

Bullying

"It happens most days. They call me smelly and fat. They made me give them money again yesterday. They're in the same class and they're always laughing at me. They said if I tell it will be ten times worse. Sometimes I don't go to school... I can't stand it anymore."

- Children have the right not to be hurt
- Bullying behaviour is unacceptable
- Bullying can happen to any child at any age
- Act immediately if you think your child is being bullied
- Children need ways to protect themselves and seek help
- Advise your child to run, yell and tell

The real story

Bullying is a frightening experience. It can isolate and damage a young person's self-confidence. Some ongoing bullying can have negative long-term effects on children, leading to depression and even suicidal thoughts and actions.

School days are a time when the influence of other children is very important and fitting in is seen as essential. If children are thought of as different for any reason, they can be picked on and bullied. Sadly, we still live in a society in which to be different in any way can mean ridicule and bullying (often copied from parents) and this ensures that prejudice will continue into the next generation. It is crucial to be alert to the possibility of bullying and make sure you know the tell-tale signs.

You may think that your child is unlikely to be bullied but the reality is that bullying can happen at any time and to any child.

Bullies who continually harm other children need support and help as well. They may have experienced difficulties in their lives which may have led to their actions. Reporting concerns may help them to get help as well.

- Bullying can happen anywhere but most commonly it happens in school
- Bullying can take many forms, from verbal abuse to physical attack
- Bullying is the repeated abuse of a child by one or several people
- Bullies are not always older than the child they harm
- Most bullying is done by children who are the same age as the victim.

Keep a record of the things that are giving rise to concern. Include dates, times etc.

Listen to your child and ask them what they would like to do.

Keep your child informed of any action you decide you must take and explain your reasons for the action.

Don't show any anger, your child will think you are angry with them.

Be proactive with the school - ask to see their anti-bullying policy. Do this before the problem gets too big.

If your child tells you about a friend or any other child who is being bullied - listen carefully and take this seriously. That child may not be able to say for themselves what is happening.

Today all schools are required to have an Anti-Bullying Policy. However, school action alone cannot guarantee success and so it is important that parents and schools work together.

If you are not satisfied with the way your child's school is dealing with the matter, you can get advice from the Children's Legal Centre Advice and Information Service.

WARNING SIGNS

Running away, non-attendance at school, other learning and behavioural difficulties for no obvious reason.

Your child has injuries with no feasible explanation for them.

ACTION

See the headteacher at the school for their support and action. If bullying is happening outside school, consider contacting the family of the child who is bullying and try to find a way to work together to sort it out.

WHAT TO SAY

Refuse to put up with bullying. Walk away, tell an adult or friend and avoid fighting. Parents - listen to your child, reassure and be there for them.

PREVENTION

Talk to your child about their school day. Teach your child to respect others from a young age.

Teach your child that prejudice and bullying is unacceptable.

CONTACTS

- Kidscape 08451 205 204
- Parentline Plus (national) 0808 800 2222
- Anti-bullying campaign 020 7378 1446
- Childline 0800 1111
- Connexions 08080 013 219

*Check the Wiltshire ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.wiltshire.gov.uk*