

SSLP Anti-Bullying Newsletter



Anti-Bullying Week

As parents and carers we worry about our children: all we want is for them to be happy, healthy, and safe.

With that in mind, it's only natural that we worry about bullying - particularly if we think our child may be more vulnerable to bullying, or we have experienced bullying ourselves.

Every November schools right across the UK take part in Anti-Bullying Week. This is an opportunity to highlight bullying and consider the steps we can take together to stop it. Anti-Bullying Week 2024 took place from Monday 11th to Friday 15th November with the theme 'Choose Respect'.

As a parent or carer, you are a vital piece of the puzzle in tackling bullying. You have a unique role to play in guiding and supporting your child through their school years and there are lots of positive steps you can take to help keep your child safe from bullying and harm. One of the steps is knowing when to ask for support. At the end of this newsletter we have included details of organisations who can help.



The Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as:
The **repetitive, intentional hurting** of one person or group by another person group, where the relationship involves an **imbalance of power**.
Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological.
It can happen face-to-face or online.



What is Bullying?

Put simply this means any situation where your child is being deliberately and repeatedly hurt by other people and they find it hard to defend themselves. This could be face to face or online, in school or in the community. It may be physical, or it could be verbal or

emotional. For example, your child might be pushed around by others, called names, or be excluded from friendship groups. Children may also target aspects about people they feel are 'different' - this could include disability, race, faith, gender, sex, sexuality, poverty, talent, skin conditions, allergies, or situation at home.

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What is Bullying?

Children are influenced by the home, community, and society they grow up in, by the things they see, read, and hear, and the people around them. We all have a role to play in creating communities where children feel safe and valued, where we stand up to prejudice and are united against bullying. Most children will experience or witness bullying during the school years: they may be the target of bullying, may be involved in bullying others, may stand by while others are being bullied or may take positive action to stop bullying.

Banter or Bullying

Banter is when friends tease each other in a fun and friendly way. It's meant to be playful and helps build relationships, with both people joining in. However, to someone on the outside, it might seem like friends are being mean to each

other because the teasing can sound offensive, even though there's no intention to hurt feelings. Since banter can be confusing, children and young people might sometimes get it wrong as they learn how to interact with others. Even adults sometimes mess up and accidentally say something more hurtful than they meant. The key thing to remember is that banter should never be hurtful. If it makes someone feel bad, it's no longer banter but hurtful behaviour. When this happens and the person delivering the banter is made aware of the hurt caused, action should be taken to stop that behaviour quickly. If this behaviour fits the definition of bullying, it could actually be considered bullying. It's okay to make mistakes, but it's important to know the difference between playful banter and unkind behaviour that could turn into bullying. Parents can help their children understand these differences by talking to them about what banter and bullying are.



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How do I know?

Unfortunately, it's common for children to choose not to tell anyone about the bullying they are experiencing. However, there are often signs we can look out for that may indicate bullying is occurring. You know your child best so will be aware of any changes to their behaviour, or if something seems wrong.

Some types of behaviour that might be an indication of bullying are:

- A reluctance to go to school.
- Unexplained tummy upsets or headaches.
- Showing signs of distress on a Sunday night or at the end of school holidays.
- Becoming quieter or more withdrawn than usual, or 'acting out' and getting in trouble more often.
- Torn clothes or missing belongings.
- Seeming upset after using their phone, tablets, computers etc.
- Wanting to leave for school much earlier than necessary or returning home late.
- You may also find that their sleep is disturbed, or they are showing other signs of sadness or anxiety.

You know your child best. Look out for any changes in their behaviour – for example becoming quieter or withdrawn or acting out and getting in trouble. They may also be reluctant to go to school or take part in their usual activities, may become upset after using their phones or devices, or may complain of frequent unexplained illnesses like tummy upsets or headaches. You may also find that their sleep is disturbed, and they are showing signs of sadness or anxiety. Your child may share with you that other people are unkind to them or have said or done things to hurt them. Always listen and take them seriously, consider the facts, and work with them on next steps.

Children are developing physically, emotionally, and socially and need our help to understand how to behave towards others and when they have crossed a line. For example, children need to learn when teasing or 'banter' can become bullying behaviour (e.g. when it's offensive and/or causes hurt). For some children it may be particularly difficult to regulate their behaviour or actions, and they may need additional support. Others will be copying prejudicial or harmful behaviour they have learnt from others. It's also common for children to have arguments and friendship fall outs and they will need our guidance to resolve conflict, make amends and move on.

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Bullying Temperature Check

The bullying temperature check on the right can help you decide the situation your child is in – but please remember every situation is different, and if you are not sure, always ask for help.

How can I help?

If your child is being bullied, don't panic. Your key role is listening, calming and providing reassurance that the situation can get better when action is taken. This is where an understanding of the definition of bullying, relational conflict and banter will be useful, so that you are able to discuss with your child what they have experienced and consider the best approach.

