

# BULLYING FACT SHEET

## WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is not easy to define. It can take many forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, racist, cyber (bullying on the computer or mobile phone) and homophobic (deliberate prejudice towards lesbian, gay and bisexual people). It is an attempt to exert control over others, who are physically weaker or socially less powerful.

Professor Dan Olweus, an expert in the study and prevention of bullying says that it can include:

- Deliberate hostility and aggression towards the victim, usually more than once
- An outcome which is always painful and distressing for the victim



## POSSIBLE SIGNS OF BULLYING

Children may:

- Be frightened of travelling to or from school
- Be unwilling to go to school
- Begin to feel 'ill' in the mornings
- Come home hungry, if their dinner money has been taken
- Become withdrawn
- Begin truanting or show reduced quality of work
- Come home with possessions missing/destroyed
- Stop eating/begin wetting the bed
- Begin to ask for more money
- Begin to become aggressive themselves
- Have unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts
- Give unlikely excuses to explain any of the above
- If you are worried that your child is being bullied, ask them directly. Reassure them you wish to help and support them. Take what they say seriously, but do not promise to keep the bullying secret.

## IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED:

Try to get as much information as you can and be as clear as possible before you speak to school. Initially, this may prove to be difficult if your child is upset or frightened.

Write down the things your child tells you. This could include:

- When did it happen (date and time)
- What happened?
- Who did it?
- Who saw it?
- How did it affect your child at the time?
- Were there any later effects?
- Who in school was informed and when?
- How did school respond?
- Did things improve, stay the same or get worse?

## WHAT CAN THE SCHOOL DO ABOUT BULLYING?

Since September 1999, all schools are now required to have an anti-bullying policy or statement, which should be made available on request within 15 school days. They should:

- Treat the problems seriously
- Investigate the incident
- Interview bullies and victims separately
- Interview any witnesses
- Decide on an appropriate action
- Regularly check that the bullying has not started again.
- Inform all staff about the incident and action taken
- Keep a written record of the incident and action taken
- Contact the parents of the victims and the bullies regularly, meeting with them if necessary.



## **CONTACTING THE SCHOOL**

Contact the school as soon after your child has made the allegation as you can. Try to remain calm and open minded, as school may not be aware of what has happened. Some incidents can be dealt with over the telephone, but in other cases you may wish to request a meeting with the appropriate member of staff. This could be the class teacher, Head of Year or Head teacher. You may also wish to write to the school detailing your concerns. Keep a record of all the contact between yourself and school, including telephone calls , any meetings that are arranged, letters sent etc.

## **MEETING THE SCHOOL**

The meeting will probably be more useful if you have prepared yourself beforehand. You can take someone along to support you, but ensure that they will act appropriately once in school.



## **BEFORE THE MEETING**

- Make a note of any questions you wish to ask
- Make a note of any points from your child's record you agree/disagree with. You should be allowed to have access to your child's school record within 15 school days
- Check school policies and note down useful points
- Gather any useful reports

## **AT THE MEETING**

Schools should treat parents' worries seriously and act quickly to resolve the issues. However, there can be misunderstandings and parents may not be familiar with some of the professional language teachers use. Ask for an explanation if there is something you are unsure about.

## **IT MAY BE USEFUL TO TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS**

- Take along your record of calls and letters sent to school, details of the bullying incident(s) and any related questions you have
- When invited to do so, read out your report and other points
- Tick each point and question as it is dealt with
- Take notes of what is said
- Check at the end of the meeting that you know what the main points are and that you have noted down any agreed actions, who is responsible for them and when they will be carried out.
- Be clear about which member of staff will regularly update you on how the situation is progressing and how often.

## **AFTER THE MEETING**

- If you were unhappy with how the meeting went, you should discuss this with the person who ran the meeting
- You should receive a copy of the minutes, or notes, that member of staff took. If you disagree with any points, contact the appropriate person in school as soon as possible
- If you are still unhappy, speak to the Head Teacher, if they are not already involved, or write to the Chair of Governors at the school.
- Legal advice can be obtained at any time regarding bullying in School

## **ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP**

**Parentline Plus Helpline** – 0808 800 2222

[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

**Kidscape Helpline** – 10am – 4pm, Mon Fri 0207 730 3300

[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

**Connexions Direct** – 080 800 13 219

[www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)

**Commission for Racial Equality**

Elliot House, 10/12 Allington Street, London, SW1E 5EH - 0207 8287022

**Victim Support** – 0845 3030900

**The Children's Legal Centre** 01206 873 820 (Mon-Fri 10am-12pm, 2pm-5pm)

[www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)

**Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)**  
(Mon – Fri 2p.m. – 5p.m.) 0808 8005793

