



## BULLYING ADVICE FOR PARENTS

### **Definition: What is Bullying?**

Bullying is not falling out with friends or one off disagreements with class members.

A definition of bullying is difficult, since what constitutes bullying in one person's eyes may be deemed playing, mischief, or even harmless fun in others.

However, in order to maintain consistency and consensus in school, we have defined bullying as:

- Deliberate behaviour, which is repeated over a period of time.
- The wilful, conscious and repeated desire of a person/s to threaten, frighten or hurt someone else.
- Bullying can take many forms.
- Physical: hitting, kicking, taking belongings etc.
- Verbal: name-calling, insulting, racist remarks, sarcasm, teasing, spreading rumours
- Emotional: spreading nasty stories about someone, excluding someone from social groups, inciting others to join in to hurt or harm
- Racist: racial taunts, gestures, name calling
- Online abuse e.g. all areas of the internet such as social media and online games platforms.

The person/s carrying out the bullying will have some sort of power over the victim/s. This power might be due to:

- Greater physical strength (older or bigger child bullies smaller or younger child).
- Greater numbers (more than one or a gang bullying a single child).

### **Detection**

Bullying can be covert and is sometimes difficult to detect. Children, especially victims, may be reluctant to expose incidents of bullying, even if not directly involved. Since incidents frequently take place in secluded places, witnesses may not exist and even when they do, may not feel able to speak. Creating an open, frank atmosphere where bullying is discussed with children and making them aware of what to do if they are being bullied, can help in detection. Silence and secrecy nurture bullying. Given that detection is difficult, staff are watchful for signs within their own classroom and around the school. There are several clues which may point to a child being bullied:

- Signs of distress (deterioration of work, erratic attendance, desire to remain with adults)
- Unexplained cuts, bruises, aches and pains
- Wanting to stay in at playtimes, feeling sick or ill
- Crying themselves to sleep at night or nightmares
- Feeling ill in the morning
- Unexplained loss of possessions, money, clothes, books
- Damage to property
- Mood / personality changes (crying, withdrawn)
- Concentration lapses
- Changes in behaviour patterns
- Unhappiness / depression

- Introvert behaviour
- Self-isolation from friends
- Stealing / coveting
- Nervous and jumpy when a text message or email is received
- Secrecy about reasons for unhappiness

However, it is important to note that many of these clues may also be indicators of other issues going on in a child's life e.g. family breakdown, abuse, etc. (See also Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy). Staff will watch for these signs in their own classrooms and around the school. A senior member of staff will always be on duty at lunchtime, to deal with children who need assistance. Parents should watch for such signs at home.

### **What is a Bully?**

Children who bully may have a wide range of characteristics. They may operate alone or in groups.

Common characteristics:

- Assertive and aggressive and have little control over their feelings
- Lack empathy and find it hard to imagine how the victim feels
- Lack guilt and feel that somehow the victim deserves their treatment
- From any kind of social or cultural background
- May experience poor discipline / excessive physical punishment / abuse problems at home by parent and / or sibling
- Other children who bully may take part because friends do so.

### **Who are the Victims?**

Understanding who may be a victim is very difficult but some children may be more vulnerable than others:

- Children who are new to a class or school
- Children who are different in speech, appearance or background from the majority
- Children who suffer from low self-esteem
- Children who react to being taunted e.g. who have tantrums, lose control, etc.
- Children who are nervous or anxious

### **Help for Parents**

If you think your child is being bullied:

- Calmly talk with your child about their experience.
- Make a note of what your child says - particularly who was said to be involved; how often the incidents have occurred; where it happened; and what exactly has happened.
- Reassure your child that they have done the right thing to tell you about the incident.
- Explain to your child that should any further incidents occur, they should report them to a teacher immediately.
- Make an appointment to see your child's class teacher, the Pastoral and Safeguarding Lead or Head Teacher.
- Explain the problems your child is experiencing.

### **Talking with Staff about Bullying**

- Try to stay calm - bear in mind that bullying is often hard to detect and despite every effort school may have no idea that your child is having difficulties 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.

- Ask if there is anything you can do to help your child or the school.
- Stay in touch with the school; let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue.
- Work with the school to rectify the situation and try not to lay blame.

**Wherever there are children, there will be some incidents of bullying.**