

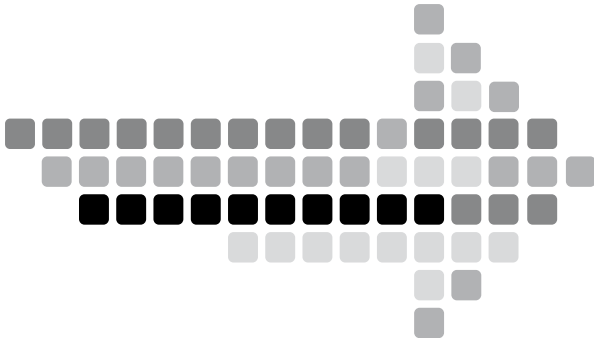
“SHE SIMPLY SNAPPED – SHE’D HAD ENOUGH!”

What parents say about bullying



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1. Introduction

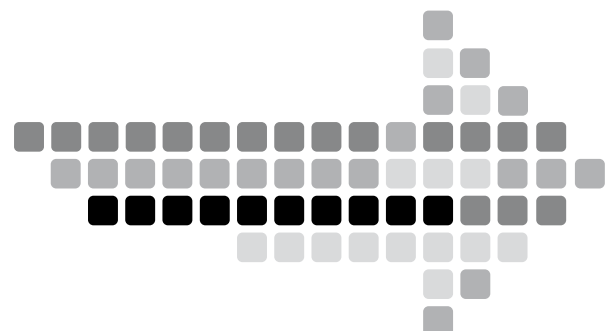
Bullying has an increasingly high media profile, reinforced by public statements from government stating emphatically that no bullying should be tolerated and that tackling bullying in schools is a key priority. This includes new powers for headteachers to regulate pupils' behaviour out of the school environment, together with very comprehensive guidance drawn up by The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for local authorities, schools and governors aimed at embedding anti-bullying work in schools.

This admirable work will do much to reassure parents that schools are willing and able to tackle bullying but what happens – and what support is there – for the parents of a child who bullies? In 2004 Parentline Plus undertook a small survey of what parents were saying when they called Parentline, our helpline for parents, about their child being a bully¹. The number of parents ringing was relatively small, (nearly 900 calls were analysed) but the picture painted was one of dysfunction, conflict and anger.

The statistics, when compared with the average levels of all calls, showed families losing control, with their child demonstrating a range of antisocial behaviours. Violence within the home was reported on a number of occasions, including fighting between siblings and between child and parent.

This year we have decided to explore further what parents feel and say about parenting someone who bullies and what they feel would help them with this hugely complex problem. We are looking too, at what parents say about having a child who is bullied, to ascertain whether these stories could be used in working with parents of children who bully, to demonstrate the impact of their behaviour.

This new work will also inform and be influenced by a Parentline Plus, DCSF funded project which is looking at how best to support parents on a face-to-face basis and what works in helping them to stop their child's bullying behaviour.



2. The policy context

2.1 Government is highlighting that bullying is a significant factor in young people's safety. The Staying Safe consultation document launched this summer by the DCSF shows that bullying is consistently reported by children and young people as their top safety concern. New guidance has recently been launched. This guidance aims to help schools in understanding their responsibilities as regards bullying and offers good practice advice on developing anti-bullying policies and practices. It replaces earlier general anti-bullying guidance issued by the Department. It draws on the experience of practitioners and specialist advice from many organisations, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner, the Anti-Bullying Alliance, the National Strategies, and Ofsted.

2.2 We welcome the acknowledgement that some bullying behaviour by pupils links to deeper issues. Understanding the emotional health and wellbeing of pupils is key to selecting strategies and in engaging external support (for example, in relation to issues of domestic violence or other safeguarding issues).

During the last 18 months, the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee has consistently recommended that more work be done on the long-term impact not only on those bullied but the bullies themselves.

Some of these recommendations are enshrined in law under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which built on the behaviour regulations that came into force with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. From September 2007 the use of parenting contracts and parenting orders has been extended to include misbehaviour at schools, and ultimately has the facility to fine the parents of bullies.

Schools may now extend the reach of their behaviour policies beyond the school gate to include, 'to such an extent as is reasonable', times when students are not actually at school – such as journeys to and from school, work experience or when a student is wearing their school uniform in a public place. Headteachers are now obliged to circulate their behaviour policies to all members of the school community annually, or more often if it is reviewed.

