

## What is Bullying?

Bullying is any action which hurts somebody **physically, psychologically** or **emotionally**. It is repetitive, intentional and can be towards one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.

Bullying is not a normal part of growing up and should not be accepted. Everyone has the right to feel safe all the time and be treated equally.

- Young people who are bullied can *feel very distressed and powerless* to put a stop to it.
- Young people who are bullied are more at *risk of developing mental health problems*, including depression and anxiety.
- At worst, bullying may drive young people to *self-harm and even suicide*.
- Bullying can impact how well your child does at school, their *ability to make friends* and can have an effect on them for many years and into adulthood.

Bullying can happen anywhere, at any time. It can happen face-to-face or online. It can take many forms, including physical violence, threats, mocking, name-calling, and saying unkind or untrue things.

### Cyberbullying

Online bullying or cyberbullying is any bullying behaviour that takes place 'virtually' via mobile devices like phones and tablets. It can take place through online social networks and is also common on gaming sites. It might include inappropriate text messaging, e-mailing or blogging, sending offensive or degrading images, excluding individuals from group chat, posting content on social media, or creating false personas to mock or humiliate others. Online bullying can often be worse than offline bullying because it can happen 24 hours a day; it can be very public and very isolating.

## How can I tell if my child is being bullied?

You may be unsure if your child is involved in bullying. He or she could be acting as a bully, being bullied or upset because s/he has seen others behaving badly. There is not always a clear distinction between a person being a bully or a victim. Often people who bully have also been bullied.

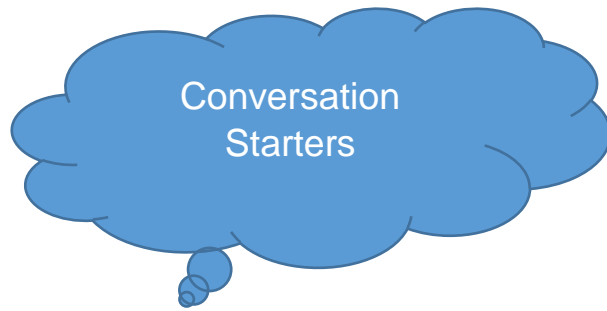
### Look out for these signs

- unexplained bruises or marks on the body
- broken or missing possessions
- becoming withdrawn
- changes in behaviour such as becoming aggressive at home or changes in eating habits
- a lack of energy
- problems sleeping
- suddenly doing less well at school
- less willing to talk about their day and becoming defensive when asked about it
- avoiding school, making excuses or claiming they are unwell
- talking less about friends and seeing them less than usual
- being protective over their phone, laptop or tablet and spending more time than usual on them

There could be other reasons for these signs, so try to avoid jumping to conclusions

Is there anything else bothering my child?

Have there been changes at home like a new baby, or divorce or separation?



**Some children may find it hard to talk about bullying and may not respond well to direct questioning. You could ask:-**

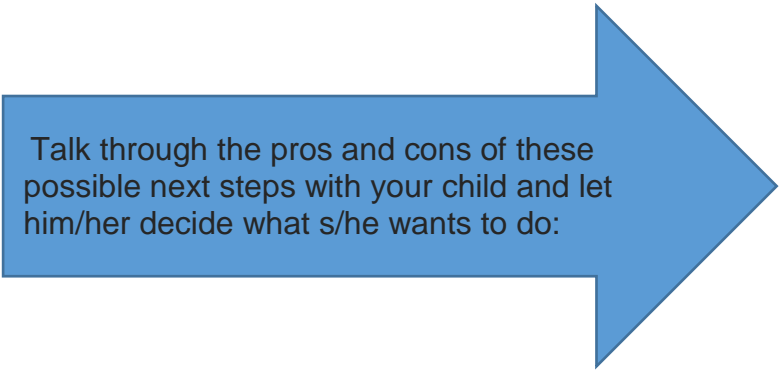
- open questions about their day
- about who their friends are and what they like about them
- what lunchtime is like at school - who do they sit/play/hang around with?
- what parents should do to help stop bullying in schools
- 'If you had one wish, what would you change and why?'
- show a programme or video which includes bullying and ask your children what they think about it.

If your child has difficulties in explaining what is happening to him/her and/or communication difficulties, you may need to use different ways to communicate with him/her, such as through drawings or games.

What should I do if  
my child is being  
bullied?

- Maintain an open and trusting relationship so your child feels confident to share concerns with you.
- If your child discloses that s/he bullied, speak calmly and reassuringly to him/her.
- Thank your child for telling you and reassure him/her that things will get better. For a lot of people, telling someone that they are being bullied takes a lot of courage.
- Many children do not tell their parents about bullying because they are frightened that they will approach the school about it and make things worse. Always ask your child what they think could be done to stop the bullying and decide on the next steps together.
- Depending on your child's age and development, you could alert school staff to your concerns. Ask them to keep a discrete eye on your child.
- Encourage your child not to retaliate as a bully is often looking for a reaction.
- Encourage your child to develop friendships outside school and to take part in activities that build confidence and resilience (e.g. drama and dance, martial arts, team sports, local activity groups).
- Encourage your child not to spend too much time on social networks and to have a healthy attitude to relationships online.
- Reiterate to your child that you are always there if s/he wants to talk about a problem.

