

# BULLYING

## Information for parents

As a parent, you may feel angry and upset if you discover that your child is being bullied. Children tell ChildLine that sometimes they keep the bullying quiet for fear of upsetting their parents. They also say they are afraid their parents won't take them seriously, or will tell them to stand up for themselves. So they frequently carry the double burden of being bullied and feeling they can't turn to their parents for help.

### Here are some pointers for parents:

- If a child tells you they are being bullied, the first and most important step is to listen. Allow them to tell their story in their own words. Don't respond by dismissing their experience as part of 'growing up'.
- Adults don't put up with being hit or insulted when they go to work. Children shouldn't have to, either. If a child has plucked up the courage to tell a parent or teacher about bullying, it can be crushing to be told to 'sort it out yourself', or 'don't be silly, they're just teasing'.
- You may suspect that your child is being bullied, but is afraid to say anything. Is there a way of raising the subject? Can you, perhaps, ask one of your child's friends if something is wrong?
- If your child refuses to talk to you, suggest that they talk to another adult, such as someone else in the family or a teacher.
- Before they speak to their parents or teachers about being bullied, children often phone ChildLine; after speaking to a counsellor, they may then feel more able to talk to someone they know.
- Your child has told you about bullying - what you do next is very important. Do not rush in demanding to see the Head/the bully/the bully's parents. It may be the very response your child was dreading. Although it may be tempting to try to sort the problem out yourself, your reaction could make your child's problem worse. Children are often scared of revenge from bullies, and some children have told ChildLine's counsellors that their fears were justified - the bullying grew worse after they told.
- Instead, talk to your daughter about what to do next. It's a good idea to suggest that they keep a diary of bullying incidents, so they have concrete facts to show the school, if necessary.
- Make an appointment to speak to the Year Team Leader with your child.
- It may be that the bullying doesn't stop straight away. Encourage your daughter to keep telling.
- Nobody can do it all on their own. Tackling bullying effectively has to involve teachers, other school staff, parents and, above all, the children themselves.
- If you are not satisfied with the initial response, don't give up. Don't feel that you are being a troublemaker or needlessly taking up staff time. Your daughter's welfare is important, and if she is being bullied, then other children could be too. It is in the interest of the school, as well as your daughter, that parents keep telling the school what's happening
- Finally, do the obvious. Tell your children you love them and do what you can to make their lives outside school fun and enjoyable - it will help them feel good about themselves.

## Is your child bullying others?

*'It was only a bit of fun really – I didn't mean her to take it seriously.'* Jay, 15

It can be very upsetting to be told that your child is bullying other children. But all children can be nasty from time to time. However, if a child finds that bullying leads to greater power in the playground or causes fear (or admiration) in other children, then the problem can get much worse.

Your first instinct might be to immediately punish a bullying child. But it is worth pausing for a moment. Could there be a reason your daughter is acting this way? Sometimes children begin bullying as a reaction to negative events. Has there been a recent change or disruption? Is life difficult at home? Is your daughter involved with a group of children who may be encouraging or condoning bullying behaviour? Or is your daughter being bullied too? Perhaps surprisingly, the bullied and bullying aren't always two distinct groups. In a ChildLine survey, 15% of primary school students and 12% of secondary school students said that they had both bullied and been bullied in the last year.

If your daughter has been bullying others, obviously that behaviour has to be stopped. Talk to your daughter and try to find out what's going on. If the bullying is a one-off, you may need to do no more, but some children need help and guidance to alter their behaviour. Sir Jonathan North has a variety of supportive strategies available to support your daughter.

## Who can help?

e-mail [support@sjncc.leicester.sch.uk](mailto:support@sjncc.leicester.sch.uk)

Young people can call ChildLine free, at any time, on **0800 1111** for confidential information and advice about all problems including bullying.

Children who are deaf or find using a regular phone difficult can try the textphone service on **0800 400 222**.

To read more about bullying, visit the ChildLine website at [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Kidscape produces leaflets and booklets on bullying, and runs a helpline Monday–Friday 10am–4pm on **08451 205204**. Or visit [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

Parentline Plus is a free, confidential, 24-hour helpline for parents concerned with a wide range of issues, including bullying. Call **0808 800 2222** or visit [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

The Advisory Centre for Education publishes information sheets on bullying and runs a helpline Monday–Friday 2pm–5pm on **0808 800 5793**. You can download a booklet entitled 'Tackling Bullying' at [www.ace-ed.org.uk/pdf/bullying.pdf](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk/pdf/bullying.pdf)