The school community includes parents as well as the staff and students who are in school on a daily basis and may include other agencies that the school works with regularly e.g. the police. Parents should also be told how they can report poor out-of-school behaviour although the school may not issue any sanctions until the student is next in school. These changes are part of a wider emphasis across government policy to encourage parents to take responsibility for their children's behaviour, including bullying.

3. Literature review

To ensure that this new briefing reflected the latest thinking on bullying, we also undertook a literature review to ascertain whether current or new research gives us more insight into the issues of those who bully, their families, their behaviours and the long-term influences of bullying behaviour on individuals' outcomes.

What is clear from the research is that the way a family lives is a prime influence on whether a child will become a bully or not. Overall the research pointed to the following influences on bullying behaviour:

- The quality of parent-child relationships. Studies have reported that the percentage of bullies increases when there is a lack of warm or affectionate relationships between the parent(s) and the child².
- Lack of parental supervision³. If parents do not know where their children are when they are out, and if they do not know their children's peer group, the percentage of bullying doubles.
- Conversely, another study found that the children of parents who impose restrictions on them show higher child participation in bullying. One study⁴ states that nagging a child excessively and delivering high levels of punishment encourage that child into bullying behaviour.
- Racist bullying may reflect the views of parents at home⁵. Children who bully their peers are also more likely than other children to be engaged, in or exposed to, violence within the home. These children are nearly twice as likely to have been exposed to domestic violence⁶. Research⁷ reveals that children maltreated by a parent are more likely to bully their peers.
- Researchers agree that family and parent characteristics play a role in young people bullying others. According to various studies, bullies tend to come from large families – made up of three or more children from virtually all social classes and family backgrounds.
- Bullies are more likely to be found in households⁸ where the parents have low educational achievement, hold skilled manual jobs and tend to have criminal convictions⁹.

4. Parentline Plus research

4.1 PARENTLINE DATA

Parents continue to ring Parentline very concerned about bullying. Most are more worried about verbal bullying although nearly 3,000 talk about physical bullying. During the last year there has been a rise in the number of parents who are talking about their child being the perpetrator and we looked in more depth at what the data said about these calls.

“Her personality’s changed from being bubbly and happy to sad and withdrawn. She’s lacking in self-confidence and self-esteem, saying she is ‘stupid’ and that no-one likes her. She has nightmares and temper tantrums.”

Violence within the home was reported on a number of occasions, including fighting between siblings and between child and parent. 72% of the 1,141 calls analysed talked about bullying taking place in the home.

Key findings from calls about bullies

- Most of the calls are about sons (62%) and the most quoted age group is 13-15 year olds, although there is a worrying level of 9-12 years olds cited as bullies.
- 77% of parents talk about problems at school as against the average of 28% of all calls. Over half as many, when compared with the average, talked about their children being excluded or truanting.
- 43% record conflict in the home between siblings – the average percentage of calls about this issue stands at only 11%.
- Parents report their child as lying – three times as many parents mention this than the average, whilst well over half as many parents – when compared with the average – mention stealing, smoking and drug abuse.

- There is a much higher level of concern about conflict with peers 18%, as against 4%, whilst 20% talk about their child being in with a bad crowd – well over twice as many as the average.
- Over half as many calls as the average say that divorce and separation has impacted adversely on their child’s behaviour.
- Children and parents reporting bullying registered much higher levels of involvement with other services – such as GP’s, police and of course, schools.

4.2. PARENT CONSULTATIONS

For this briefing we also undertook eight focus groups – talking to parents whose children were bullied as well as others whose children were identified as having bullying behaviour. All parents had household incomes of £20,000 and under and the research took place in a mix of towns and cities. We talked to parents of girls and of boys aged 9-11 and parents of 12-15s.

4.3 WEB SURVEY

For six weeks we asked parents using our website to fill in a survey on bullying (see appendix I for the questionnaire). We invited parents whose children have been accused of bullying to share their stories and problems and to find out what information, advice or support could help parents through what is a really difficult time for the whole family. We received 51 responses, many of which were long and complex stories.

5. The findings

5.1 BULLYING – WHAT IS INVOLVED

In the focus groups parents were in agreement about what form bullying took and that there were differences between boys and girls.

Boys

Although boys' bullying could include taunting and ostracising a child from the group, parents saw it as more physical and overt bullying. Where technologies – such as use of mobiles or emails and MSN – were used it was likely to be more visual than verbal e.g. texting pictures, webcam images.

