



How can I support my child if I think they are being bullied?

One of the most difficult times in a child's life can be if they are bullied. Bullying can be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

Bullying can include the following:

- Name calling and teasing
- Threats
- Physical violence
- Damage to belongings
- Deliberate and frequent exclusion from social activities and groups
- Spreading of malicious rumours
- Bullying by mobile phone, text messages
- Cyber-bullying - by email and through websites.

How will I know if my child is being bullied?

Bullying is often secretive and hidden and young people are sometimes reluctant to report bullying. Parents and families are often the first to detect symptoms of bullying, though sometimes school nurses, teachers or doctors may first suspect that a child has been bullied.

Important signs to look out for are:

- Reluctance to go to school
- A sudden headache or tummy ache, particularly on a Monday morning
- Anxiety and irritability
- An unexplained drop in marks or grades at school
- Being depressed and withdrawn
- Unexplained bruises, scratches, torn clothes or damaged possessions
- Spending a lot of time in their room
- Loss of appetite
- Insomnia
- Being fearful or angry with unexplained outbursts
- Worrying more than usual about their appearance and what clothing to wear

Children may also:

- Have possessions go 'missing'
- Ask for money or begin stealing money (to pay the bully)
- Refuse to say what's wrong
- Become distressed or angry with other family members

If you think that your child is being bullied, but you are not sure, you could ask a few simple questions:

For a younger child:

- What did they do at school today?
- Did they do anything they liked or didn't like?
- Who did they play with?
- Are they looking forward to going to school tomorrow?
- How are their friends?

For an older child:

- What did they do at lunchtime today?
- Is there anyone they would like to invite home?
- Is there anyone in school they do not like and why?
- Is there any lesson at school that they don't like and why?

What can I do about this?

There are a number of things that you can do as a parent. It is important to try to find out what is going on and use discretion. Try to stay calm, reassuring and be practical.

Suggestions for Parents / Carers:

- Calmly talk with your child about his/her experience.
- Make a note of what your child says - particularly who was said to be involved; how often the bullying has occurred; where it happened and what has happened.
- Reassure your child that he/she has done the right thing by telling you about the bullying.
- Explain to your child that should any further incidents occur he/she should report them to a teacher immediately.
- If it is school bullying, make an appointment to see your child's teacher.
- Explain to the teacher the problems your child is experiencing.

When talking to teachers about bullying:

- Please try to stay calm and bear in mind that the teacher may have no idea that your child is being bullied or may have heard conflicting accounts of an incident;
- Be as specific as possible about what your child says has happened, give dates, places and names of other children involved;
- Make a note of what action the school intends to take;
- Ask if there is anything you can do to help your child in school;
- Stay in touch with the school and let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue.

What can I do if I do not feel that my concerns are being addressed in school?

Families who feel that their concerns are not being addressed appropriately by the school might like to consider the following points:

- Ask to see the school's Anti-Bullying Policy to see if agreed procedures are being followed. Every school must have an Anti-Bullying Policy by law;
- Make an appointment to discuss the matter with the Headteacher and keep a record of the meeting;
- Discuss your concerns with the chair of governors;
- If the above steps do not help, write to the Chair of Governors explaining your concerns and what you would like to see happening;
- Contact the Trust Chief Executive Officer to share your concerns.