Listen and reassure them that coming to you was the right thing to do. Try and establish the facts. It can be helpful to take notes of what your child says, particularly names, dates, what happened and where it happened. Keep any evidence such as pictures of injuries or screenshots of online messages. Assure them that the bullying is not their fault and that they have family that will support them. Find out what your child wants to happen next. Help to identify the choices open to them; the potential next steps to take; and the skills they may have to help solve the problems. Request a meeting to discuss the situation with your child's teacher or Headteacher – or the lead adult wherever the bullying is taking place. Remember, every child has a right to a safe environment in which to learn and play. Encourage your child to get involved in activities that build their confidence and esteem, and help them to form friendships both inside and outside of school.

GREEN

My child seems happy and content. They like to go to school and have good relationships with other children and staff. While they have the occasional situation where others say or do unkind things to them, or they have said or done unkind things to others, they have been able to resolve the situation (including saying sorry if they have hurt someone else).



AMBER

My child is sometimes sad and can be reluctant to go to school. While they mention one or two friends, they seem to have regular fall outs with other children and have mentioned a number of situations where children have said or done unkind things to them, or they have said or done unkind things to other children. They seem unsure how to resolve these situations and I am not sure they are receiving enough help.



RED

My child is often sad or upset and does not like school or their usual activities. They do not seem to have friends and I am concerned that other children often say or do unkind things to them. They urgently need help to resolve the situation and to enjoy their school and social life.



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What should school be doing?

It can be a worrying or daunting experience to contact your child's school about a bullying incident, but remember that schools in the UK have a legal duty to prevent all forms of bullying and harassment. When approaching a school (or other setting) about bullying, here are our top tips:



Familiarise yourself with the school's approach: Your child's schools should have an anti-bullying policy or strategy (sometimes found within their behaviour policy) which should detail their general approach to bullying, including how to report it and their procedure for responding to it. You should be able to access this on their website or you can contact them to send it, which they must provide you with by law. Familiarise yourself with this document so that you know what to expect when working with the school.

Prioritise working together to address the bullying: While it's natural to feel upset and angry, it's crucial to approach the school with a calm demeanour and concentrate on collaborating to resolve the issue. This may be the first time they become aware of the problem, so be realistic about what you want them to do depending on the context of the situation. Remember that the school may have a different view of the situation and it is important to keep an open mind. The school should look into the allegations, take reasonable steps to stop the bullying and support those involved.

Keep a record: It is advisable to keep a record or log of what your child has told you – if you have this, bring it to the meeting at the school. At the meeting, ask for a timeframe for action to take place, and make notes of what you do, the date, to whom you speak and what they say and do.

Include your child: It is vital for your child to feel included in any discussions that have happened or actions that have been agreed, even if they aren't present at meetings with the school. Prior to any meetings, ask your child what they would like to happen next, and bring that information to the meeting. If your child isn't present at the meeting, reassure them afterwards of what was discussed, and make sure they are aware of any actions that were agreed and any timeframes. If they are the target of the bullying, they may need to be reminded that what happened to them is not OK, and that they have done the right thing in reporting the bullying. If they are the person bullying others, they may need support in exploring how they are feeling, what led to the behaviour, and what needs to change.

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What should school be doing?

Check in: You may be able to tell from your child's behaviour whether the issue has been resolved or if it might be continuing after you have reported it to the school. Check in with your child to find out if they are happy with how things have been resolved, or if they still have any worries. The school may contact you to check in in the months following the incident. If they don't and you are still concerned about your child, you may want to contact them to ensure agreed actions have been completed, and that there have been no further issues at school.

What if my child is bullying others?

Stay calm, and ask for examples of the things they have said or done, and the impact this has had on others. Take time to listen to your child's side of the story – but keep an open mind. Remember we are all capable of bullying behaviour: try not to see it as a permanent reflection of their character, but make clear the behaviour you would like to change. Talk about the impact this has had on others and encourage empathy. Make sure they are not bullying others in retaliation for bullying they have suffered. Help your child to realise that no one has the right to pressure them into something they don't want to do – this includes bullying others. Discuss whether there is anything that has upset or hurt them that might have led to that behaviour.

Talk about the impact this has had on others and encourage empathy. Make sure they are not bullying others in retaliation for bullying they have suffered. Help your child to realise that no one has the right to pressure them into something they don't want to do – this includes bullying others. Discuss whether there is anything that has upset or hurt them that might have led to that behaviour. Talk about what needs to change about their behaviour, and the actions they can take to show they are sorry.

Make it clear that you do not tolerate the use of disrespectful and hurtful language and behaviour as a family (it's vital that you model this as parents).

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Child-on-Child Abuse

What is Child-on-Child Abuse?

'Children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online.' Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024) Child-on-child abuse is a behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally harm others. It can happen to children of a similar age or stage of development and can be harmful to the children who display it, as well as those who experience it.

Child-on-child abuse can happen in a wide range of settings, including:

- at school
- at home
- in someone else's home
- in the community
- online

It can take place in spaces which are supervised or unsupervised. Within a school context, for example, child-on-child abuse might take place in spaces such as toilets, the playground, corridors and when children are walking home.

