

How to help your child cope with bullying

A guide to helping you support your child and where to obtain expert help.



Finding out that your child is being bullied is a stressful and distressing experience. It is natural for a parent to feel anger, confusion and upset.

Key messages to get across to your child:

- It's not their fault that they are being bullied
- They don't have to face this on their own
- It is unfair and wrong to bully others
- Tell your children you love them and do what you can to make their lives outside school fun and interesting

What is bullying?

Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally through threats or superior force.

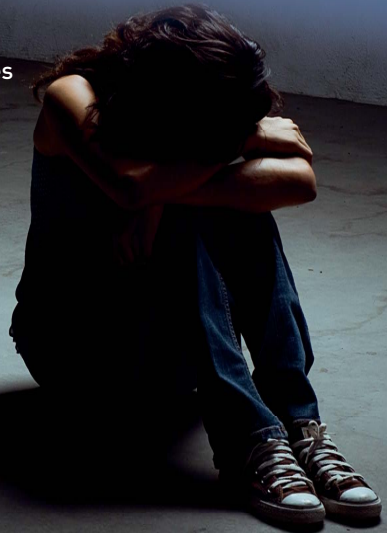
Many children do get involved in fights and disagreements every now and then. Teasing and name calling can also be done in a fun way (depending upon how the child feels. If he/she feels hurt and upset, it is bullying).

But when this type of behaviour becomes persistent and threatening and directed towards children who are unable to stand up for themselves then bullying becomes a major problem.

Being a bully, or being bullied, can happen to anyone and can have long term effects. Bullies are playing with power any way they can.

Bullying is not:

- A one off fight or argument
- A friend sometimes being nasty
- An argument with a friend



What are the different types of bullying?

- **Verbal** – name calling, teasing, threatening, spreading rumours
- **Physical** – hitting, pushing, pinching, kicking
- **Emotional** – ignoring or isolating, taking or damaging possessions, being forced to hand over money, being forced to do things against own will
- **Cyber** – using text, email or web space to write or say hurtful things about your child
- Being attacked or abused because of religion, gender, sexuality, disability, appearance or ethnic or racial origin

How to recognise if your child is being bullied

Some children are good at hiding their feelings and the first you know of the problem is when your child:

- Suddenly doesn't want to go to school e.g. hides school clothes, books etc.
- Begins to do poorly in academic work
- Changes his/her usual routine e.g. taking a longer way to school
- Says they are ill
- Becomes moody or bad tempered or is very quiet
- Suddenly loses their appetite or their eating habits change
- Starts wetting the bed
- Sleeps badly
- Comes home with cuts and bruises, torn clothes
- Comes home with possessions damaged or missing
- Wants to avoid leaving the house
- Has fallen out with previously good friends
- A younger child may become aggressive with brothers or sisters
- Suddenly doesn't want to go on the school bus
- Begs you to drive them to school
- Comes home hungry (bully taken lunch money)
- Continually 'losing' their pocket money
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone or is nervous and jumpy when a text message comes in

If your child is bullying others?

This can be embarrassing for you to find out your child is involved in bullying. Don't become angry, think about what might be the cause. Try to stop the bullying by:

