

Working with Your Child's School to Deal with Bullying

Finding out your child is being bullied is very distressing. This guide will give you some tips and strategies on how to work with your child's school to deal with bullying.



Firstly, it's important to be clear about how most schools define bullying. Children fall out all the time, but an argument or fight on the playground is not always bullying. Bullying is negative, aggressive, unkind or derogatory behaviour which takes place repeatedly over time. Usually there is a power imbalance between bully and bullied - the bullied child may be less socially adept, less sporty, less academic, or may have a physical feature which singles them out, such as being small for their age. Bullying can take many forms: physical aggression, name-calling, deliberate social isolation, hiding or stealing belongings and so on. Horrible stuff, but there are things you can do.

My child has come home and said s/he is being bullied, or I suspect bullying is going on. What should I do now?

Talk with your child. Establish the facts. Make notes of what is being said and done, and ask your child why they think this is bullying rather than a 'falling out'. Tell your child it is important that this is dealt with. Many children fear the bullying will get worse if they speak up - reassure your child that you will work with their school to stop this happening, and tell them how brave they are to have spoken up. Reassure them that it is not their fault.

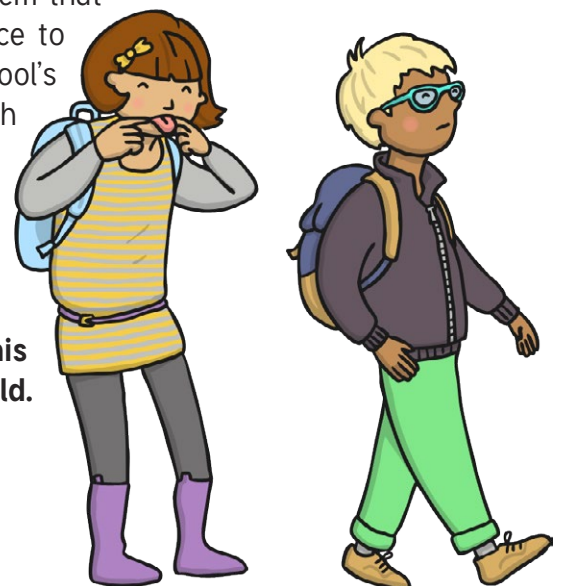


I'm satisfied this is bullying. What now?

Promise your child that you are going to do something to try and sort it out. Contact your child's school as soon as you can and ask to speak to the class teacher. Tell them that you have concerns about bullying and you'd appreciate the chance to come for a chat. In the meantime, ask to see a copy of the school's anti-bullying policy - all schools should have one. Read through this to find out what the school's procedures are when bullying is suspected.

Whatever you do, resist the urge to sort this out yourself -

either by speaking to the alleged bully or their parents! This is rarely helpful, and can make matters worse for your child. Schools can act as effective mediators.



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What should I tell my child's teacher?

Tell the teacher what your child told you. Tell them that you feel this is bullying and you would like the school to deal with it. Ask the teacher what will happen next. Ideally, the school will pass the issue on to a member of the senior leadership team, such as the headteacher or deputy, who will speak to your child, the alleged bully, and their parents before deciding what steps to take next.

Studies have shown that children who are being bullied feel more confident if they have a friend that can support them. Ask the teacher if there is a child in the class who could buddy up with your child and support them if any bullying takes place.

Arrange to meet with the teacher again in, say, a week's time to find out what has happened. In the meantime, keep talking with your child and see if they feel the situation has improved, got worse or stayed the same. Encourage them to feel confident to speak up whenever they feel they have been bullied.



How can I help my child to cope in the future?

It's important to realise that witnessing bullying incidents can be very traumatic for children, even if they are not the victim themselves. If your child tells you they have witnessed bullying, you should also contact their school.

