



# The Rotherham Parent Partnership Service

## BULLYING - FACTSHEET

Despite initiatives from the government and efforts on the part of many teachers and schools, bullying remains a serious problem for many children. We know that the emotional damage done to those who are bullied can be long lasting. It is less often recognised that lasting harm is also done to those who bully.

Research has begun to suggest that unless new behaviours are learned and adopted, bullies may continue to bully throughout their lifetime, with damaging consequences for their mental health and well-being and their relationships with others.

### WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is not always an easy thing to define. Dan Olweus, an expert in the prevention of bullying, says that bullying can include:

- Deliberate hostility and aggression towards the victim
- A victim weaker and less powerful than the bully or bullies
- An outcome which is always painful and distressing for the victim

### BULLYING CAN BE:

- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching
- Verbal - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours
- Emotional - excluding, tormenting, ridicule, humiliation
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact, abusive comments, homophobic abuse

### WHERE CAN IT HAPPEN?

- In the playground
- In the toilets
- On the way to school
- On the way home
- In the classroom



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## WHO IS BULLIED?

Many children are bullied at some time. Some children who are bullied are different in some way, however, often, there is no difference.

## WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO BULLIED CHILDREN?

They can suffer from depression, low self-esteem, shyness, poor academic achievement, isolation and, in some cases they may attempt and manage to commit suicide.

## POSSIBLE SIGNS OF BULLYING

Children may:

- be frightened of walking to or from school
- not wish to use the school bus
- be unwilling to go to school
- begin to feel 'ill' in the mornings
- come home hungry, if their dinner money has been taken
- become withdrawn
- begin truanting
- come home with possessions missing/destroyed
- stop eating/begin wetting the bed

## WHAT CAN THE SCHOOL DO ABOUT BULLYING?

All schools should have an anti-bullying policy which should be made available on request. The policy should deal with bullying incidents in accordance with the procedures set out in the policy.

They should be prepared to:

- Treat the problems seriously
- Investigate the incident
- Interview bullies and victims separately
- Interview any witnesses
- Decide on an appropriate action
- Have a follow up meeting with the victim's family to report progress. It is reasonable to expect you will be kept informed.
- Inform all staff about the incident and action taken



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- Keep a written record of the incident, interviews and action taken

## BULLYING OUTSIDE SCHOOL

This can be very hard to deal with, especially if the bullies' parents won't intervene to stop their children tormenting others. The suggestion is that threats, taunts and harassment should always be reported to the police.

### The following may help:

- Keep a written record of all incidents
- Try and find out who is doing the bullying
- If appropriate, approach the bullies parents
- The council Environmental officer could be informed about the situation
- Take legal advice, available from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
- Enrol your child in self-defence classes, increasing their confidence
- Consult local youth leaders who may know the children involved
- If possible, video, photograph or record the incidents
- Report all physical assaults

## WHY DO CHILDREN BECOME BULLIES?

### Reasons may include:

- They have been abused themselves
- They like the feeling of power
- They don't relate well to other children
- They are bored or frustrated
- They are under great pressure to succeed
- Following a traumatic event such as a death in the family

## WHAT DOES THE GOVERNMENT SAY?

Your child's school has a duty of care towards their pupils - they are considered to be in loco parents.

Schools should also provide an adequate and efficient education

- Anti-bullying strategies should also cover play and break time



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- Bullying should be in the schools behaviour policy, which must also include racial and sexual harassment
- Pupils should be encouraged to report incidences of bullying to older pupils and staff
- A school prospectus should explain how to report the bullying and how staff should investigate
- School should record all racial incidents. Any action taken should be told to parents and governors

## MAKING A BULLYING REPORT

Try to be as clear as possible before you speak to school. Things to think about may include:

- What happened?
- Who did it?
- Who saw it?
- How did it affect your child at the time?
- Were there any later effects?
- Was school informed?
- How did school respond?
- When did it happen? (day and time)
- Did things improve, stay the same or get worse?
- What do you think may have happened if the bullying continued?