Parents identified the following activities:

- Threats/intimidation.
- 'Initiation' e.g. sticking something down a throat.
- Humiliation (via texting pictures).
- Taking/throwing possessions.
- Shoving, pushing, tripping.
- Kicking, punching, fighting/assault.
- Strangling.

Girls

Here parents saw bullying as more verbal, underhand and 'bitchy'. They talked of:

- Taunting, name calling, rumour spreading.
- Exclusion from the group.
- Hair pulling, slapping, pushing, shoving, spitting.
- Taking/throwing possessions.
- Threats/intimidation.
- Clothes spoiled or cut.
- Use of MSN and text to frighten and defame.

5.2 DIFFERENCE – THE REASONS FOR BULLYING

“My son is in the process of being diagnosed for a psychological/behavioural problem or possibly Asperger’s or ADD. The school insist that it is his behaviour which makes him a target and he must learn to change.”

All the parents, both in the focus groups and web survey, identified ‘difference’ as the main cause for bullying. These included:

- Special educational needs.
- Racism.
- Appearance – sticky-out ears, skinniness, fatness – the wrong hair.
- Being too bright or too slow.
- Being the youngest in a new school.
- Not wearing the right clothes.

“He said – I can have that pair, that one or that one. If I have one of the others, I’ll get bullied.”

Some parents were baffled as to why their child was being bullied, citing them as confident and able to look after themselves.

5.3 WHY DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE BULLY?

All the parents we talked to, whose children had been identified as bullies, had very strong reactions and feelings of shock about what was happening. Most saw the reasons for such behaviour as complex. They pointed out that:

- A significant proportion of these children had previously been bullied themselves, which blurred the boundaries between the two.
- When they were being bullied, parents thought their child simply ‘snapped’ – they had had enough or had decided they would fight back.
- Parents also felt fighting back would stop the bullying.

“The school telephoned me to tell me that my son had hit the bully back, and that I was to tell him not to fight back in future, as they regarded this as the problem.”

- Their children simply became confident enough to retaliate.
- Those who bullied often had a mix of behavioural problems such as Asperger syndrome, learning difficulties and anger issues which made them difficult to discipline and to understand boundaries.

“My daughter is frustrated and very conscious of her inabilities. I believe that these insecurities and low self-esteem in relation to her experience of school causes her to be horrible to other children. I am saddened by this and am fighting the education system to access additional educational resources and support for my daughter.”

Parents felt that boys ‘graduated’ from victim to bully as they became bigger and stronger than their bully. Girls were seen as taking on the new role when they perceived they were prettier or cleverer than their bully.

There was acknowledgement amongst several parents that their children were behaving badly. They described their children as being ‘mouthy’, controlling, determined to get their own way or were ringleaders at school. These parents felt bullying was an extension of general bad behaviour.

However, there were other external factors that parents identified that led to their child's bullying behaviour. These included:

- Family change.
- Rows and relationship difficulties.
- A new baby.
- Sibling rivalry.
- Raging hormones.
- Going up to secondary school and going from the oldest to being the youngest and smallest. Here, bullying behaviour is seen as helping the child to 'fit in'.
- Peer pressure – doing it to be part of the gang. Some believed their children bullied to impress their group/stand out in it.
- Lack of discipline at school and in general. The general decline in discipline was thought to be a clear factor in the growth of bullying, in that children knew they could get away with it.

“Kids are the untouchables, and they know it!”

Bully-victims

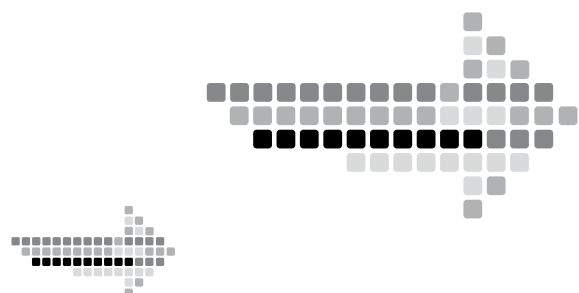
The desk research carried out for this report highlighted worrying findings about what is known as a bully-victim. The victims of bullying can start to bully others, such as siblings. They are often called bully-victims, aggressive victims or provocative victims¹⁰. In essence, bullies may directly or indirectly force a child into becoming a victim and a bully, throwing that child into a cycle of bully-victim. As one researcher put it:

“Unless victims learn to think of and use the many non-violent and effective ways to respond to an aggressor, they risk being repeatedly victimised or becoming perpetrators of violence.

These children tend to be quick-tempered and may try to fight back when they feel that they have been insulted or attacked. Not only are they bullied by their peers, but they also may try to bully weaker children.”