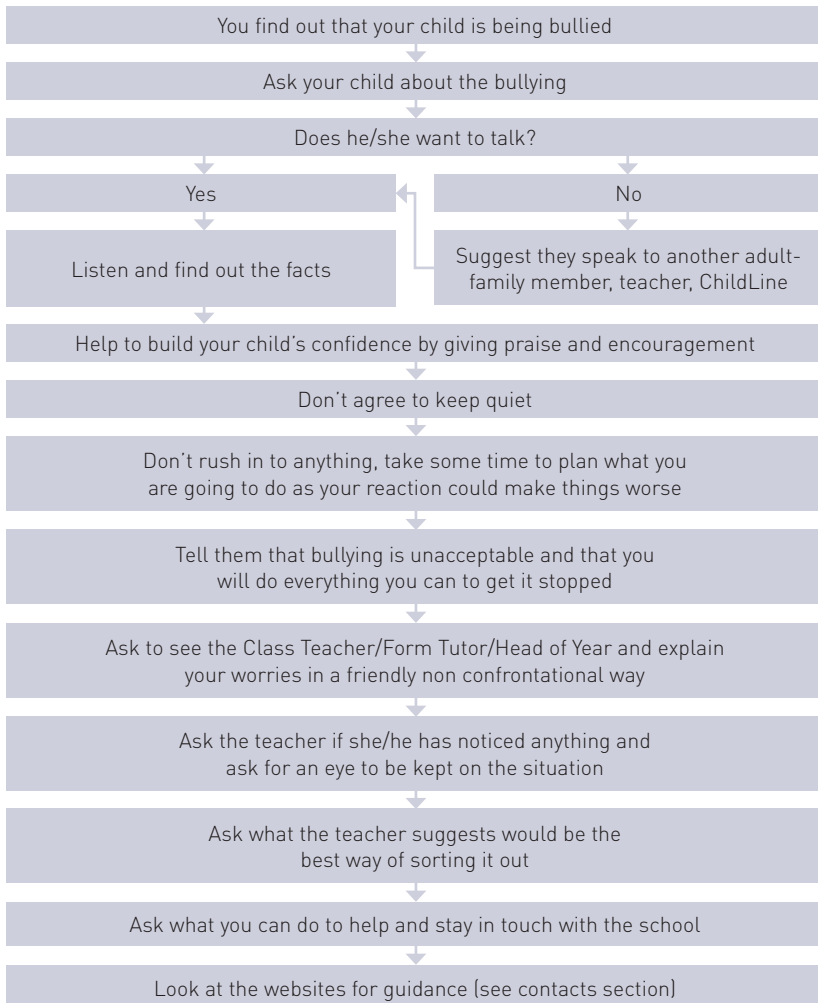
- Talking with your child, let them know that what the bullies are doing is unacceptable, making other children unhappy and you will not tolerate it
- Make sure that in the home other family members don't use force or aggression to get what they want
- Make an appointment to see your child's teacher or form tutor and explain what is happening
- Talk with the teacher about how you both can help stop the bullying
- Keep regular checks on how things are going at school
- Giving your child goals to behave better and then reward their good behaviour
- Give your child lots of praise and encouragement when he/she is being kind and cooperative
- You may want to contact ParentLine Plus etc.

Step One

Remember some children worry that the bullying will get worse if the school speaks to those that are doing the bullying. Talk to your child before speaking to the school. We don't put up with being hit or insulted so children shouldn't have to either.



What to do if your child is being bullied



Do not accept that calling names and teasing is not bullying. If your child is upset – it is bullying. Your child's school has to have an Anti-bullying Policy by law. You are entitled to ask for a copy to look at. The policy should tell you what the school will do if bullying is reported and also what the school is doing to stop bullying happening in the first place.