Online child-on-child abuse is any form of child-on-child abuse with a digital element, for example:

- sexting
- online abuse
- coercion and exploitation
- peer-on-peer grooming
- threatening language delivered via online means
- the distribution of sexualised content and harassment

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Child-on-Child Abuse

As children develop healthily, it is normal for them to display certain types of behaviour. It is important that adults who work or volunteer with children can identify if any behaviour has become harmful or abusive, and respond proportionally to keep all the children involved safe.

It is essential that all our staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers. Child-on-child abuse will never be accepted or dismissed as 'children being children'. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as 'just banter', 'just having a laugh', 'part of growing up' or 'boys being boys' can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it. If one child causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as child-on-child abuse: bullying, fighting and harassment between children do not generally require multi-agency intervention.

However, it may be appropriate to regard a child's behaviour as abusive if:

- there is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the children concerned; or
- the perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or there are concerns about the intention of the alleged child. If the evidence suggested that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim or to exploit them, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.



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What are the indicators?

Indicators and signs that a child may be suffering from child-on-child abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse and can include:

- failing to attend school, disengaging from lessons, or struggling to carry out school related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected
- physical injuries
- experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing
- becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much
- broader changes in behaviour including alcohol or substance misuse
- changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age
- abusive behaviour towards others

Abuse affects our children and their presenting behaviours in different ways and the list above is not exhaustive. Children who present with one or more of these signs are not necessarily victims of abuse and their behaviour will depend on their individual circumstances.

ALL staff are alert to behaviour that may cause concern and think about what the behaviour might signify. We actively encourage children to share with us any underlying reasons for their behaviour, and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents/carers so that the cause(s) of their behaviour can be investigated and understood with the appropriate support in place. We recognise that any child can be vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to the strength of peer influence, especially during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children.



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Which groups of pupils are vulnerable to their peers?

Extra consideration should be given for pupils who may have additional vulnerabilities due to protected characteristics. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers.

Research suggests that:

- child-on-child abuse may affect boys differently from girls (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators). However, all peer-on-peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously;
- children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peer without;
- some children may be more likely to experience child-on-child abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs; and
- children who are questioning or exploring their sexuality may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse.



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Social Media

Social Media has opened us to a whole new world. The flipside is that social media can be a haven of cyberbullying and other questionable activities. Without meaning to, children can share more than they should. Most teens post photos of themselves on their profiles, reveal their birthdates and interests, post where they live...the list is endless.

All of this can make them easy targets for online predators and those that might mean them harm. Children can also face the possibility of a physical encounter with the wrong person. Many apps reveal the poster's location. This can tell anyone exactly where to find the person using the app. Children are unable to retract photos, videos, pictures and comments once they have been posted online, which means they are impossible to completely erase from the internet.

Some children may be fearful to talk about being bullied. In some cases, the bully might have threatened them with consequences if they speak out about the abuse. So as a parent, teacher or carer, it's important for you to provide a safe, open and non-judgemental environment for the child to be able to discuss their concerns. Discretion is very important too, especially for older children who may be embarrassed to admit to being bullied and might be reluctant to seek help.

If your child is experiencing difficulties and does not know who to speak to regarding issues such as bullying or emotional wellbeing, or they have concerns about a friend; they can contact a member of staff.



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Useful Contact Information

NSPCC free helpline for parents and carers.
0808 800 5000 - www.nspcc.org.uk

Kidscape provide workshops for children that need support with bullying issues as well as a helpline for parents and carers.

0300 102 4481 - www.kidscape.org.uk
www.kidscape.org.uk/advice/advice-for-young-people/whatshould-i-do-if-im-being-bullied

Family Lives gives support and advice for parents on any aspect of parenting and family life, including bullying.

0808 800 2222 - www.familylives.org.uk

Contact has a helpline for families of children with disabilities - they can give advice on bullying issues.

0808 808 3555 - www.contact.org.uk

Red Balloon Learner Centres provide intensive, full-time education for children aged between 9-18 who feel unable to return to school because they have been severely bullied. There are Red Balloon Centres all over England, and they also have a programme of online support.
www.redballoonlearner.org

YoungMinds provides advice and information about young people's mental health and have a parent helpline.

0808 802 5544 - www.youngminds.org.uk

Childnet gives advice for parents and carers to help support children and young people in their safe and responsible use of the internet.
www.childnet.com

Think U Know is a website for children and young people about staying safe online.
www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Internet Matters provides regularly refreshed content to support parents and carers with all aspects of e-safety. Includes lots of advice on technology that can help you to protect your child online and helpful content relating to cyberbullying.

www.internetmatters.org

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) provides help and advice on cyberbullying.

www.ceop.police.uk

Report Harmful Content Online (provided by the UK Safer Internet Centre and South West Grid for Learning) have a website which has support about reporting harmful online content.
www.reportharmfulcontent.com

Childline is a free, confidential helpline for children and young people available any time, day or night.

0800 1111 - www.childline.org.uk

The Mix provides support for under 25s for a range of issues, including bullying.

Text THEMIX to 85258 - www.themix.org.uk

The Diana Award has tips and advice on what to do about bullying on their anti-bullying website.

www.antibullyingpro.com/support

Papyrus UK provide suicide prevention support for young people and have a helpline.

0800 068 4141 - www.papyrus-uk.org