Bully-victims rate more poorly than other children (victims, bullies, or children not involved in bullying) with worse outcomes such as lack of social adjustment, low levels of self control, poor attainment at school, lack of ability to bond or build friendship and higher levels of depression.

According to a study carried out in the United States, the bully-victims can also appear problematic at home as they are more likely to bully siblings (73%) than bullies (57%) or than children not involved in school bullying at all (32%)¹¹. Unfortunately, parents can be the first bullies in a child's life, inflicting abuse in a variety of forms from psychological to physical¹².



5.4 THE ROLE OF THE PARENT WHEN A CHILD IS BULLYING

“It’s a dog-eat-dog world out there. There’s not the discipline, it’s down to us now.”

In the focus groups parents often talked about how they wanted their children to stand up for themselves, and to fight back. Some advocated fighting back as the best form of defence – whilst others felt it was a last resource.

“We’ve brought them up to hit back to protect themselves.”

This defiant attitude was strongest where parents had been bullied as children. Even those who had originally told their children that it took more strength of character to walk away, said they would revise this view if they saw their child being hurt or upset.

“I was told that my son, along with others, is bullying a child, when I have asked his class teacher I was told it’s six of one and half a dozen of the other and my son also gives as good as he gets from the child in question, who is always calling my son fat... the sad thing is my son never mentions this when being questioned as he fears that he will not be believed by the head so doesn’t mention it.”

The message seems to be that in today’s tough world, parents felt they had to teach their children to protect themselves. This was their responsibility. The reasons given were that they did not want their children to lose self-confidence or to be victims – some said they worried that children could ultimately commit suicide.

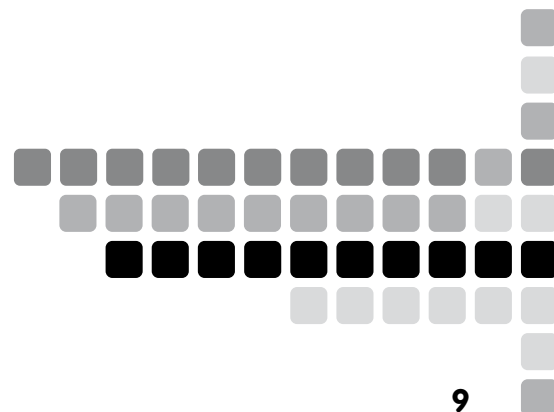
“It made my son attempt to take his own life. We are all still trying to support him and deal with his feelings at the moment and haven’t had time to deal with our own reactions yet.”

Some parents recognised that their own behaviour might impact on their child’s behaviour – one said:

“We have a fiery relationship and it must influence her behaviour. If we talk to each other like a piece of crap, she must think that’s OK.”

However views differ on the role of the parent in this context. Some parents are worried that they cannot help and that things are getting worse. Standing up for themselves is once again highlighted but from a different viewpoint as in this story:

“We are worried that our daughter is so concerned about being accepted by her peers she does not like to stand up for herself. We are also worried that this need to be accepted makes her likely to make decisions that she knows are not good (e.g. letting someone at school pierce her ears in the toilet at break, letting a friend bleach her hair). Maybe we accept too many tantrums at home because we feel that she has a tough time at school/with her friends.”



Of greater concern is the number of parents who did not see their children's behaviour as bullying. Within the research, there was also a clear group of parents (of boys) who refused to admit their children were bullying. These parents regarded their children's behaviour as childhood 'wrestling' or rough and tumble and these parents saw this as a normal part of behaviour. This was especially the case when talking about a group of children.

"How can it be bullying, if it's in a group?"

These parents chose to believe their children's word over those of the teachers and did not agree with (or stopped their children from receiving) the punishment meted out.

5.5 THE EFFECT AND INFLUENCE OF BULLYING ON THE FAMILY

"Devastating. It is with us all the time.

My daughter has changed and is jumpy, anxious, nervy, tearful, depressed, angry.

My younger son did badly in his SATs when he was expected to achieve all 5s because he was distressed. I have been depressed and angry. My husband is angry."

"My child is distressed. We are all suffering sleepless nights and full of worries and frustration that there is no help."

The anguish felt by families dominated by bullying – whether victim or perpetrator – is extreme. Parents telling their stories via the web survey were eloquent about the misery bullying causes. In the focus groups parents talked about trying to act normally so that the whole family were not affected, but finding it hugely difficult. The survey had many stories about parents' shock and anger at finding out about the bullying and how this was affecting all their lives.