## WRITING TO THE SCHOOL

To make sure that there are no misunderstandings, write to the school, describing the bullying and request a meeting. You may wish to send a copy to the Chair of Governors and the Director of Education.

## MEETING THE SCHOOL

The meeting will probably be more useful if you have prepared yourself beforehand.

## BEFORE THE MEETING

- Make a note of any questions
- Make a note of any points from your child's record you agree/disagree with



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- Check school policies and note down useful points
- Gather any useful reports

## AT THE MEETING

Many schools will treat parent's worries seriously and act quickly to resolve the issues. However, there can be misunderstandings and parents may not be familiar with some of the language or technical jargon teacher's use.

## IT MAY BE USEFUL TO TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS

- Take along a copy of the letter sent to school, the bullying report and a list of other questions
- Read out your report and other points
- Tick each point and question as it is dealt with
- Take notes of what is said
- If you do not understand something, ask and keep asking until things are clear
- Summarise points at the end so everyone is clear

## AFTER THE MEETING

- Send a copy of your notes to make sure everyone is clear about what was agreed.
- If you are unhappy with the meeting or cannot get a meeting with the person you wanted, you could always ask to meet someone more senior, including the Head teacher.
- Set a deadline for a response and keep a note/copy of all the things you have done or sent to school
- If you are really unhappy, you could consider making a complaint or taking legal advice

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNORS

The governors have an important role to play in making sure that their schools are welcoming places where children are relaxed.

Governors can get the issue of bullying put on the agenda for a meeting. It needs to be established how it will be tackled in school.



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Governors must make it clear that they require practical strategies and curriculum plans which can be effectively delivered. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 say that governing bodies must produce and review discipline policies in consultation with parents.

- begin to ask for more money
- begin to become aggressive themselves
- have unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts
- give unlikely excuses to explain any of the above

If you are worried that your child is being bullied, you need to ask them directly. Reassure them you wish to help and support them. Take what they say seriously, but do not promise to keep the bullying secret.

## HELPING VICTIMS OF BULLYING

Victims can feel vulnerable and powerless. Their self-esteem may have been very badly affected, particularly if the bullying has been going on for some time.

- Reassure your child that they are loved very much and you are there for them
- Stress that the bullying is not their fault
- Try to explain that their reaction to the bullying may actually encourage the bully
- Practice helping your child to become assertive - books available on this from local libraries
- Try to think of ways your child could respond to the bullies most frequent taunts
- Look at ways of minimising opportunities for bullying, e.g., not taking valuables to school, not hanging around corridors on their own
- Talk to your child about how they are feeling
- Encourage them to write their feelings down
- Make sure you praise or reward them for their achievements
- Create opportunities for them to do well, e.g., helping to prepare a meal, cleaning the house
- Give them responsibility and create a chart with stickers, or a system where the progress can be seen
- Encourage a new hobby
- Encourage new friendships
- Invite other children round to your home



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## ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP

- ▮ Kidscape Helpline - 10am - 4pm, Mon-Fri - 0207 730 3300  
[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)
- ▮ Commission for Racial Equality  
Elliot House, 10/12 Allington Street, London, SW1E 5EH  
0207 828 7022
- ▮ Victim Support - 0845 3030900
- ▮ Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)  
Helpline: 2 -pm, Mon-Fri 0808 800 5793
- ▮ Home Education Advisory Service - send large SAE  
P.O. Box 98, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AN
- ▮ Youth Access - Call for details of young people's counsellors in your area. 9am - 5pm Mon-Fri - 0208 772 9900
- ▮ Samaritans - anytime - 08457 909090
- ▮ Pupiline - [www.pupiline.net](http://www.pupiline.net)
- ▮ Childline bullying line - 0800 44 1111
- ▮ The Anti bullying Campaign (ABC)  
185 Tower Bridge Road  
London SE1 2UF Telephone - 020 7378 1446
- ▮ Dept for Education and Science (DFES)  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying)
- ▮ Young Minds (Children's Mental Health Charity)  
102-108 Clerkenwell Road  
London EC1M 5SA Telephone - 020 7336 8445  
Helpline - 0800 0182 138 Website - [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)