

WHY ME ?



**A Parent's Guide to Helping
Your Child Deal with Bullying**



Why Me? A Parent's Guide To Helping Your Child Deal With Bullying



Summary

This booklet has been designed as a guide for all parents who are concerned that their child may be being bullied, or may be a bully. All schools have some experience of bullying but they do vary in the approaches that they use in dealing with it. There are many ways that parents can help to address the problem. Many parents feel angry at the injustice of what is happening to their child but this booklet will help to provide information on spotting the signs of bullying and some suggested ways to address and tackle it, working with the school and your child to solve the problem.

● WHAT IS IT?

The first step is identifying bullying – what is it, who does it and why? There are many types of bullying. More information on types of bullying is provided on Pages 2 and 3.

● IS IT HAPPENING TO YOUR CHILD?

The next step is to identify whether this is happening to your child. Turn to Page 5 for more.

● CONTACT THE SCHOOL

Getting in contact with the school is vital. Keep a note of bullying incidents, ensure that your child is receiving support at home. Information on what do now is provided on Page 7.

● WORK WITH THE SCHOOL

Help your child to identify a 'safe' person that they can talk to. If you feel you are not receiving sufficient support from the school, details of further contacts are provided on Pages 7, 8 and 9.

● HELP YOUR CHILD TO COPE

Behaviour, verbal and cognitive techniques to boost self esteem and self confidence are found on Pages 11, 12 and 13.

● SUPPORT

Knowing that your child is receiving support, both at home and in school, will provide reassurance for you both. Working closely with the school to ensure that the problem is addressed and tackled is the best method of stopping bullying for good.



ANYONE CAN BE A BULLY- BEING A BULLY IS BEING CRUEL TO SOMEONE ELSE



WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying can take many forms. Research and accounts from young people identify bullying as any behaviour that is:

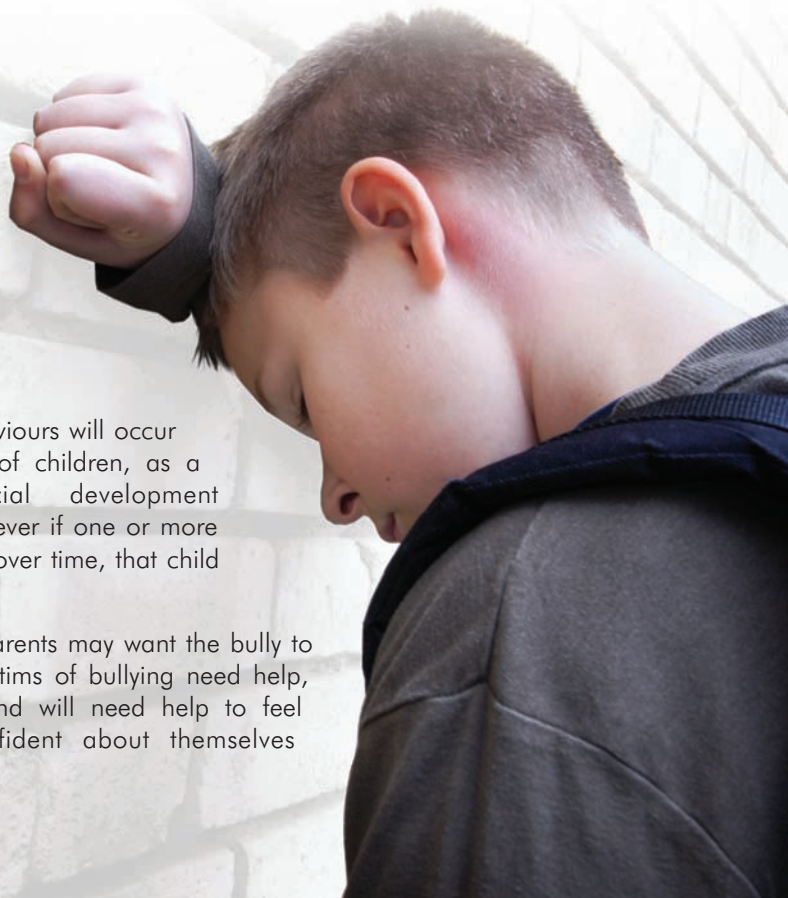
- Harmful, carried out by an individual or group
- Repetitive, wilful or persistent
- Where there is an imbalance of power, leaving the person being bullied feeling defenceless

