

Pointers for Parents

Bullying is never acceptable. It's not a normal part of growing up.

Children and young people will fall out with each other; they will disagree about what's cool and what's not and they won't necessarily like or make friends with everyone they meet, for a variety of reasons. And that can be a normal part of growing up, but if left unchecked, it can lead to bullying behaviour.

Every child has the right to feel safe, whether at school, the local youth club or at home. In order to make this happen, parents need to be aware of the signs that might indicate that bullying is taking place.

What is bullying behaviour?

- > Being called names, teased, put down or threatened
- > Being hit, tripped or kicked
- > Having belongings stolen or damaged
- > Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you
- > Receiving abusive text messages or emails
- > Being targeted for who you are or who you are perceived to be

What signs might indicate that my child is being bullied?

- > They become withdrawn
- > They have scratches and bruises that can't really be explained
- > They don't want to go to school or they are having trouble with school work
- > They don't want to go out and play with friends
- > Changes are made in the route they take to school
- > They complain of headaches, stomach aches and other pains
- > They become easily upset, tearful, ill-tempered or display other out-of-character behaviour

This list is by no means exhaustive. As a parent, you will know better than anyone if there's a change in your child's behaviour.

So, what should I do?

Don't panic and try to keep an open mind.

It can take a lot of courage to tell someone you are being bullied and, although this is an important step for any child or young person, it's not an easy one to take. Be mindful of this.

If your child hasn't approached you but you have concerns that they might be experiencing bullying, make time to talk to them and discuss how they are feeling. If they don't feel confident talking to you about it, encourage them to talk to a teacher or another adult, or give them the details of **ChildLine's Bullying Line**, where they can talk to an adult in confidence.

If your child does approach you and tells you they are being bullied, your response is vital. It's important that you listen. Try to find out more about what has happened; who was involved, what type of bullying they have experienced, and where and when it has taken place. This is less about establishing a set of facts, it's more about encouraging talking and listening. Ask them what they would like to happen and agree on a way forward together. Children and young people generally don't have the capacity to deal with bullying by themselves, so being told to 'sort it out yourself' or 'hit them back' really won't help.

How can I stop it?

Once you know more about the situation, there are a number of steps for you to consider when deciding on the best way forward for your child. Parents understandably get angry and upset if they hear that their child is being bullied, but acting on impulse rarely helps the situation so try to remain calm.

- > Never try to sort out the bullies yourself - this can make matters worse
- > Include your child and discuss how they would like the situation to be handled – help them to feel they have some control of the situation. Listen.
- > Make an appointment to speak to a teacher or adult that your child feels comfortable with
- > If you need to talk to a neighbour or another parent do so tactfully and carefully
- > Calmly tell the school, club or organisation what has been going on, what your child would like to do and discuss how you can proceed from there together
- > Ask for a copy of their anti-bullying policy. They will need time to investigate the bullying, so make a note of what they are going to do and set up a date to review the situation
- > Be a ‘pushy parent’ if you need to be, but remember most children and young people want things to stop with the minimum of fuss.

Where can I get more information?

- > respectme works with all adults who have a role to play in the lives of children and young people to give them the skills and confidence to deal with bullying behaviour. Our free training events offer practical advice and guidance on how to recognise bullying behaviour and the steps that can be taken to address it. We can advise on issues such as what to look for in an organisation’s anti-bullying policy, and steps you can take to help reach a satisfactory outcome.
- > Further information can be found on the respectme website: **www.respectme.org.uk** You can also contact respectme on **0844 800 8600** or email: **enquire@respectme.org.uk**
- > If you are worried about your child and would like to talk to someone in confidence, you can call **ParentLine Scotland** on **0808 800 2222**. Lines are open from 9am - 5pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday and from 9am - 9pm on Tuesday and Thursday.
- > If your child is being bullied and would like to speak to an adult in confidence, they can contact the **ChildLine Bullying Line** on **0800 44 1111**. Lines are open Monday to Friday 11.30am-10pm and Saturday and Sunday from 2pm-8pm.



respectme
Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service

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