"It's made my child frightened and has no confidence, his brother (1yr younger) is always with his brother, feels the same. My husband and I are worried sick about our older boy and don't know if we give him the right advice."

The parents of children who had been bullied, were generally angry and upset and felt they had let their children down. A feeling of helplessness about a situation over which they had little control was seen to have an impact on the whole family.

"My son is upset, cried, just telling me little bits now and again. Maybe I am over reacting, but the summer holidays should be a happy time for children and he is unhappy being left out of things."

6. Schools and bullying

Strong reactions by both parents whose children had been accused of being bullies, and those who have been bullied, were voiced across this study.

6.1 PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN ARE BEING BULLIED

“It’s about the children, not the teachers any more.”

“Yes, he just tells a teacher when the boy hits him. But that goes unreported. He has also been told not to tell me anything that goes on at school.”

Parents often talked about how they felt that not enough was being done. Many of these parents were very angry and distressed.

“The bullies should be removed – full stop. Zero tolerance is the only answer there is a major problem in our schools and it is only going to get worse. If these teachers cannot stand up to these bullies then they should not be teaching!”

6.2 PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN BULLY

Some parents did blame teachers for not keeping their children in better check, or for ‘labelling’ or picking on their children. However, there was also a sense that teachers now were by no means entirely to blame.

A small number of parents felt that the blame was now being laid at parents’ doors, and this group of parents reacted with indignation to accusations of bullying.

Reactions included:

- Refusing to believe it **was** bullying; felt their child had been wrongly labelled.

“He’s always being accused along with other children for things which others would not class as bullying...”

- Felt they and/or their child were already labelled in any case.
- Refusing to comply with the school and supporting their child to stand up against the school.
- A strong sense of us and them.

Some parents openly said they worked against the school, or were in conflict with it. They refused to talk to the school or believe teachers and even helped their children to escape punishment. One parent we talked to had been banned from school grounds.

“She never bullied in the first place – she was falsely accused (and no, she is not a perfect child just because she is mine!!).”

6.3 OVERALL REACTION TO SCHOOLS

“We were taken very seriously. Efforts were made to conceal my child’s identity from the bullies. The bullying didn’t stop entirely, but it was diffused and we felt we had the power and option to go further, if necessary.”

However, overall, we feel that this research demonstrates more understanding about how schools are trying to tackle bullying than previous consultations with parents. Although some felt the school only reacted after they had insisted something should be done, others felt the school had been excellent in their reactions. Parents talked about the school:

- ‘Stamping on’ the problem immediately.
- Speaking to the children and/or their parents.
- Separating the children if necessary.
- Watching carefully what was happening.
- Working with parents to get to a solution.

Many of these schools went further and helped parents find specialist help for their children.

Primary and secondary schools had their own strengths and weaknesses in terms of how they responded. Parents felt that primary schools could be easier to deal with because the relationships were closer and other parents usually known, but that sometimes primary schools were seen to have fewer resources for tackling bullying.

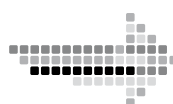
Secondary schools were thought to be more impersonal, but some were also better equipped to help. Parents talked about peer mentor schemes and specialist staff.

“She wanted to move from her school. She got really upset and mean at home almost trying to replicate it with her younger brother. That was not allowed and the discipline and teaching stopped it.”

6.4 BULLYING OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL ‘GATE’

“Anything that will help I would be absolutely grateful. I have my son’s name down at quite a few schools but there are no places available so he is having to stay in this environment.”

We asked parents what they thought of the new powers for headteachers which were broadly welcomed, although some felt it might be too little, too late. Parents generally took one of two sides:



At one end of the spectrum, parents thought the regulations were a very good idea as they saw bullying outside the school being simply a continuation of an in-school problem which until now was a 'limbo-land' in terms of control. New regulations therefore recognised all of this and stopped schools from ducking responsibility.

"My biggest fear is that my youngest child will get bullied on the bus to school."