BULLYING BEHAVIOUR CAN INCLUDE

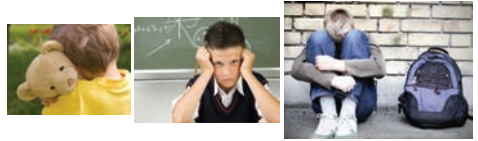
- Physical violence
- Victimisation
- Social exclusion
- Name calling
- Threats
- Cyber bullying

To some extent these behaviours will occur normally within a group of children, as a normal part of social development (competition, rivalry). However if one or more persistently target a child, over time, that child is being bullied.

When a child is bullied, parents may want the bully to be punished. However, victims of bullying need help, support and protection and will need help to feel stronger and more confident about themselves (empowering).



WHAT MIGHT BULLIES DO?



Verbal bullying: Teasing is a dangerous and long-lasting form of bullying. The most common forms of teasing are related to appearance, referring to weight, colour of hair, ability to play sports, personal hygiene or casually using words like “gay” as a form of insult to the child.

Verbal bullying may refer to aspects of language, culture, race, faith and appearance. Although the words vary, it is the intent, the audience and the setting - it could be a group watching, or bystanders repeating the phrases to others that harm the target. The teasing hurts because of the bully’s manner, tone, facial expression and regular repetition. Bullies may also call names, say horrible things, spread rumours, gossip, ridicule the child, encourage other children to do or say something nasty, or tell lies about them. Adults sometimes tease children and this can be just as hurtful.

Emotional bullying: Emotional bullying can be expressed openly – “You can’t sit with us” – or involves indirect, subtle, secret behaviours or body language by the bully and others. It may involve giving “the silent treatment”, staring, mimicking, whispering, excluding from games. The intention is to use the group against the child.

Physical bullying: This involves regularly attacking someone who has less power. It can be direct aggression such as pushing, pinching or kicking. Indirect aggression can include stealing possessions, throwing possessions around, flicking objects at the child. It often involves food, either stealing it, hiding it or damaging it so that the child remains hungry.

Cyber bullying: Some children have been bullied by text messages, phone calls, instant messaging conversation, social networking sites or even been filmed by mobile phone during a physical assault (happy slapping). Cyber bullying using the Internet and / or mobile phones can be particularly invasive as it comes into what should be a safe place – home. The child may find it very difficult to ‘escape’ such bullying.



It is recommended that children under the age of 18 should not have an instant messaging account, social networking site etc. unless it is carefully monitored. Parents should keep the computer in a public space, not in the child’s bedroom and also consider other devices in the home such as mobile phones and game consoles.

WHO GETS BULLIED?



Anyone can be bullied. Children who are being bullied may have low self-esteem or self confidence as a result. They can feel helpless, embarrassed, humiliated and scared.

Children who are being bullied might think everyone is laughing at them or making fun of them (even if they are laughing and giggling at something else!). They may not have close friends so may be alone at break or lunchtimes and may become bullies themselves.

Persistent bullying can result in

- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Shyness
- Poor academic achievement
- Isolation
- Self-harm
- Threatened or attempted suicide

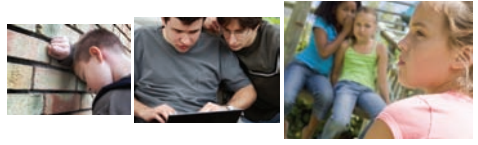
Children are often reluctant to tell adults that they are being bullied. Some reasons are:



They may not be clear if they are being bullied, what to do or where to go for advice

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Something about your child's behaviour may alert you to the fact that he or she is being bullied.



