



## Say NO to bullying

### A guide for parents

#### **What bullying is (and isn't) A checklist:**

1. It happens regularly, over and over again.
2. It is deliberate. The other person wants to hurt, humiliate or harm the child.
3. It involves someone (or several people) who are stronger in some way than the person being bullied. The person doing the bullying has more power; they are older, stronger, there are more of them or they have some 'hold' over the target (e.g. they know a secret about them).

Because these three things have to happen together for something to be called 'bullying', we know that bullying is not:

- A one off fight or argument
- A friend sometimes being nasty
- An argument with a friend

#### **What do schools do about bullying?**

This guide tells you about the sort of things that your child will be learning at school about bullying and how you can help your child at home - it is useful to refer to whenever you have a concern about bullying.

Schools must by law have an anti-bullying policy (which tells you what the school will do if bullying is reported, and also what the school is doing to stop bullying happening in the first place).

This work helps schools to stop bullying happening by:

- Making sure that all children and adults mean the same thing when they are talking about bullying.
- Helping children to understand how bullying feels for the person being bullied.
- Making sure that all children feel OK about telling an adult when they know that bullying is going on.
- Making sure that all children know exactly what to do if they are being bullied, and feel confident that something will be done to stop it.
- Helping children enjoy, celebrate and respect the ways we are all different, as well as the ways in which we are similar, and to feel good about themselves.

### How can you help at home?

The most important things you can do to help your child to understand, help prevent, and deal with bullying are to:



- Know what your child will be learning about bullying at school (by reading this booklet for example!)
- Encourage and support them in trying out the skills they are learning at school
- Model using non-bullying behaviour yourself, and showing respect for other people
- Read this booklet through, then talk about the case study, information and ideas with your child, using them to open up a discussion about bullying, and to let them know that you will be there to listen and support anytime they need to talk

### Preventing bullying

- Be a good role-model in the way you talk about and treat others - your child will learn that everybody deserves respect.
- Model empathy for others - talk about how other people might feel in different situations: in real life, TV programmes, books, films and play.
- Talk openly about what bullying is and how it feels (use the check list and case study).
- Make it safe for children to talk about bullying - let them know you won't make them feel silly whatever their worries.
- Talk to children about different sorts of bullying. As well as physical harm, threats and taking stuff, it can include name-calling, leaving someone out

(exclusion), rumour spreading or forcing children to do something they don't want to do. All of these can be hurtful and humiliating as physical bullying.

- Teach them how to avoid electronic (cyber) bullying. See the Cut Out and Keep guide on page 5.



### What to do if your child is being bullied

- Your child may not tell you that he or she is being bullied. If you suspect it is happening, look out for the signs (see the checklist below).
- If your child tells you they are being bullied, keep calm. Getting angry and threatening to visit the school or parent of the other child will terrify you child further. Try to avoid the automatic responses that we tend to have (see 'What is it like for parents?'). These tend to focus on what should happen to the bully, and about how your child should change *themselves*. This can confirm to them that they are somehow to blame for the bullying. They are not!
- Praise your child for telling you and reassure them that they have done the right thing telling you.
- Remind children of how they can manage their feelings, e.g. talking, relaxing, exercising, distracting themselves.
- Use your best listening skill. Accept your child's feelings.
- Don't jump in with advice or try to immediately solve the problem for them. Listen to their ideas, and unless they are likely to end up in serious danger.
- If you tell your child to fight back, or say something 'clever' to the people they may well end up feeling twice as bad. They might get in trouble, they might get hurt, they might get laughed at more, and they will feel a double failure- not only are they more bullied, but they have failed to stop it as well.



- Bullying destroys our confidence, so if your child is being bullied, work doubly hard to help them feel valued and important.
- Help your child to think about what they would like to happen, and ask how you can help. Don't rush this step (unless you feel that as an adult you **MUST** take action\*).

- Teach your child 'fogging'. It is outlined in the Cut Out and Keep guide on page 6.
- If the bullying carries on after your child has tried out their own strategies, and that you agree together there are further steps that you can take - see the checklist on the next page.



