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# **Supporting Your Child If They're Being Bullied**

## **A Guide for Parents & Carers**

*From The Diana Award Anti-Bullying Campaign*

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## Introduction

Bullying can make children feel shy, isolated, and depressed. According to a recent Netmums survey, 65% of parents worry about their child being bullied at school.

Young people feel they often have to deal with bullying alone, and your child may worry that telling you will make you angry or upset. It's important that you have the tools you need to keep your child safe, happy and free from bullying.

The Anti-Bullying team has put together a guide to help you. In this guide we cover what bullying is, the effects it can have on both child and parent, the role and responsibility of your child's school, finding the right support for your child (whether bullied, bully or bystander) and effectively taking action to stand up against bullying.

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### ***Facts about bullying...***

*Bullying is the main reason why children aged 11 years and under contact Childline.* [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

*Bullying is the leading concern for boys contacting Childline.* [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

*45% of young people experience bullying before the age of 18.*  
[www.ditchthelabel.org](http://www.ditchthelabel.org)

*36% of young people aged 8 to 22 are worried about being bullied at school, college or university.* [www.diana-award.org.uk](http://www.diana-award.org.uk)

*38% believe their school, university or college doesn't take bullying seriously.*  
[www.diana-award.org.uk](http://www.diana-award.org.uk)

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Bullying can affect any young person, however strong, confident or outgoing we might think they are. It is important that we all work together to combat bullying. Supporting a bullied young person can take time as their confidence will need restoring, so please do not get frustrated or lose hope!

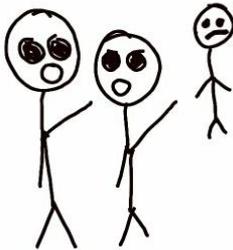
## What is bullying?

Bullying is any behaviour that makes someone feel upset, uncomfortable and unsafe. This is usually deliberate and repetitive and can take many forms such as Verbal, Indirect and Physical.



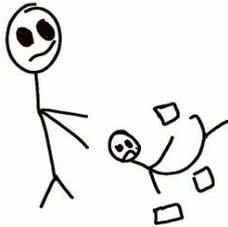
**Verbal Bullying** – is usually attacking or upsetting somebody in the form of speech (this also includes signing).

*Examples: name-calling, intimidating, mocking and making hurtful comments.*



**Indirect Bullying** – can take on a less obvious form that you wouldn't directly see or hear.

*Examples: spreading rumours or lying about someone, leaving someone out of a group on purpose, hiding, stealing or damaging someone property.*



**Physical Bullying** - is usually clear and is unwanted physical harm.

*Examples: hitting, spitting and pushing a person.*



**Cyber Bulling** - is bullying that takes place via the use of devices such as- computers (including tablets), game consoles and mobile phones.

*Examples: offensive texts, uploading pictures that could harm a person's reputation or cause harm, sharing damaging information about a person in a public forum, lying and starting/spreading rumours about someone.*

Bullying can make a child feel unsure or have low self-esteem and self-worth. If you child is not helped effectively, bullying can have lasting psychological effects that can stay with a child and effect their adulthood.

## Signs that your child may be being bullied

Here are a number of signs to look out for...

- Appearing upset after using the computer or mobile phone

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- Spending a lot of time alone in their room

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- Changes in your child's attitude or behaviour, perhaps appearing sad, moody, aggressive or anxious

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- Becoming more withdrawn, quiet and nervous in larger groups of people

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- Avoiding school, making excuses or claiming they are unwell

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- Lack of interest in social events or activities they normally enjoy

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- Experiencing a drop in grades, teachers feeding back they are struggling more in class or not socialising with normal peer group as much

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- Physical indications such as cuts, bruises or damaged possessions and clothing

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- Some young people may have violent and verbal outbursts, as they can feel powerless at school but in the safety of their own home feel that they can take back some of the lost power.

## What to do if your child is being bullied

Your child will be concerned about your reaction, so try to stay calm and make sure you thank them for telling you. It is really important that you listen to what your child is telling you and observe their behaviour.

Your child wants to know that you believe what they are saying and will support them through this tough time. If they are confiding in you it means that they are asking for help and support.

It is important to talk to your child about how you can take action together to stop the bullying: ask them what *they* would like you to do. A good first step is to contact their school: follow our flowchart on p.8 to find out the steps to take first. Together with your child's teachers you can help to stop the bullying.

