

BULLYING

Bullying encompasses a whole range of problems for children and young people and can take many forms including: physical violence; verbal abuse; exclusion; making threats and spreading rumours. It can happen anywhere and children and young people experience being bullied face to face and online, via email, the internet and text messaging.

Children who experience bullying behaviour often feel unable to stop or prevent what is happening. Many have told someone what is happening and have not been taken seriously or nothing has changed.

A parent's natural instinct is to protect their children. However many of the callers to ParentLine Scotland feel they are letting their children down by being unable to prevent their child being bullied.

Often by the time parents call the helpline they have tried many different avenues which have been unsuccessful. They talk about feeling powerless and frustrated about what to do next. These feelings are often similar to what their child is experiencing. One of the important things parents can get from phoning the helpline is the confidence to continue to address bullying and the reassurance that every child has the right to be safe in school.

Each school is required by law to have an anti-bullying policy, which aims to reduce and prevent bullying and create a no tolerance ethos. Some schools have excellent anti-bullying initiatives in place already. However there are still many children who have a miserable time each day of their lives.

Spotting the signs

It is sometimes easy to spot a change in the behaviour of children. Some children, however, will go to great lengths to prevent adults from knowing what is going on, as they feel afraid it will make things worse.

Signs to look out for:

- Change in attitude
- Reluctance to go to school
- Unexplained illness
- Damaged clothes
- Bruising or scratches
- Withdrawn behaviour

Why children and young people find it hard to tell

Some unhelpful things adults say:

- Stop telling tales
- Stand up for yourself
- They're only teasing you

Some adults think bullying is an unavoidable part of school life. Many children and young people have experienced telling an adult that they are being bullied and either nothing happens and the bullying continues, or in some cases becomes worse as a result.

A lot of children don't want to stand out in a crowd. It is important to teach children to respect and promote individuality.



What you can do

If you suspect or know your child is being bullied try not to over-react – this will only make your child more anxious.

- Listen to what your child says, give them the opportunity to tell you what is happening to them and support them to say what they would like to do.
- If possible try to follow their wishes but let them know that at times you may need to act to ensure their safety.
- Inform your child of any action you or others plan to take.
- Make an appointment with the school and clearly explain the situation.
- Ask what the school's policy is on bullying and what action they intend to take.
- Offer suggestions of your own, allow a realistic time frame for change to take place and arrange a follow-up meeting.
- If it helps, make a note of things you want to say and remember you can take someone with you for support.
- If the bullying is happening away from school, you may need to consider involving the police if it persists but please phone and talk over any concerns first.

Children who bully need help too and it is important to give them the opportunity to talk to someone they can trust. They need to acknowledge what they are doing is wrong and get help to identify why they are acting in this way as well as help to change the pattern.

Contact us

The helpline can be contacted on:

t: **08000 28 22 33**

e: **parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk**

The helpline opening hours are:

Monday to Friday: 9am-10pm

Saturday and Sunday: 12noon-8pm

"I'm so upset – each morning I have to force my son to go to school. He has been bullied for over a year now – it's awful, I feel so desperate for him. The school were supportive at first but I think they are fed up now – they let him away early at night, but that means he has to walk home himself."

We can help you take action to achieve change where it is needed.

For further information about CHILDREN 1ST please contact:

CHILDREN 1ST, 83 Whitehouse Loan, Edinburgh EH9 1AT

t: 0131 446 2300

f: 0131 446 2339

e: info@children1st.org.uk

For more information on family group conferences or to find out how you can help and to order any of our publications, visit our website: **www.children1st.org.uk**