Children being bullied at school may:

- Be frightened of walking to and from school, want to change their usual route or beg to be driven into school
- Be unwilling to even go to school, feel ill in the mornings (headaches, tummy aches)
- Begin truanting
- Begin doing poorly in schoolwork
- Come home regularly with clothes or belongings damaged or missing (clothes, pencil cases, books)
- Have unexplained bruising, cuts, scratches
- Come home really hungry (bully taking lunch or lunch money)
- Become distressed, anxious, withdrawn, lack confidence, look listless or sad
- Have no friends, never want to invite a friend home or go to parties
- Stop eating
- Cry themselves to sleep or have nightmares, especially on Sundays or at the end of the holidays
- Bedwetting
- Ask for money or start stealing, or have pocket money go missing (to pay bully)
- Refuse to talk about what is wrong more generally or about school
- Become aggressive and unreasonable, or bully siblings or other friends
- Behaviour might change from how it is normally
- Behave unusually



They may give improbable excuses for any of the above

WHAT TO DO NOW



If you have spotted either the physical, behavioural or emotional signs that your child is being bullied, there are various things that you can do:

Ask your child to talk about their worries. You might say “I’ve noticed you being quiet recently, is there something on your mind?” You might ask more directly, if something or someone is bothering them. It is important to try and encourage them as much as you can.

Listen to what your child says. Try not to dismiss their fears and immediately jump in with solutions. Say “It sounds very upsetting/lonely/frustrating” or “how does that leave you feeling?” Try and draw them out “Tell me some more about it...?”

- Take what your child says seriously and explore with your child the facts about what took place.
- Don’t promise not to tell anyone. However, be sensitive to your child’s fears of making matters worse.
- Give your child a chance to vent THEIR feelings about being bullied, which might be different from your feelings as a parent.
- Reassure your child that you love them and are going to help them.
- Talk to someone you can trust about YOUR views and feelings. This might be a partner or a friend.
- Arrange to meet your child from school if this is when the problem happens.
- Keep a written diary or note of what your child is saying happens and any changes of the situation.

It is important not to confront the bully or their parents. This can lead to serious arguments and further problems for you and your child. There is a suggested format for a “bully log” at the back of this guide.

It is helpful to work through a third party and this is usually the school where the bullying is taking place.

Remember that you are acting as a role model for your child. If you behave in a calm, assertive manner when dealing with this, it will help them to understand how to react to challenging situations.



TALKING AND WORKING WITH THE SCHOOL



- Contact the school as soon as you suspect there is a problem. Schools have an important role and responsibilities relating to the wellbeing of pupils and will be as keen as you to resolve the issue.
- Talk to the class teacher and remember that it isn't the school doing the bullying. They may not even be aware of the situation. With a teacher keeping an eye on the situation and monitoring contact between your child and the bully, it may be resolved fairly easily.
- Encourage your child to expand their circle of friends and ask them to watch out for each other.
- Asking children home to play is a good way of expanding the friendship circle.
- If the bullying persists, contact the school again and write to the Head teacher to find out what the school policy is on bullying. That way you will know exactly what is being done to tackle the situation. Continue to keep a note of everything that is happening.
- Reassure your child that ignoring the situation will not make it go away and may in fact make it worse. They must believe that it is not their fault and that no-one deserves to be bullied.
- Do not encourage them to retaliate: this will only cause them more problems and they may get them hurt.



EXPRESSING YOUR CONCERNS



For parents of children in a KCC school, the recommended route for expressing your concerns might be as follows:

- Contact an appropriate person in your child's school.
- In primary schools this might be the Pastoral Support Manager or Family Liaison Officer.
- In secondary schools this could be the Head of Year or Key Stage Co-ordinator.

If you are still not happy contact the Head teacher of your child's school.

Contact outside organisations for support and advice (listed at the end of this booklet).