If you find out that your child is being bullied and they do not want to talk about it, it's important that you explain to your child that is not a weakness to admit that they are being bullied, but a sign of strength.

As a parent you might start to feel guilty that you did not spot that your child was being bullied, or act sooner. But you should remember that the bullying your child is going through has been spotted - that you are taking action and are supporting your child.

### Conversation Starters

It can be tough to get a teenager to talk to you about something that is worrying them. We've pulled together some ideas that might help:

- 'What is lunchtime like at your school? Who do you sit/play/hang around with?'  

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- 'What's it like to ride the bus/train to school?'  

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- 'Is anyone ever left out of activities?'  

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- 'What do you think needs to happen at school to stop bullying?'  

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- 'What should parents do to help stop bullying in schools?'  

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- 'If you had a magic wand or one wish what would you change and why?'  

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- ‘What are some good qualities about yourself?’ (Talk about why it’s good to feel good about yourself)

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- ‘What’s your biggest goal or ambition this year?’

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- ‘Do you think your friends talk to their parents about how they are?’

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- ‘What’s the best thing about our family?’

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- ‘What do you think makes a good parent? What qualities should we have?’

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- ‘What traits do you most admire about other people?’

## Supporting Your Child

Being bullied can knock a child’s self-esteem and confidence. Make sure that you make opportunities for your child to talk to you and don’t pressure them to talk when they are not ready or willing.

**Refocus-** if your child is focused on the negative, you can help them refocus on the good things in their life. Encourage them to think about things they are good at and their dreams for the future. Your child needs to know that they are loved and valued.

**Think creatively–** When young people are worried, stressed or angry, they need an outlet to express themselves. Encourage your child to join groups that they are interested in, for example a sports, drama or arts club, or to spend time with their friends. These activities can help young people build their self-confidence.

**Role model positive behaviour-** Your child is listening and watching your actions, so try and stay positive even if you encounter setbacks along the way. Think about the language you use and your own use of social media.

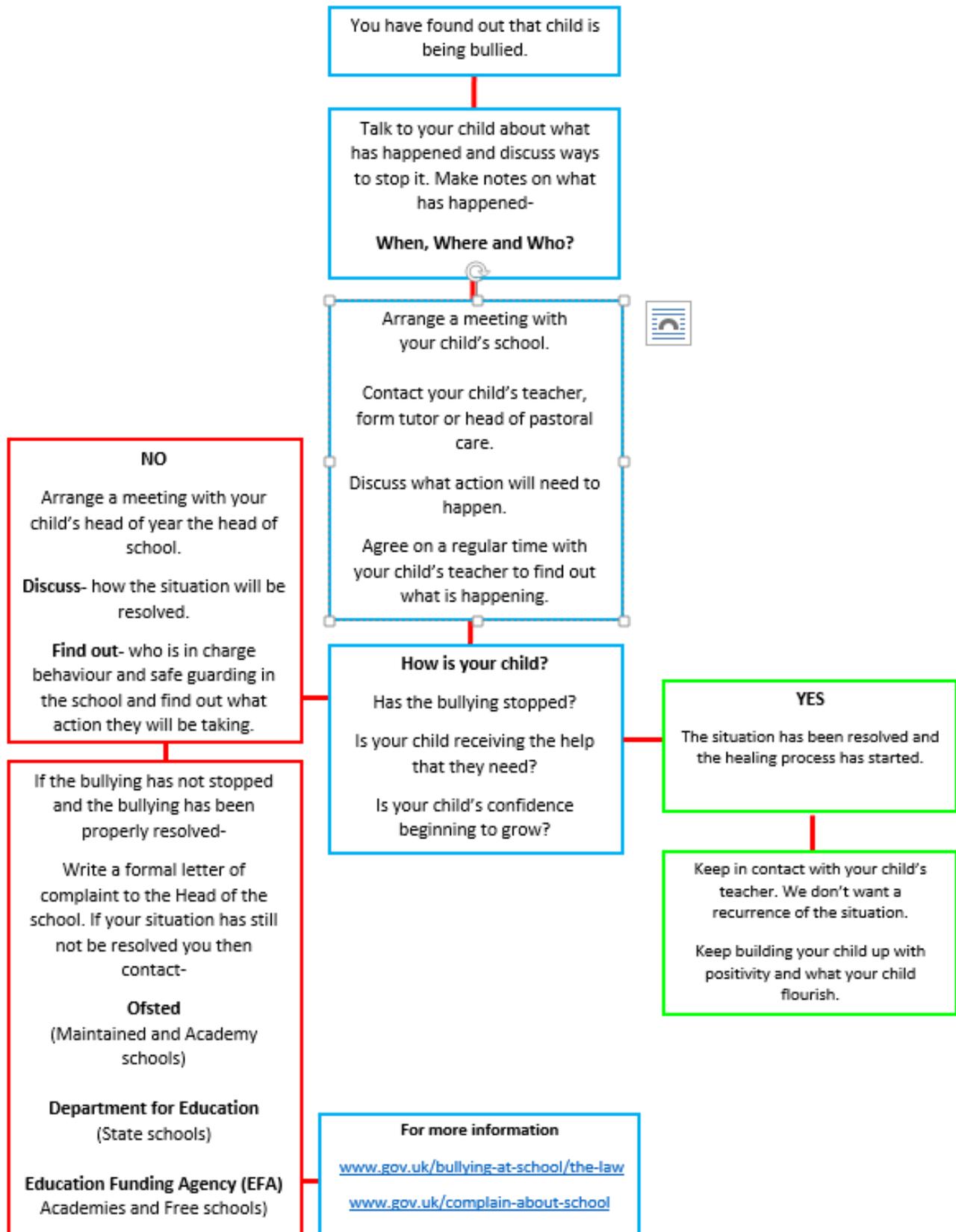
**Important note-** *in very serious cases of bullying we recommend that you seek professional help such as counselling. Speak to your GP, school or local Youth Service who will be able to refer you to right specialist support.*