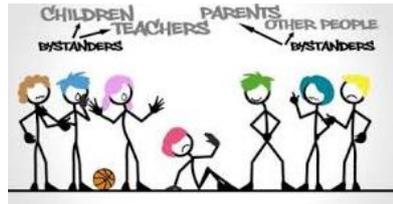
\*If your child feels in danger, you will need to make sure that they have a plan for keeping safe. Talk about ways of avoiding the children doing the bullying, e.g. staying with a group of friends, staying in safe areas, knowing who to go to for help etc. Tell your child that you have to involve your child's teacher at this point, and agree how you can do this in the best way (so that other children aren't aware of the visit for example).

#### **Further steps to take if the bullying doesn't stop**

- Collect any evidence, e.g. keep a diary of who did what, exactly what they said or did, how often it happened, when and where; keep any text messages, emails, website comments or posting
- Alert the school. When you talk to the school, stay calm and give specific details. Talk about what the school will do and ask what they would advise you to do. Remember that you are partners and both want the best for your child.
- Look at the school's anti-bullying policy and look at together to make a plan to tackle your worries together.

#### **What to do if your child knows bullying is going on**

- There is always strength in numbers. Encourage your child to talk to others at school who feel the same way that they do, and to swap ideas about what to do.
- Help your child to look at bullying in the same way as they would any situation in which someone might get seriously hurt. They would not consider reporting a small child who is about to cross a dangerous road as 'grassing', and bullying can be just as dangerous!
- Talk to your child about what they can do to support a child who is being bullied. Some ideas are to befriend the other child and be kind to them, include them in their games, tell an adult what is going on and, (if safe) get a group together to challenge the children who are doing the bullying.



### What to do if your child is bullying others

- If you are told that your child is bullying others, stay calm. Don't immediately dismiss the idea ('What? My John - never!') or rush into punishing them severely. Try not to call them a 'bully' - a label that can stick, we are all capable of bullying others at times.
- Your child is not a monster! When you talk, stay calm and remind them that you love them- it is the behaviour that you do not like or approve of.
- Listen to what they have to say. If they deny it, arrange to see the teacher. Stay calm and listen to what the teacher has to say .
- Talk to them about how the other person feels - they may not realise how much they are hurting, frightening or upsetting the other person.
- Help your child to develop confidence, to make friends - happy people don't need to bully others!

#### Cut Out and Keep Guide

##### Keep safe from cyber-bullying

1. Always ask before you send a picture or information that could be shared with other people. Remember that you don't know what will happen to any pictures or information you let people have. What you think of as a joke might be really upsetting for the other person when the whole world sees it.
2. Think before you send a message about yourself or any other people involved. It doesn't take long for it to be shared with every single person you know (from your best friend to your grandmother to your worst enemy!).
3. Never give out personal information when it can be shared with others. You may trust your new friends, but you don't know his or her friends.
  4. Treat your password like your toothbrush - don't let anyone else use it!
5. If you receive nasty messages, texts, comments etc, block the person sending them and always report it to an adult.
6. Don't reply to a bullying message but do keep it - whether it is a picture, message or online communication. For more information see [www.kidscape.org.uk/cyberbullying/](http://www.kidscape.org.uk/cyberbullying/)

### Cut Out and Keep Guide

#### Dealing with bullying by 'Fogging'

When people are horrible to us we want to be horrible back. The trouble with this is that we might get hurt, they might be even more unkind and we might even get into trouble (which is really not fair, but it does happen).

Fogging can give us a way to stop the things the people bullying us might say from hurting us, and also can stop us from 'rising to the bait' (which lets them win).

Remember that the person bullying you is often saying things about you because of something that is wrong in their life. Or they may enjoy the fact that they can 'wind you up', especially in front of an audience. Often what people who bully like is the feeling of power they get when you react as they want you to. Fogging stops them from getting this pleasure, but doesn't put you in danger.

#### Fogging: How to do it

- The person bullying you has said this to many other people - what they say tells us more about them than you.
  - They want to see a good reaction - take away the satisfaction!
- Imagine a great fog around you which swallows up insults so they cannot get under your skin.
- Use a normal, bored sounding voice and say something neutral (that doesn't make them angry).

'yeah, whatever'

'if you say so'

'well, you could be right'

'maybe'

'yeah that's true, I do wear glasses'

- Make sure your body language, tone of voice and the words you use all give the same message: 'I'm really not bothered by anything you say or do'.
  - Stick with it, it might not work the first time.

Helplines and websites:

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) (Tel: 0800 11 11 )

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

[www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk) (Tel: 0808 800 2222)