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Information Sheet: 20

## BULLYING

Don't suffer in silence

### Information for parents and families

Produced by the Department of Education & Skills

All schools are likely to have some problem with bullying at one time or another. It is important that your child's school takes steps to reduce and prevent bullying, as many schools have already successfully done.

#### Bullying behaviour includes:

- Name calling and teasing
- Physical violence
- Threats
- Isolating individuals from group activities

Parents and families have an important part to play in helping schools deal with bullying.

First, discourage your child from using bullying behaviour at home or elsewhere. Show them how to resolve the difficult situations without using violence or aggression.

Second, ask if your school already has or is developing an anti-bullying policy. An anti-bullying policy is a document, which sets out how the school deals with incidents or bullying. You have a right to know about this policy, which is for parents as much as staff and pupils. If your school does not yet have a policy, you could play a part if helping to develop one.

Third, watch out for signs that your child is being bullied, or is bullying others. Parents and families are often the first to detect that a problem exists. Don't dismiss it. Contact the school immediately if you are worried.

### **If your child has been bullied:**

- calmly talk with your child about his/her experience
- make a note of what your child says - particularly who was said to be involved; how often the bullying occurred; where it happened and what has happened
- reassure your child that he/she has done the right thing to tell you about the bullying
- explain to your child that should any further incidents occur/he/she should report them to a teacher immediately
- make an appointment to see your child's class teacher or form tutor
- explain to the teacher the problems your child is experiencing

### **Talking with teachers about bullying:**

- try and stay calm - bear in mind that the teacher may have no idea that your child is being bullied or may have heard conflicting accounts of an incident
- be as specific as possible about what your child says has happened - give dates, places and names of other children involved
- make a note of what action the school intends to take
- ask if there is anything you can do to help your child or the school
- stay in touch with the school; let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue

### **If you are not satisfied:**

Families who feel that their concerns are not being addressed appropriately by the school might like to consider the following steps:

- make an appointment to discuss the matter with the Headteacher, keep a record of the meeting
- if this does not help, write to the Chairman of the Governors explaining your concerns and what you would like to see happening
- contact a local or national parent support group for advice
- in the last resort contact
  - the director of education for your authority if your school is not grant-maintained
  - the Secretary of State for Education if your school is grant-maintained

### **If your child is bullying other children:**

Many children may be involved in bullying other pupils at some time or other. Often parents are not aware that their child is involved in bullying.

### **Children sometimes bully others because:**

- they don't know it is wrong
- they are copying older brothers or sisters or other people in the family whom they admire
- they haven't learnt other, better ways of mixing with their school friends
- their friends encourage them to bully
- they are going through a difficult time and are acting out aggressive feelings

### **To stop your child from bullying others:**

- talk with your child; explain that what he/she is doing is unacceptable and makes other children unhappy
- discourage other members of your family from bullying behaviour or from using aggression or force to get what they want
- show your child how he/she can join in with other children without bullying
- make an appointment to see your child's class teacher or from tutor; explain to the teacher the problems your child is experiencing; discuss with the teacher how you and the school can stop him/her bullying others
- regularly check with your child how things are going at school
- give your child lots of praise and encouragement when he/she is co-operative or kind to other people

## **RESOURCES**

### **Advice for parents and families about bullying:**

- *Bullying and how to fight it: A guide for families*, A Mellor (1993). SCRE, 15 St John Street, Edinburgh EH8 8JR (available from good bookshops)
- *Fighting, teasing and bullying: simple and effective ways to help your child*, J Pearce (1989). Thorsons, Wellingborough (available from good bookshops)

## Organisations who can help:

### **Advisory Centre for Education**

1c Aberdeen Studios

22 Highbury Grove

London N5 2DQ

**Advice Line: 0808 800 5793**

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

### **Anti-Bullying Alliance**

[www.anti-bullyingalliance.org](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org)

### **Anti-Bullying Campaign**

10 Borough High Street

London SE1 9QQ

Tel: 020 7378 1446 (10:00 - 16:00)

### **Anti-Bullying Network (Scotland)**

University of Edinburgh

Holyrood Road

Edinburgh EH8 8AQ

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

### **Bullying Online**

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

### **Careline**

London Tel: 020 8514 1177

Leeds Tel: 0532 302 226

Telephone counselling for anyone experiencing bullying or other problems.

### **ChildLine**

Studd Street

London N1 0QW

**Helpline: 0800 1111** (advice line for children)

Website: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### **Children's Legal Centre**

University of Essex

Wivenhoe Park

Colchester

Essex, CO4 3SQ

**Advice Line: 0845 456 6811** - Publications and free advice, by phone or letter, on legal issues.

Website: [www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)

**Kidscape**

2 Grosvenor Gardens

London SW1W 0DH

Tel: 020 7730 3300

**Helpline: 08451 205 204**

Publications and advice. A bullying adviser is available Mondays to Friday, 10.00am to 4.00pm.

Website: [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

**Parentline Plus**

520 Highgate Studios

53-79 Highgate Road

Kentish Town

London NW5 1TL

**Helpline: 0808 800 2222**

Website: [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

**Scottish Schools Ethos Network Team**

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

**Department for Education and Skills**

Bullying pages

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying/>

**Surrey County Council**

Contact centre: 08456 009 009

<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk>

**Partnership with Parents**

Noke Drive

Redhill, Surrey, RH1 4AX

**Helpline: 01737 737300**

<http://www.pwpsurrey.org>

**Surrey Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**

[www.surrey-camhs.org.uk](http://www.surrey-camhs.org.uk)