

MOVING ON TO HIGH SCHOOL

BULLYING

FACTSHEET FOR PARENTS

INTRODUCTION

Starting upper or high school should be an exciting and rewarding experience for your son or daughter, but for some children it is blighted by bullying. Bullying can have a very negative impact on children's work, health, self-esteem and confidence. Children who are seen as different are especially vulnerable to bullying.

BE VIGILANT

Often parents and family members are the first to spot signs that their child is being bullied. Look out for ripped clothes, cuts and bruises, bad tempers, depression and withdrawn behaviour, fallings out with friends, aggression towards siblings and a reluctance to attend school.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying can take many forms ranging from teasing to threats, abusive text messages and phone calls, social exclusion, stealing and physical violence. Bear in mind that the level of violence amongst teenagers can be greater than that experienced by younger children. Whatever the level of intimidation, bullying can be terrifying for a child and upsetting for parents and carers.

But always remember your child should not have to put up with harassment from others. All schools should have a policy on how to tackle bullying which details the measures the school puts into practice as soon as an incident is brought to their attention.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Talk to your child about school, their likes and dislikes and friends. Don't force your child to talk to you, but simply reassure them that you can be trusted and that you want to help sort out any problems. That way they would be more likely to confide in you when problems do arise. If your child does tell you that they are being bullied, encourage them to talk to trusted adult at the school or to phone ChildLine. Explain that bullying is cowardly, unfair and wrong and that being a victim is nothing to be ashamed of.

2. Be aware of your child's emotional state and offer support. Remember that adolescence brings its own pressures, doubts and fears, which being bullied will intensify. Many teenagers admit to self-harming as a way of coping with immense

stress. Be on the look out for signs that they are doing this. Talk to your child about their problems and try to solve them together.

3. Keep a record of anything you find out and encourage your child to keep a diary; keep a record of any nasty texts or e-mails.

4. Contact the school as soon as you suspect there is a problem. They will be as keen as you to resolve the situation.

- Find out what the school's bullying policy is. Talk to the tutor or head of year, and remember that it isn't the school's fault. Bullying can occur in any school. A good school will respond quickly to investigate any suggestion of bullying and take swift and effective action to ensure the safety of its pupils, and to ensure that those who bully are aware of the harm they have caused. With the teacher keeping an eye on the situation and monitoring contact between your child and the bully, it may be resolved fairly easily
- Encourage your child to have as wide a circle of friends as possible who can all and to watch out for each other.
- If the bullying persists, contact the school again and write to the head teacher to find out what the school policy on bullying is. That way you will know exactly what is being done to tackle the situation. Continue to keep a note of everything that is happening.

5. Reassure your child that you will support them through this difficult time. Explain that ignoring the situation will not make it go away, and may in fact make it worse. Your child must believe that it is not his or her fault and that no-one deserves to be bullied. Do not encourage your child to retaliate: this will only cause more problems and your child may get hurt.

6. Taking the matter further If you are unhappy with the way the school is handling the situation, you can contact the school's Chair of Governors and the local authority. If the bullying is violent, you should contact the police.

FOLLOW THE CORRECT CHANNELS AND DO NOT TAKE MATTERS INTO YOUR OWN HANDS

It's important not to confront the bully or the bully's parents. This can lead to serious arguments and further problems for you and your child.

DO NOT LET YOUR CHILD STAY OFF SCHOOL

No matter how unhappy your child is you cannot let them stay at home. Parents can be prosecuted for failing to send their child to school. The best thing you can do is reassure them that the situation will be resolved and that they haven't done anything wrong. Keep in contact with the school to ensure they are aware of your concerns and are taking all possible steps to protect and support your child.

IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS

As well as being vigilant for the signs that your child is a victim, be equally conscious of indicators that your child may be bullying others. Your child could be copying aggressive behaviour and not seeing that it is wrong. If your child is going through a difficult time, bullying may be a way of expressing feelings.

- Talk with your child about why he or she is behaving in this way and try to make him or her understand the devastating effect it has on others
- Ensure that no-one in the family uses aggression or force to get what they want and show your child how to join in with others without the need for bullying
- Discuss the situation with your child's form tutor or head of year to see how you and the school can work together to put a stop to the bullying
- Make sure your child knows that he or she is loved and supported and provide plenty of encouragement when he or she is good with other people
- Talk regularly about the situation to ensure there are no serious problems underlying the bullying behaviour

For more information and advice:

Advisory Centre for Education Advice line for parents on all matters concerning schools

1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ
Helpline: 0207 354 8321 (Mon-Fri 2am-5pm)

Anti Bullying Alliance

Brings together over 60 organisations into one network with the aim of reducing bullying and creating safer environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn.

020 7843 1901

www.antibullyingalliance.org.uk

Children's Legal centre Publications and free advice line on legal issues

Tel: 01206 873 820
(Mon-Fri 10am-12.30pm and 2pm-4.30pm)

Add logo here



Kidscape Wide range of publications for young people, parents and teachers

2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH

Tel: 0207 730 3300 Fax: 0207 730 7081

Bullying counsellor available Monday to Friday 10am-4pm

Parentline Plus Helpline

Tel: 0808 800 2222 (24 hours)

520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, Kentish Town, London NW5 1TL

Telephone hotlines:

NSPCC - 0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk

Childline – 0800 1111 www.childline.org

Websites:

Family & Parenting Institute – www.e-parents.org

Advice on how to beat bullying – www.bullying.co.uk

Government guidelines – www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying

www.dfes.teachernet/bullying

Please add local information and contact details here