If you have raised your concerns with the Headteacher and are not satisfied, you can write to the Chair of Governors, care of the school. If you are still not satisfied, contact your Local Children's Services Partnership Manager.

You may ultimately want to contact the Strategic Director of Children's Services at KCC, County Hall, Maidstone.

For further information, the schools complaints procedure is available on our website www.kent.gov.uk/safeschools

If a serious assault has happened, you will need to contact the school. Schools in Kent have a Managing Incidents Policy, designed in partnership with Kent Police which refers some in school incidents back to the school initially.

The police will still investigate school based incidents if requested by the parent. In turn the school may decide to refer the incident to the police.

IN SCHOOL SOLUTIONS



Agree with your in school contact a date by which you can expect to hear back from them and follow it up.

Go to the meeting with information about what took place, who was involved, how your child has been affected, what you and your child have already tried, and what you would like to be done now.

Be prepared to work with the school. They will have an Anti-Bullying Policy that should be available for you to see and will probably want to meet with you again once they have done their own investigations.

If possible, have some suggestions for the school to try, such as offering protection, or supervision, or observation of your child. Does the school have a Mentor/Buddy scheme? Do they have access to a schools counselling service? Do they use mediation techniques or Restorative Approaches?

Is it possible for your child to have a "Safe person", a named member of staff they can go to if they are worried and that they know will listen to them?

Make another appointment to go back and review together how things have gone.

Don't give up.

In a few, very extreme cases, parents consider changing their child's school or even teaching them at home as a last resort. Contact your Local Children's Services Partnership Manager for advice.



HELPING YOUR CHILD TO COPE

Parents often suggest one of three courses of action to their child:



Ignore the bullying, tell a teacher/adult, or encourage their child to retaliate.

But there are other approaches that may be helpful to think about and discuss with your child.

BEFORE AN INCIDENT TAKES PLACE

- Keep to safe areas of the school and grounds.
- Keep near to people (adults and children) who are not likely to bully you or who can protect you.
- Ask friends to stay near you.
- Tell parents or friends what frightens or worries you.
- Practice looking happy or unconcerned as a temporary way of avoiding conflict, act “as if” there wasn’t a problem.
- Look after yourself, reduce the number of stresses and upsetting things around you.

WHEN BULLYING IS HAPPENING

Encourage your child to choose different strategies depending on who is around them and where they are e.g. doing something different to what they would normally do.

- Ask the bully to stop.
- Ignore it and walk away.
- Find your friends and stay with them.
- Refuse to listen and think of something else instead.
- Ask for a “safe” person and a “safe” place in school where you can go and talk.
- Use the systems in school, such as peer mediation, to discuss your worries.



TELL AN ADULT AND KEEP TELLING THEM

TECHNIQUES TO HELP YOUR CHILD COPE WITH BULLYING AND STRESSFUL SITUATIONS



Changing how you think (cognitive strategies)

All of the below are strategies that you could talk through and help your child to try and use to help them in difficult situations.

- Your child could learn to use positive self-talk. Thinking about the things that they are GOOD at, or anything positive about themselves at all, or who DOES like them will help them to keep calm in a difficult situation. Little reminders like a photo or a letter or tickets from a special trip, can also help them. If someone makes a nasty remark to them, they will need to remember this list of good things and say it to themselves in their head. This may take some practice.
- Encourage your child to think about past bullying situations. Are there things that they could have done differently that could have resulted in a different outcome?
- One way to get some new ideas on how to cope with the bullying is for your child to think about what happens from the point of view of the bully. Why is he or she doing it? What are they getting out of it?

The techniques below can be used by your child to help them feel more confident in the way that they think, feel and look in a stressful situation.



