

Information for Parents and Carers

Bullying

One of the most difficult times in a child's life can be if they are bullied. Bullying can be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time. It can be difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

Bullying can include the following:

- Name calling and teasing
- Threats
- Physical violence
- Damage to belongings
- Deliberate and frequent exclusion from social activities and groups
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Bullying by using technology, including phones (calls and text messages), emails, instant messaging and social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat)

How will I know if my child is being bullied?

Bullying is often secretive and hidden and children are sometimes reluctant to report bullying. Parents and families are often the first to detect signs of bullying, though sometimes professionals such as teachers or school support staff may first suspect that a child has been bullied.

Important signs to look out for are:

- Reluctance to go to school
- A sudden headache or tummy ache, particularly on a Monday morning
- Anxiety and irritability
- An unexplained drop in marks or grades at school
- Depression and withdrawal
- Unexplained bruises, scratches, torn clothes or damaged possessions
- Spending a lot of time in their room
- Loss of appetite
- Insomnia
- Being fearful or angry with unexplained outbursts
- Worrying more than usual about their appearance and what clothing to wear
- Suddenly not wanting to carry their mobile phone

Children may also:

- Have their money, mobile phone or possessions go 'missing'
- Ask for money or begin stealing money (to pay the bully/ies)
- Refuse to say what's wrong
- Become distressed or angry with other family members

Questions you might ask if you think your child may be being bullied:

For a younger child:

- What did they do at school today?
- Did they do anything they liked or didn't like?
- Who did they play with?
- Are they looking forward to going to school tomorrow?
- How are their friends?

For an older child:

- What did they do at lunchtime today?
- Is there anyone they'd like to invite home?
- Is there anyone in school they don't like and why?
- Is there any lesson at school that they don't like and why?

What can I do about bullying?

There are a number of things that you can do as a parent. It is important to try to find out what is going on and use discretion. Try to stay calm, reassuring and be practical.

Suggestions for Parents / Carers:

- Calmly talk with your child about his/her experience
- Make a note of what your child says – particularly who was said to be involved; how often the bullying has occurred; where it happened and what has happened. Kidscape have a 'bully log', which can be used as a template to help you keep a diary of incidents. This can be found on their website <https://www.kidscape.org.uk/resources/>
- Reassure your child that he or she has done the right thing to tell you about the bullying
- Explain to your child that should any further incidents occur he/she should report them to a teacher or other member of school staff immediately
- If it is school bullying, make an appointment to see your child's teacher or form tutor. Before going to the meeting, read the school's Anti-Bullying Policy, which should be available on their website
- Explain to the teacher the problems your child is experiencing

When talking to teachers about bullying:

- Try to stay calm and bear in mind that the teacher may have no idea that your child is being bullied or may have heard conflicting accounts of an incident
- Be as specific as possible about what your child says has happened, give dates, places and names of other children involved
- Make a note of what action the school intends to take
- Ask if there is anything you can do to help your child in school
- Stay in touch with the school and let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue

What can I do if I do not feel that my concerns are being addressed in school?

- If you haven't already seen it, ask to see the school's Anti-Bullying Policy to see if agreed procedures are being followed. Every school must have an Anti-Bullying Policy by law.
- Make an appointment to discuss the matter with the head teacher and keep a record of the meeting.
- If the above steps do not help, write to the Chair of Governors explaining your concerns and what you would like to see happen.
- Discuss your concerns with a parent governor
- Contact the Local Authority to share your concerns. To find out more about making a complaint please visit:
<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/schools-and-education/complaints-about-schools>
<https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/resident/schools-and-learning/advice/Pages/schools-complaints.aspx>
- Have a look at this website for guidance:
<https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/>

If you need to ask any questions or for further advice, please contact:

Barnardo's SENDIASS on southteessendiass@barnardos.org.uk