## Keep a Diary

Keep a diary of **WHEN, WHERE, WHO** and **WHAT** was involved in the bullying. If there is physical harm to your child take a picture, as when you speak to your child's school you will need to recall this information.



## Working with your School Action Plan



## **Helpful Tips – when working with your child, your school and other parents**

### **Work with the child and the school**

The chances are your child has been worrying about this for some time and possibly been reluctant to speak out. Their biggest fear may be that if they speak out the problem will get ten times worse. Don't let them feel that way.

Instead of taking over the problem work with them to help them feel like they still have some power and control over what is happening. This will help them develop their problem solving skills and confidence. Tell them 'Let's see what we can do about this'.

### **Work with the school**

Our immediate thoughts can be that the school has failed to keep our child safe and we want something done NOW. Remember to give the school a chance to act on your concerns. Try to avoid heading straight to the school - they are busy places and you may not be able to get an appointment. Ring up and ask to speak to someone and stress your concern. Don't let your own experience of school get in the way of your child's experience. Try not to take your child out of school or keep them off. This can often make it harder to get them back to school and doesn't give the school the chance to sort out the problem. However, in some extreme cases where your child is unsafe and at risk of physical or psychological harm, you may decide to remove your child. In this case we recommend that you consult your school on how your child's educational needs can be met elsewhere.

### **Other parents**

While you may be tempted to speak to the parents of the bully, this isn't always the most helpful plan of action. Try and let the school deal with the situation or if you know the parent and want to speak to them, tread carefully. Certainly don't contact them on social media!

## Preparing for your meeting with the school

There are a few things you might want to consider discussing with your child's teacher when you meet with the school:

- Request to see a copy of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy: Every school is required to have one of these and it can give you a good idea of how the school tackles bullying incidents

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- Ask if there are any safe areas in the school where your child can go if they're being bullied

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- Does the school have an anti-bullying programme such as the Anti-Bullying Ambassador scheme?

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- Have they made the other teachers aware that your child has been bullied and might need extra support?

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- Does the school have a buddy system for your child to get support from older students?

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- You and the teachers should keep your child's wishes at the top of the agenda. How do they want you to tackle the issue?

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- Are there subtle ways the teachers can address the problem without exacerbating the situation? For instance would rearranging the class seating plan to sit the students further apart help if the bullying has taken place during class time? Could the teacher avoid placing the students in the same group for group work?

