



Parents and carers briefing

The Anti-Bullying Alliance is committed to stopping bullying in all its forms. Bullying is unacceptable behaviour.

Parents worry about bullying. It is often difficult to know what to do if you notice signs that your child may be being affected by the actions of others. The aim of this briefing is to help support parents and carers deal with this complex issue.

In November each year, ABA runs a high profile campaign to raise national awareness and provide support for schools and local authorities to respond to and prevent bullying. The theme of this year's Anti-Bullying Week, encapsulated in the slogan ***Being different, belonging together***, encourages schools to consider how preventing and responding to bullying, harassment and discrimination is interconnected and interdependent.

Bullying can take a number of forms and ABA defines it as:

The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person by another, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be carried out physically, verbally, emotionally or through cyberspace.

Every Child Matters

Every Child Matters is the government's integrated approach to promoting and securing children and young people's well-being. Local authorities are joining education, social care and health services to improve their responses to the needs of children, young people and families.

Underpinning Every Child Matters are five outcomes. These aim for all children to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being.

All services are committed to making their own unique contributions to achieving these outcomes, and to sharing information to ensure that children and young people's needs are well understood by all those who may be supporting them. Bullying falls under the *Stay safe* outcome, but it is true to say that exposure to bullying means that a child or young person is less likely to achieve well at school, to make contributions

to school or community life, or to be emotionally, mentally or physically healthy.

Public bodies are required by law to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination. For schools this covers the provision of services – the education and care of young people – as well as their role as an employer. Schools have general and specific statutory duties under the equalities strands of race, disability and gender. Under the Equality Act 2006 schools must also ensure that they do not discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief or sexuality.

In addition, schools now have a duty to promote both the well-being of children and young people as well as community cohesion. A cohesive community is, broadly speaking, one in which difference is valued, life chances are similar, positive relationships are developed and there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all its members. As one young person put it: 'Life in and around school should be about living together and accepting our differences.'

How bullying is dealt with in schools

The law requires that all schools have a behaviour policy that sets out the measures that will be taken to encourage good behaviour and respect for others and to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. These measures should be drawn to the attention of pupils, parents and staff at least once a year. In recent years the government has issued anti-bullying guidance to support and inform the development of policy and practice in all schools, including specific materials that address bullying related to racism, religion and culture, homophobia, special educational needs and disability, and cyberbullying.

All schools and local authorities have a complaints process and unresolved bullying complaints are fed into these systems. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is currently developing its response to a report from the Children's Commissioner for England that suggested a variety of reforms to how complaints are dealt with.



Support for parents

You may be unsure if your child is being bullied. If you suspect that he or she may be, then look out for signs that may include the following:

- Your child shows signs of stress: being moody, silent or crying, or bullying a younger sibling or friend.
- Your child makes excuses to miss school, such as stomach complaints or headaches (or your child may be skipping school altogether).
- Your child is withdrawn in their behaviour.
- Your child has more bruises or scrapes than usual.
- Eating habits change.
- Clothes are torn, school things are broken or missing, or money is lost.
- Your child sleeps badly.
- Younger children may begin wetting the bed.

There could be other reasons for these symptoms:

- Is there anything else bothering your child?
- Have there been any changes in your family life like a new baby, or divorce or separation?

All forms of bullying need to be addressed. This year's theme ***Being different, belonging together*** will help children, young people, families and schools to focus on how children and young people treat each other. If you think your child is being bullied:

- Listen to your child's fears, reassure them that it is not their fault and that this is not something that they will have to face alone.
- Tell your child that bullying is not acceptable behaviour and that you will do what you can to get the bullying to stop.
- Don't pressure them to talk to you.
- Give them ideas of who else they could talk to, for example, a relative, a teacher, your GP, **ChildLine (0800 1111)** or other relevant organisations.
- Help them build up their confidence.
- Praise, encourage and support them.
- Keep a 'bullying report' in which you record details of incidents and, if known, the names of the perpetrators.

- Talk to your child's teacher and try to work with the school on tackling the problem.
- Keep notes of any meetings, copies of letters and record details of phone calls.

If you have spoken to your child's teachers and school and the bullying doesn't stop, or you are still not happy with the way in which the school is dealing with the situation, then you can seek support and more information from the **Parentline helpline on 0808 800 2222**. Lines are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.