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**Bullying Advice for Parents and Carers**

**What is bullying?**

There are many definitions of bullying; most contain reference to the following characteristics:

* **it tends to be prolonged and repeated**;
* **it involves an imbalance of power between victim and perpetrator;**
* it may be physical, verbal or psychological.

Bullying is a complex issue that may be defined as the intentional abuse of power by an individual or group with the intent of causing concern or distress to another individual or group. It may occur on a regular or irregular basis; every reported incident should be treated seriously and be thoroughly investigated.

Bullying is experienced by significant numbers of children and young people; adults should be vigilant in looking for possible instances. Bullying and harassment can seriously blight lives and cause acute unhappiness and anxiety. This can lead to changes in a victim’s behaviour causing hindrance to academic progress, truancy and self-harming.

Not all aggressive behaviour is bullying. Some behaviour, particularly with very young children, might be aggressive but have no knowing intent to cause distress or injury. Victims who report that they feel bullied when they may not have been are obviously vulnerable and should be supported. Adults in these types of instances need to carefully explain the differences between bullying and isolated though regrettable acts of aggression that might be a one off incident.

Bullying is an intentional abuse of relational power. There are other types of negative behaviour, which are sometimes mistaken for bullying. Squabbles, quarrels, pushing and shoving should not automatically be seen as bullying. Children and adults quarrel from time to time and it is not bullying if there is no imbalance of power. It is important that schools recognise the difference between conflict and bullying, which is typically surrounded by a complex web of deceit and power misuse.

Sexual or racial harassment are forms of bullying. The former is most often perpetrated by boys against girls and is more often than not an abuse of physical power. The Commission for Racial Abuse defines abuse of a racist nature as “violence, which may be verbal or physical, including attack on property as well as the person. This may be suffered by individuals or groups because of their colour, race, nationality or ethnic origins, when the victim believes the perpetrator was acting on racial ground”.

Bullies are not all the same they can be:

* aggressive and physically intimidating and act in gangs to harass their victims;
* anxious bullies who join bully groups to avoid adverse attention themselves;
* victim bullies who turn to bullying weaker youngsters after having suffered bullying themselves;
* verbal bullies who taunt and disparage their victim effectively attacking the victims self esteem;
* psychological bullies who spread harmful stories or hint at possible negative outcomes to their victims.

Victims also differ in nature, some examples can be:

* looked after children;
* children with special education needs;
* children who have a different mode of speech or appearance from others. This would include those from different ethnic backgrounds to the majority;
* anxious or nervous children with low self-esteem;
* children with under-developed social skills;
* attention seeking individuals who provoke others or seek the role of victim.
* newcomers to school, class, social group or neighbourhood

Bullying is deliberate behaviour, by an individual or a group, repeated over a period of time.

Anyone can be the target of bullying and this can be for a variety of reasons such as gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, age and disability.

Bullying can be:

**Emotional** being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)

**Physical** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence

**Racist** hurtful behaviour, both physical and psychological, that makes a person feel unwelcome, marginalised, excluded, powerless or worthless because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, faith community, national origin or national status

**Sexist, Sexual or**

**Transphobic**  when a learner usually repeatedly harms another learner or intentionally makes them unhappy because of their sex or because they may not be perceived to conform to typical gender norms

**Homophobic** bullying motivated by prejudice against lesbian, gay and bisexual people (LGB) or those perceived to be LGB

**Verbal** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

**Cyber/Technological** all areas of internet, such as email & internet chat room misuse; mobile threats by text messaging & calls; misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video facilities

**Disability**  bullying around special educational needs and disabilities

**What are the signs of bullying?**

Indicators a child is being bullied include:

* Reluctance to go to school
* Appearing frightened of the journey to and from school
* Change their usual route
* Deterioration in their work
* Anxious, moody, withdrawn, quiet
* Complaining of illnesses such as stomach aches and headaches
* Bed-wetting in a previously dry child or young person
* Having nightmares or sleeping difficulties
* Come home regularly with missing or damaged possessions
* Arriving home hungry
* Asking for extra money or stealing money
* Begins truanting
* Begins to do poorly in school work
* Stops eating
* Unexplained cuts and bruises
* Aggressive, bullying others
* Gives improbable excuses for any of the above

**How can parents/carers help?**

* Give reassurance to your child that is not their fault
* Talk calmly about what is happening even though you may feel upset yourself
* Listen to your child and take what they say seriously
* Encourage your child to report incidents to a member of staff
* Make notes of what has happened (who, what, when, where)
* Talk to the school or organisation
* Do not confront the bully or parents yourself-work with the school or organisation

**Talking to the school**

Schools must have an anti-bullying policy. It should make clear the strategies it will use in response to bullying incidents. Schools have a duty to promote positive behaviour and have strategies to prevent bullying incidents occurring.

* Tell the school about the incident
* Try and stay calm-the school may have had no idea that your child is being bullied or may have heard conflicting accounts of the incident
* Give as much detail of the incident as you can- time, location, what happened, names of those involved including witnesses
* Arrange a meeting with school staff
* The school should investigate the incident before the meeting
* Take written details of the incident to the meeting
* Ask for notes to be taken so that there is a record of what is discussed and agreed
* Ask for a named contact at the school both you and your child
* Stay in touch with the school and let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue
* Agree a plan of action and a time for a follow up meeting

**After the meeting**

* Write to the school outlining what you think was agreed at the meeting.
* Give the school time to deal with the incident but agree a deadline with the school
* Talk to your child about what is happening

**Useful websites and telephone numbers**

[www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk) Tel: 08451 205 204

[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) Tel: 0808800 2222

[www.snapcymru.org](http://www.snapcymru.org)

[www.wales.gov.uk/respectingothers](http://www.wales.gov.uk/respectingothers)

[www.antibullying.net](http://www.antibullying.net)

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) Tel: 0800 1111

[www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)