



Clued Up Parents Fact Sheet

Understanding bullying



What is bullying?

Bullying is when someone intimidates or causes harm to another person on purpose. The victims of bullying can be verbally, physically or emotionally assaulted and are often threatened and made to feel frightened.

Bullying should not be viewed as an unfortunate but unavoidable part of school life. No child deserves to be bullied - it's unacceptable behaviour and can have a devastating effect on the victim. Most schools have an anti-bullying policy, so it's a good idea to be aware of the position adopted by your child's school.

Bullying in school can include:

- Verbal harassment - face to face, by phone, text or over the internet
- Hitting, hair-pulling and kicking
- Teasing and name-calling
- Spreading rumours
- Damaging possessions
- Frightening and intimidation

How can I tell if my child is being bullied?

Your child may not tell you that he or she is being bullied. However, you may notice some changes in his or her behaviour, including:

- Unwillingness to go to school
- Feeling unwell, often with a headache
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Aggression towards you or others in your family
- Bedwetting
- Waking in the night
- Missing or damaged belongings

What should I do if my child is being bullied?

If you suspect your child is being bullied, don't ignore it.

Find a quiet time to talk to your child. Explain that bullying is unacceptable and that no one should have to put up with it. Promise to do all you can to stop it.

Make an appointment to see your child's class teacher as soon as possible. Useful tips for the meeting:

- Decide what you want to say and what you'd like to achieve from the meeting before you go.
- Try to stay calm even though you may feel angry and emotional.
- Don't blame the teacher - he or she may be unaware of the bullying.
- Give specific examples of how your child is being bullied.
- Ask what the school's anti-bullying policy is.
- Discuss what action the teacher will take.
- Arrange to meet again within two weeks to discuss progress.

If you're unhappy with the way your child's teacher deals with the situation - either at the meeting or after the school has taken action - make an appointment to see the head teacher and go through the same process described above.

Seek outside help from a specialist adviser if the bullying continues after you've spoken to the head teacher. Information on this is available from the following websites:

www.bullying.co.uk

www.kidscape.org.uk

www.besomeonetotell.org.uk

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

What should I do if my child is a bully?

If you suspect your child is bullying another child or other children, don't ignore it.

A child who is bullying others often has problems of his or her own. Try to understand what may be causing this behaviour and think about what is going on in your own home. Bullying can be subtle, so watch your child's behaviour closely.

Consider the following:

- Is your child going through a difficult time?
- Does your child feel overlooked or overshadowed?
- Could your child be copying someone else's behaviour - maybe an adult or older sibling at home?
- Do other members of your family use aggression or force to get what they want?
- Are you allowing your child to use aggression or force to get what they want from other people?

Make sure your child understands that bullying is unacceptable. Encourage your child to be friendly, understanding and kind to others. Try to bolster friendships by inviting other children over to your home but watch out for any signs of bullying.