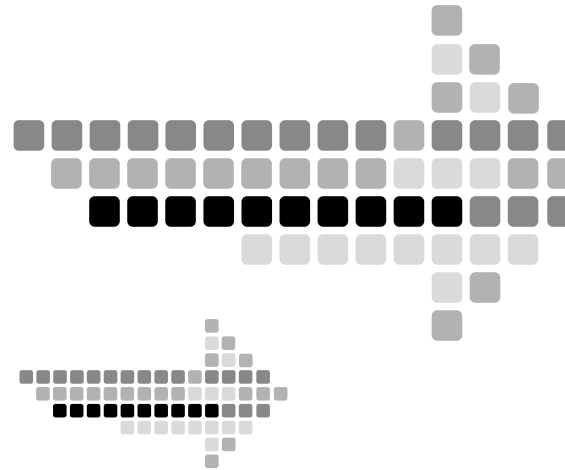
"I think it's good, but they must also give more back-up and information to parents who care that their children are bullies and desperately want their children to stop."

They felt the new powers would act as a deterrent and could even help bring back a sense of community as it encouraged people to work together. A minority of these parents had experienced the inability or unwillingness of their child's school to respond to bullying outside of its grounds, and hoped the new regulations would change this. However several thought it would be difficult to enforce.

At the other end, parents regarded the regulations as a further and unwarranted intrusion. These were the parents who denied their children's bullying, and did not want more people 'interfering' in their and their children's lives. They believed the school's responsibility should be restricted to school hours and premises.

"I don't agree with it. What's it got to do with the school?"

"Why is the school interfering here?"



Conclusion

This research shows that parents still feel that there is not enough done to help both parent and child where bullying is the issue. However, there is a growing feeling that things are improving – that the government and schools are tackling bullying and it is high on the agenda. Parents themselves are more aware of the warning signs and on what makes a child vulnerable to being bullied. They also concede their role and where it works best is when parents, schools and other agencies work together.

The shock of finding out about bullying was made very clear throughout this research. Parents talk about letting their children down. However, some parents adopt a more defiant attitude about bullying – encouraging their children to fight and seeing this as a form of protection. We are concerned that by doing this, those who are bullied can become bullies themselves which is highlighted in the research on bully-victims.

There is, therefore, much more to be done to persuade parents that such retaliation exacerbates the situation and that there are other ways that can be used to tackle the bullying. In particular the relationship between a school and a family where bullying is involved, is still complex with mutual wariness being cited by parents. Publicising how schools are using their new powers on controlling behaviour outside the school gates would be a way to start to build bridges.

The very high levels of conflict both within the family, the school and the community when a child bullies need to be addressed. It is essential that when schools and communities develop policies to cut down on bullying and to ensure community safety, the families of bullies are recognised as needing responsive and appropriate help with their family life and are not further isolated.

Over and above any work being done with the school, family support services need to be involved and to reach out to these vulnerable families to offer support, particularly if the bullying involves violence within the home from children to their parents. Without such targeted support, the lives of those bullied will continue to unravel and the families of those doing the bullying will not be in any position to prevent this destruction.

Recommendations

- Anti-bullying policies and work should be based on a whole family approach, should involve and engage with parents of those bullied as well as parents of bullies, and policies need to ensure that all these parents are supported and enabled to talk through the issues with their children and get further help and support if needed.
- The guidance on the use of a Bullying Charter is a step towards this but we want to see evidence that parents are involved in the development of such a charter and that it is easily available for local parents. With this in place, parents will have confidence in reporting bullying because they know they will be listened to and their concerns acted upon.
- Parents, particularly those whose children have been seen to bully, must understand the sanctions that a school implements in bullying cases. Clear and transparent policies that are given to every new child and their parent, and are regularly referred to in communications between school and parent would contribute to this understanding.
- If a parenting contract or order is implemented in the context of bullying, very clear guidance must be given to parents so they do not feel stigmatised and punished.
- Parents and their children need to be fully conversant with the outcomes of bullying. They also need to understand the influence that their own behaviours have on their children. If a parent has an inclusive and accepting attitude to others, and understands the implications of racism, sexism and homophobia on an individual whether it be a pupil or a teacher, their child will develop the tolerance and respect needed to make a real difference.
- When bullying becomes an issue, the lines of communication between parent and child and school or community need to be strengthened. Parents need to know too how the complaints system works. This should include transparency on the procedures taken – whether a child bullies or is bullied – and reassurance that underlying problems will be investigated and acted upon.
- It is helpful if good communications between parents and schools is established when a child starts school, and maintained, so that if problems such as bullying arise, the lines of communication already exist.
- That headteachers, teachers and other school support staff are trained to signpost vulnerable families to other sources of specialist help for any family problems which might underlie the bullying.
- School staff also need to know where they can signpost. Children's Information Centres have an important role to play here. We hope that improved information from Children's Information Services will in time help staff to access this information easily.
- Where the lines of communication between parent and school have broken down, the family must have access to appropriate independent advocacy or mediation-based support services offered as a matter of course by a local authority.
- Strong links between schools and local community services need to be built and maintained, including police, education welfare, social services, welfare benefits and rights, and family support services. In this way the community can work together to ensure that all children have the right to a safe environment whether at school or in the wider community. This should be demonstrated by robust anti-bullying policies in locations outside of school, which are developed to be compatible with those of the local school.

