

Documenting a Bullying Case File: Traceability and Digital Evidence

Building a solid case file to act quickly and protect the student

Student welfare staff · Leadership team

Families

Use from the very first report

A well-documented case file makes it possible to act faster, protect the student involved, and base every decision (internal measures, referral, legal complaint) on verifiable facts rather than impressions. This sheet sets out how to collect, preserve and organise evidence in a bullying or cyberbullying situation.

1. Why document every case systematically

For the student

Being believed and taken seriously quickly; not having to justify themselves or repeat the facts to every new person involved.

For the school

Justifying the measures taken, ensuring continuity of follow-up if staff change, and having a usable file in case of external referral or proceedings.

2. What to keep

- **The full thread** of messages, comments or posts — never an isolated excerpt taken out of context.
- **Time-stamped screenshots**, showing the account name, date and time, with no cropping or editing.
- **The identity of the accounts involved** (usernames, handles, platform concerned).
- **Any identified witnesses** (students, staff) and a dated summary of what they saw or heard.
- **The school context**: class, dates and locations of any in-person incidents, and any triggering events.

3. Taking a screenshot that will hold up

1 Never crop or zoom in

Capture the full screen, including the phone's status bar (date and time visible).

2 Keep the username visible

The name or handle of the author must clearly appear in the screenshot — never blurred at this stage.

3 Capture the whole thread

Take several consecutive screenshots rather than a single isolated message, to show how events unfolded.

4 Date your filing

Name each file with the date it was captured and file them in chronological order (e.g. 2026-09-15_screenshot_1.png).

4. Where and how to store the evidence

Good practice — Create a dedicated digital folder per case, dated and named neutrally (no student name in a title visible to everyone). Restrict access to authorised staff only (leadership, student welfare team). Keep a backup copy. Never share, publish or forward this evidence beyond the people responsible for handling the case.

5. Tracking log (template to reuse)

Date	Platform / location	Nature of the incident	Evidence on file	People involved	Action taken
__ / __ / ____					
__ / __ / ____					
__ / __ / ____					
__ / __ / ____					

6. Steps for reporting

- 1 Listen to the student**
 In a calm, confidential setting, without making them doubt their own account or confronting the alleged perpetrator immediately.
- 2 Complete the case file**
 Gather evidence following the principles above and fill in the tracking log.
- 3 Internal referral**
 Student welfare staff, leadership team, wider support staff (school nurse, counsellor): deciding on immediate protective measures.
- 4 External referral if needed**
 National helplines for bullying and cyberbullying, a report to the relevant education authority, or a formal complaint to the police for the most serious cases.

7. Legal framework and data protection

Evidence collected must be strictly limited to what is needed to handle the situation: a retention period limited to the follow-up and any proceedings, access restricted to authorised staff, and deletion of the file once the situation is resolved and any appeal periods have passed. If a formal complaint is filed, it is then the authorities (police, courts) that determine how evidence is retained as part of the proceedings.

Useful contacts and support

National anti-bullying helpline

National cyberbullying helpline