## Sample Letters of complaint to your school- Head of Year

Mr Jones  
[Street Address]  
[Area]  
[Post code]  
[phone number]  
[email address]  
[Date]

[Full name of Head of Year/House]  
[School Address]  
[Area]  
[Post code]

Dear Mr/Mrs/MS [Recipient Name]

**RE: Bullying incident which involves [child's full name, year group]**

I am a parent/guardian of a child who attends your school and I am writing to inform you about the bullying incidences which have involved my child and the lack of action from your staff members.

The following incidences have happened to my child: [describe what happened to your child. Use facts explaining who was involved, what happened, where it happened, when it happened?]

I have previously informed [teacher's name] about this incident on [date of complaint made]. Unfortunately, this issue has not been resolved.

As you are aware, it is your duty of care to ensure that students are not being continuously bullied and the revised OfSTED framework contains 'behaviour and safety' of pupils as one of its key criteria for inspections.

Can you please work to resolve this issue? I would like to be made aware of the strategy you will put in place and how this will be monitored by the relevant member of staff? Please could you also make [teacher's name] aware of my complaint to avoid this happening in the future.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours Sincerely,

[Your Name]

## Sample Letters of complaint to your school- Head Teacher

Mr Jones  
[Street Address]  
[Area]  
[Post code]  
[phone number]  
[email address]  
[Date]

[Full name of Head Teacher]  
[School Address]  
[Area]  
[Post code]

Dear Mr/Mrs/MS [Recipient Name]

**RE: Bullying incident which involves [child's full name, year group]**

I am a parent/guardian of a child who attends your school and I am writing to inform you about the bullying incidences which have involved my child and the lack of action from your staff members.

The following incidences have happened to my child: [describe what happened to your child. Use facts explaining who was involved, what happened, where it happened, when it happened?]

I have previously informed [teacher's name] about this incident on [date of complaint made]. Unfortunately, this issue has not been resolved and there is now the urgency to escalate the issue further.

As you are aware, it is your duty of care to ensure that students are not being continuously bullied and the revised OfSTED framework contains 'behaviour and safety' of pupils as one of its key criteria for inspections.

Can you please work to resolve this issue? I would like to be made aware of the strategy you will put in place and how this will be monitored by the relevant member of staff? Please could you also make [teacher's name] aware of my complaint to avoid this happening in the future.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours Sincerely,

[Your Name]

## Sample Letters of complaint to your school- School Governor

Mr Jones  
[Street Address]  
[Area]  
[Post code]  
[phone number]  
[email address]  
[Date]

[The Governing Body]  
[School Address]  
[Area]  
[Post code]

Dear Mr/Mrs/MS [Recipient Name]

**RE: Bullying incident which involves [child's full name, year group]**

I am a parent/guardian of a child who attends your school and I am writing to inform you about the bullying incidences which have involved my child and the lack of action from your staff members.

The following incidences have happened to my child: [describe what happened to your child. Use facts explaining who was involved, what happened, where it happened, when it happened?]

I have previously informed [all the teachers involved in resolving this case, including any Senior Management or Head Teacher] about this incident on [dates of complaints made]. The feedback I received from this was [explain what the teachers did and how this has not helped]. Unfortunately, this issue has not been resolved and it is now a matter of extreme urgency as my child [explain how it is affecting the child using facts, for example it could impact your child's attainment in school, their desire to go to school, it makes them truant/be late].

As you are aware, it is your duty of care to ensure that students are not being continuously bullied and the revised OfSTED framework contains 'behaviour and safety' of pupils as one of its key criteria for inspections.

Can you please work to resolve this issue? I would like to be made aware of the strategy you will put in place and how this will be monitored by the relevant member of staff? Please could you also make [all the teachers involved in the incident] aware of my complaint to avoid this happening in the future.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours Sincerely,

[Your Name]

## Other organisations that can also support you...



ChildLine 0800 1111: get help and advice about a wide range of issues, talk to a counsellor online, send ChildLine an email or post on the message boards: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)



Samaritans: available 24 hours a day to provide confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress, despair or suicidal thoughts: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)



The UK Safer internet Centre is a partnership of three organisations with heritage and expertise in making the Internet a safer place to be: [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)



Red Balloon supports young people who self-exclude or are isolated at school because of bullying or other trauma: [www.redballoonlearner.org](http://www.redballoonlearner.org)