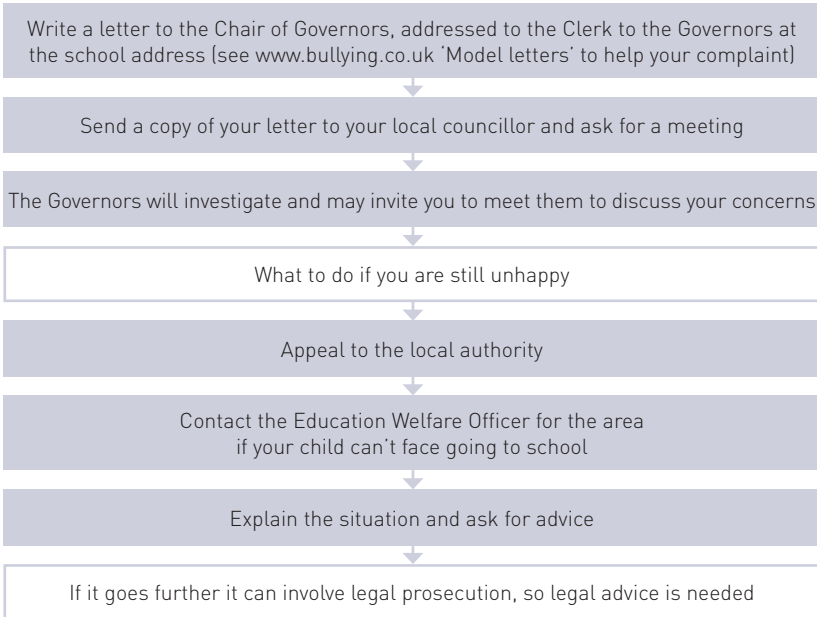
If the bullying continues

Step Two

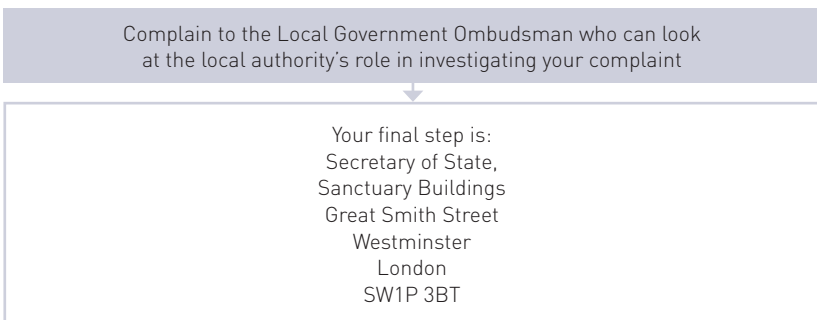


If you are still unhappy

Step Three



Step Four



What to do if the bullying is very serious?

Your child is too frightened to go to school or you fear for their safety.

- The police may need to be involved – children aged 10 or older can be charged with assault or harassment
- The Police force in Northamptonshire has a Youth Manager who is experienced at dealing with these issues (see 'Contacts' section)
- You could contact your doctor so the level of distress can be recorded and you can ask your doctor if counselling would be beneficial

Bullying outside school

- Schools can take action if bullying happens, on the journey from home to school
- If the bullying is carried out by pupils in school uniform, contact the headteacher asking for action to be taken
- Make a complaint to the police about the threats, intimidation or physical attack. Children over the age of 10 can be charged with assault or harassment. If under 10 the police are very good at warning bullies off in front of parents
- Suggest your child walks with other pupils or takes a different route to or from school – if possible

Bullying on the school bus:

- Write to the school to make a complaint about bullying on the bus
- Also make a complaint to either the local authority school transport department (if it is a local authority bus) or to the bus firm as they may then contact the school which would help to solve the problem

Bullying checklist:

Try to remember every bullying incident. Jot down each one...

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- Who saw it?
- How did it affect your child at the time?
- Were there any later effects?
- Did you tell the school?
- What exactly did the school do?
- When did it happen? Date and time
- Did things improve or did they get worse?



National Contacts

ParentLine Plus 0808 800 2222 (24hrs)
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Kidscape 08451 205 204
Helpline for parents (Mon – Fri 10am-4pm)
www.kidscape.org.uk

NSPCC 0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk

Advisory Centre for Education 0808 800 5793
(advice line for parents)
www.ace-ed.org.uk

Children’s Legal Centre 0800 7832187
www.childrenslegalcentre.com

‘Bullying: a guide to the law’ Bullying online
www.bullying.co.uk

Parents centre
www.parentscentre.gov.uk

Anti-bullying Alliance
www.anti-bullyingalliance.org

Local Contacts

Fran Thornton
Youth and Extended Policing Manager,
Community Policing & Partnerships,
Department for Service Improvement,
Northamptonshire Police

08453 700700 Ext 2513
Email: Fran.thornton@northants.pnn.police.uk



Research

- Community Anti-bullying Project Hull
- 'Safe to Learn' DCSF 2007
- 'Parent Anti-bullying Leaflet' Derby City
- Websites – Young Minds, Parentscentre, Parentline Plus, ChildLine, NSPCC, Bullying Online

Acknowledgements

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Further Information

For further help or information from the Families Information Service in Northamptonshire, please call **01604 237935** or e-mail **earlyyears@northamptonshire.gov.uk**

The telephone helpline operates Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5pm. Out of office hours you can leave a message on the answer phone and we will ring you back.

Alternatively, you can write to:

**Northamptonshire County Council
Children and Young People's Directorate
Early Years and Childcare Service
PO Box 216, John Dryden House,
8-10 The Lakes, Northampton NN4 7DD.**

More details can be found at:

www.northamptonshire.childrensservicedirectory.org.uk

The Children's Service Directory website provides information on a range of services and activities for children aged 0-20 years, across Northamptonshire. You can search by keyword, postcode or by clicking on different "zones" to find the information you need.