Talking about bullying – a call to parents

“My son is a bully and has now been excluded from school. I want him to stop bullying but don’t know how.”

Bullying has a really high profile these days, and the government wants to make sure that schools do all they can to make sure there is no bullying taking place at school or even outside the school – such as on the bus, in the park, or on the way home.

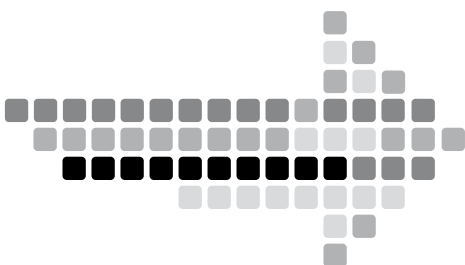
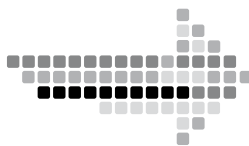
Worries about bullying are one of the major concerns that parents want to talk to Parentline Plus about and we would like to hear your views and stories to see if you feel that the government’s emphasis on stamping out bullying is making a difference. And if not – why and what do you think would help.

We would also like to hear from parents whose children have been accused of bullying and to find out what information, advice or support could help parents through what is a really difficult time for the whole family. We do hope you will share your feelings, experiences and what happened next.

By taking part in this survey you are giving permission for extracts to be used in our work to help other parents. Any material used will remain anonymous and any names used in the text will be changed.

If you require any further support you will get a secure confidential response via our email support or if you feel the matter is urgent you can ring our free, confidential, 24-hour Parentline on **0808 800 2222**

It would help us if you could let us know about just one child. If you want to write about your experience with another of your children, you are welcome to fill in another survey.



1. How old is the child we are talking about in this survey?

- Up to 3 years
- 4-8 years
- 9-12 years
- 13-15 years
- 16 years and over

2. What gender is the child we are talking about in this survey?

- Male
- Female

3. Has your child recently been bullied?

- Yes (continue to question 4)
- No (continue to question 10)

3. a) If yes, where?

- School
- Home
- Other (please specify below)

3. b) And how?

- Physical
- Verbal
- Racial
- Personal belonging being taken
- New to the school
- Other (please specify below)

4. What was your first reaction when you found out?

- Shock
- Anger
- Sadness
- Worry for your child
- Worried about what to do about it
- Other (please specify below)

5. Did you contact the school?

- Yes
- No

5. a) If yes, what happened?

6. Were you satisfied by what the school did?

- Yes
- No

6. a) If yes, why?

6. b) If no, what could they have done better?

7. What effect did the bullying have on your child and did this effect the rest of the family?

8. Has your child been accused of bullying?

- Yes
- No (continue to question 15)

9. If yes, what form of bullying was it?

- Physical
- Verbal
- Racial
- Other (please specify below)

10. How did you find out and what happened next?

11. Did you think the school handled the situation well?

- Yes
- No

12. Have things improved – has your child stopped his/her bullying behaviour?

- Yes
- No

Please read below before filling in the final part of the survey.

Impact of new regulations

New regulations now enable headteachers to regulate pupils' behaviour when they are not at school and not under the control of a member of staff.

This can include travel to and from school, places that are close to the school, work experience, further education as part of a school programme, school events and off-site extended school activities. Behaviour can also be regulated when a pupil is wearing school uniform in a public place.

Individual schools will make their own judgements about what is reasonable behaviour in order to regulate it, and punishment can only be issued when the pupil is next in school.

Schools will be encouraged to work with transport providers (public or contract) to agree how behaviour during travel should be addressed. They will also be encouraged to collaborate with Neighbourhood Watch groups, retail staff, street wardens and police.

Schools should set out how parents can report poor out-of-school behaviour, and tell them of liaisons with collaborators/agencies as well as behaviour standards and processes. Schools should also liaise with Neighbourhood Police and Youth Offending teams where relevant to agree which behaviours require referral to the police.

