

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 how to resolve difficult situations without using violence or aggression. Second, ask to see the school's anti-bullying policy which, sets out how it deals with incidents of bullying. You have a right to know about this policy, which is as much for parents as for staff and pupils.

Third, watch out for signs that your child is being bullied, or is bullying others. Parents and families are often the first to detect symptoms of bullying, though sometimes school nurses or doctors may first suspect that a child has been bullied. Common symptoms include headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and irritability. It can be helpful to ask questions about progress and friends at school; how break times and lunchtimes are spent; and whether your child is facing problems or difficulties at school. Don't dismiss negative signs. Contact the school immediately if you are worried.

If your child has been bullied:

- calmly talk to your child about it
- make a note of what your child says - particularly who was said to be involved; how often the bullying has occurred; where it happened and what has happened
- reassure your child that telling you about the bullying was the right thing to do
- explain that any further incidents should be reported 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 to 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 think your concerns are not being addressed:

- Please request a copy of the school's complaints procedure and follow the process detailed in that document.

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. 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 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 bullying others:

- talk to your child, explaining that bullying is unacceptable and makes others 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 to join in with other children without bullying
- make an appointment to see your child's class teacher or form tutor; explain to the teacher
- the problems your child is experiencing; discuss with the teacher how you and the school can stop them bullying others
- regularly check with your child how things are going at school
- give your child lots of praise and encouragement when they are co-operative or kind to other people.

Resources for parents and families about bullying:

Alexander, J. Your Child Bullying: Practical And Easy To Follow Advice. Element Books
Elliott, M. 101 Ways to Deal with Bullying - A Guide for Parents. Hodder and Stoughton.
Kidscape. Keeping Safe: A Practical Guide to Talking to Children. Kidscape,
2 Grosvenor Gardens, London
Lawson, S. Helping Children Cope with Bullying. Sheldon Press
Lindenfield, G. Confident Children: A Parents' Guide To Helping Children Feel Good. Thorsens.
Mellor A. Bullying and How To Fight It: A Guide For Families.
Pearce J. Fighting, Teasing and Bullying: Simple And Effective Ways To Help Your Child.
Wellingborough: Thorsons, 1989.
Train, A. The Bullying Problem: How to Deal with Difficult Children. Condor Book, Souvenir Press

Organisations Who Can Help:

Advisory Centre for Education, Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2dq.
Tel: 0207 704 9822 Tel Helpline: 0207 354 8321 (Mon-Fri 2-5 Pm).

Anti Bullying Campaign, 185 Tower Bridge Road, London

Tel: 0207 378 1446 (9.30 Am - 5.00 Pm).

Children's Legal Centre, Tel: 01206 873 820

Publications And Free Advice Line On Legal Issues.

Parentline Plus, 520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, Kentish Town,
London NW5 1TL Tel: 0808 800 2222.