

BULLYING

Advice for Parents

What to do ... *before it happens*
... *when it starts*
... *in extreme cases*

HOW TO PREVENT BULLYING HAPPENING

- You and your partner should agree in advance who speaks, and who takes minutes. Send a copy of your minutes to the school after the meeting inviting any comments/alterations in writing. File copies.
- If you believe your child is at risk of serious injury or self-harm, **DO NOT SEND HIM / HER TO SCHOOL UNTIL YOU ARE SURE IT IS SAFE**
- Re-assure the child that you understand the seriousness of their position, and how you will support them.
- Consult your G.P. immediately.
 - Request your child's absence be authorised due to stress.
 - Discuss the possibility of counselling with your G.P.
- Inform the school in writing of the reason for your child's absence.
- Request work for your child at home.
- Consider the possibility of transfer to another school.
- Liaise with your school's Education Welfare Officer about alternative strategies.
- You have the right to educate your child at home if you wish. You must notify the school that you are taking the child off-roll and electing for home education.
- Your local Education Department have the right to visit and approve the educational arrangements you have put in place.
- If you intend to take action against the school for failing in their Duty of Care, you could request an Official Complaints Procedure form from the Headteacher, or consult a solicitor specialising in this area. Sometimes, M.P.'s are prepared to become involved and give their support.
- If the bully is in Year 6 upwards, you can go direct to the Police to file an assault charge in cases of physical injury, whether the assault has happened in school or in the wider community. You should always take photographs of any physical injury for your records.
- If your child is approaching secondary transfer, or moving school for reasons of bullying, always notify the new school in advance of the problems the child has had, and name the pupils responsible. Request that if the bully should transfer to the same school they should be put in entirely separate classes and the situation be carefully monitored.

- Make time to talk to your child, and check that s/he is happy at school.
- Ask the child to keep a diary listing high points and low points of his/her school day.
- Talk it through regularly, suggesting practical strategies to overcome problems.
- Practise agreed strategies in role-play situations, until children perform them automatically and with confidence.
- If possible, allow your child to bring friends home to reinforce suitable relationships.
- Try to make time to offer to assist with class visits or help in class, so you can develop a more informed relationship with the class teacher and other pupils.
- NEVER criticise someone else's child's behaviour directly. If there's a problem, speak to an appropriate member of staff in private, or ask the school to host a meeting between you and the child's parent.
- Let the school know immediately if your child is unwell or upset and give a phone number at which you can be contacted.
- Make every effort to attend school open days and progress evenings so that you maintain a regular dialogue with the school.
- Give your child the opportunity to gain confidence and make a wide circle of friends by introducing him/her to a variety of after-school activities, e.g. sport, drama, music, art, guides, scouts etc.
- Give your child responsibility: encourage him/her into good habits such as preparing their schoolbag and packing homework the night before, tidying bedrooms and being responsible for pets.
- Praise and reward good behaviour and progress, and set treats as targets for your child to work towards.

If you'd like further advice or more information about the training we can provide for young people and for schools, please visit the Kidscape website: www.kidscape.org.uk

Kidscape contact numbers...

Anti-bullying Helpline for parents: 08451 205 204
(Mon-Fri, 10-4)

General & Training Enquiries: 020 7730 3300

Kidscape
2 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0DH

Registered Charity 326864

IF BULLYING HAPPENS - DAY-TO-DAY MONITORING

If you think your child is being bullied in school, here are some positive strategies you can put in place.

- If your child shows changes in behaviour, such as anger, nervousness, tearfulness, introversion, nightmares or poor sleep, sit them down and try to establish the reasons.
- Contact the school, share your concerns with the class teacher, and monitor the problem jointly whilst being supportive to the child.
- If the problem resolves itself quite quickly, just keep a note of the cause, date and who was involved for future reference should there be more problems at a later date. Think about encouraging your child to start keeping a diary of every day interesting events on a regular basis.
- If the problem continues, try starting a home-school booklet (see our website). This will help to establish patterns, such as:
 - Does it always happen with the same child?
 - Does it happen regularly in a particular lesson or in a particular place or at any special time of the day?
- Think how you can help your child deal pro-actively with this situation:
 - Can the teacher move your child's seat in class?
 - Can the person responsible for supervision at the time when incidents occur be made aware of the problem, to assist or effect change?
- At this stage, you should make sure that if you are dealing with a persistent bullying issue, that you are familiar with the contents of the school's anti-bullying policy. This is a document the school is required to have BY LAW. Request a copy if you don't already have one (you may need to offer to pay the cost of photocopying).
- Match your child's problem against what the anti-bullying policy states, and ask the school to respond accordingly. If the policy states that the school runs a "No Blame" policy, consider changing schools at this point – the issue is unlikely to be dealt with effectively
- If your child has any physical symptoms, take him/her to your G.P. and ask for this to be written on the child's notes. There are two reasons for this:
 - 1) Should your child be too distressed / physically sick / start refusing to go to school, your Doctor would have previous information available to assess if it would be appropriate to authorise a sick note. Your child's absence would then be AUTHORISED not UNAUTHORISED, avoiding the possibility of court action for non-attendance whilst you sort out the problem.
 - 2) Should you decide to....
 - a) transfer school, and need to appeal for a placement in an over-subscribed school,
 - b) complain officially about the way your child's case has been handled, or
 - c) request bullying be taken into account if your child is about to take public exams,....your Doctor could be asked for a professional letter of support to help with this if s/he has been fully informed and involved from the outset.

- Reinforce your child's ability to deal with bullying situations by playing "What would you do if..." situations, e.g.
 - What would you do if someone demanded your dinner money?
 - What would you do if someone said you were "chicken" because you were unwilling to gang up on a victim?
- Practise appropriate responses to these situations until your child can respond automatically without freezing in victim mode.
- Look at your child's ability to hold eye contact. Make sure that s/he holds eye contact when speaking to people.
- Look at your child's body language.
 - Does s/he try to appear as small as possible?
 - Does s/he jump and scuttle away like a frightened rabbit when spoken to?
 - Ask him/her to practice standing easily with shoulders back and weight well balanced.
- Does your child tend to whisper, or respond in a shrill tone?
- Practise breathing deeply from the chest and saying "NO" in a deep voice that carries.
- Does your child feel friendless?
 - Can you allow them to bring a friend home for tea?
 - Can you ask the class teacher to pair him/her up with a suitable partner of similar temperament in school?
 - Can you enrol him/her for an after-school activity that would build confidence and widen the friendship circle?
- Drama classes, choirs and orchestras, sports clubs, scouts/guides, and youth clubs all give the child an opportunity to "start from scratch" and make successful relationships in a new environment.
- Sometimes elderly neighbours, grandparents and relatives can provide a friendly ear, especially when the child is trying hard not to worry an already stressed parent!
- Have things for your child to look forward to, such as holidays, trips to the cinema, little presents or shared time together, so that their outlook is not totally bleak!

IN EXTREME CASES

- **NEVER LEAVE YOUR CHILD IN AN UNSAFE SITUATION!**
- Put all your concerns in writing to the school.
- Ask them to only respond in writing to you as you are keeping records should you need to take the matter further.
- List all the bullying incidents with names, dates, school action and outcomes.
- Ask for an appropriate safety plan to be put into place for your child.
- Consult the anti-bullying policy and state what you think "appropriate action" would be.