and ask them to create their own piece of drama designed to raise awareness about the dangers of cyber-bullying. The performance should be no more than 5 minutes long.
- As a class, create a mind map of the different types of bullying behaviour. Ensure children are aware that bullying isn’t just physical violence or name calling, it can also be isolating someone or a friend controlling your actions. Then ask pupils to create their own mind maps about the effects that bullying can have on someone, e.g. becoming withdrawn, having fewer friends, acting aggressively, skipping school. Then, as a class, make a list of the positive actions pupils can take to support someone who is being bullied, e.g. making them feel included, standing up for them, telling a teacher if they see bullying behaviour.