- Practise how you BREATHE – take a deep breath and count to four and then breathe out counting to five. Repeat this and notice how you calm down a bit. Also, with plenty of oxygen your body will work better and your voice will be stronger.
- Practise how to RELAX. When we get stressed we get very tense. By wriggling your fingers, toes, arms and shoulders your muscles can relax a bit. Keep an eye on your hands and make sure you stretch your fingers out if they are clenched tightly.
- If you still feel tense use your Positive Self Talk, or try to imagine that you are in a safe, happy place, maybe your bedroom or maybe an imaginary secret place.
- If you are being called names, it can help to write them down. Try saying them to yourself, or sing them to the cat. This may make them seem less hurtful. Ask someone you trust, what they think of them. The names are the bully's weapon so if you can find a way not to let them hurt you, the bully has no power.
- Discuss what is happening with a trusted adult, either at home or in school.

OTHER STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES TO TALK ABOUT WITH YOUR CHILD



The strategies detailed below can help your child to develop resilience and boost their self esteem to help them cope with bullying. All bullying incidents need to be reported to the school and dealt with appropriately but the below can help your child to deal with an incident if it occurs.

Encourage your child to:

- Be more assertive. Placing a “no” or “I” at the beginning of a sentence gives it more emphasis. Instead of “Sorry, but I don’t want to do that” say “No, I don’t want to do that” This is tricky to learn and needs practice.
- Listen to how other people they know, or how people in films or on TV talk and see how they might sound assertive or not.
- If the bully makes personal comments such as “You have a big nose” they could reply by saying “Yes, I do, don’t I” They accept what they say, agree with it, then move on.

Changing what you do (behaviour strategies)

- Walk away. Teach yourself to spot a situation which is unsafe and walk away as soon as you can.
- Ask your friends to stay with you at times when there might be bullying e.g. break times or lunchtimes. You might choose an older child, relative or friend.
- Try to be friendly with lots of different groups of children. This will mean you have lots of people to be with when you’re at school.
- If school offers clubs at playtime and lunchtime, think about inviting some of your friends to attend them with you. They are often a good way of extending your friendship group.

Changing how you look (body language strategies)

- Stand up tall with your head held up. Keep your back straight and your shoulders back.
- Look people straight in the eye – it makes them think you are confident.
- Try to look calm – “act as if” – even if you aren’t. (Relaxation techniques can help).



TOGETHER WE CAN STOP BULLYING!

USEFUL CONTACTS



Parentline Plus

Free confidential helpline
0800 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Anti Bullying Alliance

A network of over 50 organisations aiming to reduce bullying and create safer environments for children and young people
0207 4858535
www.ncb.org.uk/aba

Childline

Free confidential hotline for children and young people
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

Kidscape

UK Charity established to prevent bullying
0207 7303300
www.kidscape.org.uk

Partnerships with Parents

Assistance for parents with children in Kent schools
01622 755515
www.kent.gov.uk/partnershipwithparents

NSPCC

Community based projects across the UK and Channel islands to prevent cruelty to children
0800 800 500
www.nspcc.org.uk

Young Minds

Parent Information Service
0800 0182138
www.youngminds.org.uk

Department for Children, Schools and Families

UK government department responsible for children's services, families, schools, 14-19 education and the Respect Taskforce
0870 000 2288
www.dcsf.gov.uk

Cyber Bullying

Guidance on internet safety and safe surfing for young people
0870 000 3344
www.thinkuknow.co.uk

If you are not satisfied with the response from your school, you can consult the KCC complaints guidance.

www.kent.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/about-the-council/contact-us/schools-complaints.htm

Please see below design for Bullying Log, which can be used by the school or the parent when working together to resolve a situation.

Nature of Incident	Date of Incident	Follow up/Actions

If you would like to contact your Local Children's Services Partnership Manager please call 08458 247 247

With thanks to the Dover Parent's Forum for their input. Printed by Isom Printers. Further copies of this booklet are available from Kent Safe Schools, contact details are available on the back of this booklet.



IMAGINE:

Imagine being bullied
A girl like me,
Imagine feeling down
and wanting to drown
Imagine how lonely
and desperate it can be.
Imagine that girl
THAT girl is ME

written by year 4 female student

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