

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!!

Speaking to your child: Don't respond with: 'Stop telling tales', 'Ignore it' AND don't think of it as a normal part of growing up. We have the right to feel safe all the time and bullying should not be a barrier to our learning, happiness or success.

Definition of bullying: Discuss your child's perception of what bullying is. Dig out the school's Anti-Bullying Policy. Make sure it is really bullying and not just a one-off.

Get all the facts: Who, when, why? Make some notes. This will be useful when deciding on further action.

Safe places: Draw a map of the school and get your child to label safe places or safe havens where they can go to escape the bullying and, more importantly, to report the bullying. Or get them to draw round their hand and write the names of 5 people on the fingers that they can go to if they have a worry. Make 3 of them individuals at school and 2 outside of school. Help them realise that there are so many people in life that love, care and support them—from parents, dinner ladies, teachers, police. Highlight these different roles and the part they can play in your child's life.

Monitor the situation

'How was school today?' Granted this will often result in 'OK' or, if you have a teenager a grunt but delve further and remain positive. Ask questions such as 'What was the best part of the day?', and 'What would have made it better?'

Class teacher: These days schools will encourage parents that the first point of call is the class teacher, not the Executive Headteacher or Head of School. A good relationship with your child's teacher will help you keep on top of any fears or worries.

'Forget about it' Once you have investigated and decide on a plan of action try not to continue to worry. Compliment your child on their strengths and successes. Go swimming, do a jigsaw, take them out and take their mind off the situation. Remind them that they succeed in lots of things in life and help them to realise they have a lot to be proud of.



The Arreton and Oakfield Federation

What to do if you're worried your child is being bullied



What is bullying ...

What is unkindness or friendship issues...

Being called a name at school: Discuss the difference between bullying and unkindness. It's important that your child is resilient and able to deal with one-off incidents of name calling. Talk to them about reporting this behaviour as inappropriate rather than bullying. Help them develop a clear idea that bullying is continuous, deliberate and more than someone having a bad day and not thinking twice. It's important we don't label everything in life as bullying.

Feeling left out: Discuss the support networks available to your child. If your child is feeling lonely or left out, speak to them about what clubs at break times they could attend and highlight safe areas in the school and find out which adults they trust and could go to. Get them to list or draw a picture of their friendship groups and help them discover friends they could spend time with.

Physical bullying: Find out exactly when and where this bullying is happening. Remain calm—you child has the right to feel safe and you can now demand that the school investigates this and responds to you ASAP. If you don't feel it is resolved, escalate it, take it higher and if necessary involve the authorities.

Advice for you and your child

First occasion: Encourage them to be assertive, through body language and facial expressions. Practice with them to say 'I'd like you to stop doing that' with eye contact. Urge them not to retaliate verbally or physically as this will likely result in them being punished. Mention the incident to an adult.

Second occasion: Tell your child to remove themselves from the situation, find an adult and report it. Discuss who they sit with or who they hang around with. Does the school need to look at lesson seating plans or staff on duty at break and lunch time?

Problems on social networks: Save the evidence, report, delete and block. With social networks, it's best to nip the problem in the bud, blocking the individual will stop any further abuse. Official guidelines states schools can and should deal with the issue of cyberbullying between 2 pupils so don't be afraid to request this or if it is serious to report it to the police. Help your child look at their friends list. If you feel this is serious abuse or harassment take it to the police as it is against the law.



If your child tells you they are being bullied

- ◇ Believe and listen to them
- ◇ Praise them for doing the right thing and speaking to you
- ◇ Remain calm and focussed

Don't take the problem on yourself

Work with your child and the school: The chances are your child has been worrying for some time and possibly been reluctant to speak out. Their biggest fear may be that if they speak out the problem will get 10 times worse. Don't let them feel that way. Instead of taking over the problem, work with them to help them feel 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 your child safe and we want something done NOW. Remember to give the school a chance to act on your concerns. Try 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 chance to sort out the problem.