Possible next steps:



Talk through the pros and cons of these possible next steps with your child and let him/her decide what s/he wants to do:

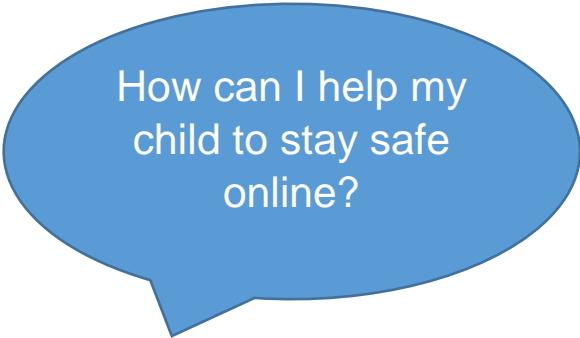
- Walk away from the situation and avoid the bullies
- Firmly ask the bully to stop (for example: "I don't like that name, it makes me upset - please don't do it again.")
- Write a note asking the bully to stop
- Ask a witness/friend to ask them to stop
- Report the bullying to a teacher or staff member
- Communicate your concerns to the head teacher
- It may be helpful to create an action plan with your child of the steps you are going to take to address the bullying and improve the situation.

What if my child is  
bullying someone?

**There can be many reasons why a child is bullying someone:**

It may not be straightforward. You may feel disappointed or upset that your child has been bullying others. Try to stay calm and take some time to think about next steps:

- Calmly explain that what s/he is doing is unacceptable.
- Your child may not even be aware that this is bullying, so it's important to explore what has been happening. Discuss the definitions on page 3 and explore with your child how s/he would feel if someone was behaving like this towards him/her.
- Explain what you'll do next, such as talking to the school, and what you expect the child to do (for example apologising or writing a letter to the person being bullied).
- Give the child time and space to ask any questions about why his/her actions need to change.
- Be careful to explain that it is the behaviour, not the child, that is wrong and needs to change.



## How can I help my child to stay safe online?

Children can often be under pressure to join the latest social networking sites, apps and have the newest technology. Go through these points with your children to make sure they stay safe online while having fun:

- They should behave online as they would offline.
- Only make friends with people online that they know and trust and never meet up with someone that they don't know.
- Make sure you know what websites your children use and ask them to teach you about social networks and instant messaging so that you are more aware about what they are doing online.
- Encourage them to act responsibly online and talk to them about the dangers of the internet and being careful about the information they post online. For example never share any personal details such as phone numbers or home address.
- Check privacy settings on their social media sites and apps - these determine who sees the information they share and who can contact them.
- Encourage them not to share their passwords, change them regularly and not to have the same one for every account.
- Help them to understand that everyone has a digital footprint and that any information they post online can be used and saved by other people.
- Talk about what they can do if they have a problem online such as knowing how to block or report someone.
- Make sure they know that they can speak to you or someone in their support network if they are ever being bullied.
- See Hanbury C. of E. On-line Safety policy for further guidance.

**If your child is experiencing online bullying:**

- Help him/her to keep evidence by saving or copying any texts or conversations received so the necessary people can investigate the bullying
- Block abusive users
- Follow procedures for reporting abusive content on social networks
- Let your child's school know: online and offline bullying are often linked and so the bullying may also be happening at school
- In cases of threats of violence or sexualised content, contact the police
- Don't retaliate to the bullying.

How Can I help my child to  
develop his/her social and  
emotional skills?

Social and emotional skills include self-awareness and acceptance; empathy (being able to see and feel things from another point of view); being able to manage emotions; and being able to manage relationships.

How we manage our emotions can really impact on our quality of life and how we behave towards others. Helping our children to have a good 'emotional intelligence quotient' will help them in their current and future relationships, dealing with stressful situations and in having resilience when things are difficult, such as if they are being bullied.

**Increase their self-awareness and build self-esteem by  
talking about:**

- □ their good qualities
- □ what the best thing is about your family
- □ their goals and ambitions
- □ the traits they admire in others



Managing emotions starts with you: what your children see you do is what they will do. Think about how you respond to stressful situations and how you can model good emotional intelligence.

Actively listen to your children's feelings. Help them to understand that it's ok to feel sad, angry or upset sometimes. Once they have accepted and dealt with the feelings, they can think about what caused the emotions and how to deal with the problem.

Teach your children to act in a caring way towards others, get along with fellow students, manage angry feelings and be assertive without being aggressive when standing up for themselves and others.

**Help them to talk about difficult things.**

- □ All children have things they find it hard to discuss and this is where they most need your support. Having a regular time when they can bring up things that may be bothering them can really help.

Encourage them to reflect on their feelings and behaviours in different situations. For example, ask them to think about how they feel when they see somebody being unkind to someone else.

Help them to understand how a positive mindset can influence their responses and feelings: they have the power to change their emotional response to situations.