The regulations also include measures concerning new media (cyber bullying). Schools should make clear in their behaviour policy that the use of defamatory or intimidating messages and images inside or outside of school will not be tolerated and that disciplinary sanctions will be applied.

13. Things are changing – what is your reaction to government's latest policy about bullying?

14. Do you think the school will actually do anything about bad behaviour that takes place outside the school?

- Yes
- No

14. a) Please give reasons for the above answer

15. Do you think it would make a difference if schools agreed a 'behaviour policy' with:

Local transport

- Yes
- No

Neighbourhood watch

- Yes
- No

Shops

- Yes
- No

Street

- Yes
- No

Wardens

- Yes
- No

Community leaders

- Yes
- No

16. If your child had been bullied out of school by a child from a different school, would you feel comfortable speaking to that school or the neighbourhood police team to ask them to look into it?

- Yes
- No

17. Schools are encouraged to ban mobile phones on school grounds. Do you think this is enough to stop bullying by mobile phone?

- Yes
- No

18. What role do you think the school can play in stamping out cyber-bullying (bullying over the internet)?

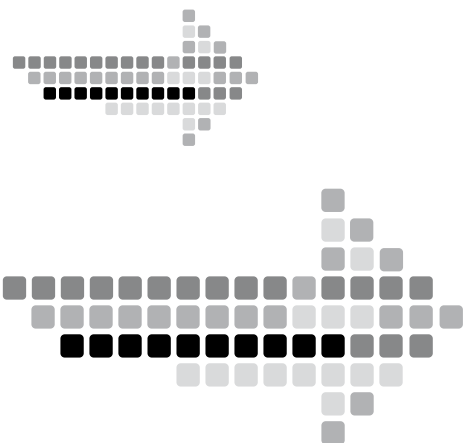
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Tips for parents

What to do if you think your child is being bullied or is bullying:

- Listen and talk to them. They may feel out of control and ashamed – whether they are being bullied or bullying. Let them know you love them and want to help.
- Be clear that it is important for the bullying to stop and that the school will need to be involved.
- If your child is bullying others, think about what might be behind it – are they trying to get attention or fit in with the crowd, or are they unaware of how they are hurting others? Are they bullying because they have been bullied or have witnessed bullying at home or elsewhere?
- Talk to the school as soon as possible. Try to stay calm when you talk to the teachers – it helps to write down what you know and what the school says to you about what they are going to do. If you feel you may not stay calm consider going with a friend to support you.
- Encourage your child to keep a journal in which they record each incident of bullying. They could also draw pictures or write about the bullying – this can help to release painful feelings and will be a record of what happened and when it happened.
- If your child is bullying others, think about what might be behind it – are they trying to get attention or fit in with the crowd? Or are they unaware of how they are hurting others?
- If you think things are not getting better, ask to see the school's anti-bullying policy and make an appointment to see the headteacher.
- Take care of yourself. Coping with your child's bullying may be very stressful – especially if it brings back memories of your own experiences. Try to take time for yourself or talk over what you feel with friends or family.



Want to find out more?

If you need someone to talk to, phone Parentline free on **0808 800 2222** or the free textphone on **0800 783 6783** (for people who are deaf, hard or hearing or have a speech impairment). For email support contact us at parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk

Parentline Plus produces information and materials on a range of parenting issues. Check out www.parentlineplus.org.uk

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

Independent advice and information for parents on all matters concerning schools, including bullying.

Advice line: **0808 800 5793**

Website: www.ace-ed.org.uk

Anti-Bullying Alliance

The website provides information and advice for parents, children and schools on tackling bullying.

Website: www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre

Advice and information on legal issues affecting a child. You can obtain a copy of the booklet, 'Bullying: a guide to the Law', from their website.

Email: clcparenting@essex.ac.uk

Website: www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Department for Children, Schools and Families

The website provides information and advice for parents, children and schools.

Website: www.dcsf.gov.uk/bullying

ParentsCentre

Information and support for parents on how to help with your child's learning, including advice on bullying.

Website: www.parentscentre.gov.uk

Parentline Plus is a national charity and a leading organisation in the development and delivery of support for parents and families. We work to recognise and to value the different types of families that exist and to shape and expand the services available to them. We understand that it is not possible to separate children's needs from the needs of their parents and carers and encourage people to see it as a sign of strength to seek help. We believe it is normal for all parents to have difficulties from time to time.



Parentline Plus:

520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, Kentish Town,
London NW5 1TL

Free Parentline: 0808 800 2222

**Free textphone for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment:
0800 783 6783**

Web: www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Email: parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk

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