

Bullying and cyberbullying

(Information taken from NSPCC - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying/>)

Advice for parents and carers to help keep children safe from bullying, wherever it happens.

What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone.

It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.

Bullying can take different forms. It could include:

- physical bullying: hitting, slapping or pushing someone
- verbal bullying: name calling, gossiping or threatening someone
- non-verbal abuse: hand signs or text messages
- emotional abuse: threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone
- exclusion: ignoring or isolating someone
- undermining, constant criticism or spreading rumours
- controlling or manipulating someone
- making silent, hoax or abusive calls
- racial, sexual or homophobic bullying
- bullying someone because they have a disability.
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What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying in the real world, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and mobile phone.

Cyberbullying can include:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- trolling – the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- shaming someone online
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll

- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.
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Signs of bullying

No single sign will indicate for certain that your child's being bullied, but watch out for:

- belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- physical injuries, such as unexplained bruises
- being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- not doing as well at school
- asking for, or stealing, money (to give to whoever's bullying them)
- being nervous, losing confidence, or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- problems with eating or sleeping
- bullying others.

Effects of bullying

The effects of bullying can last into adulthood. At its worst, bullying has driven children and young people to self-harm and even suicide.

Children who are bullied:

- may develop mental health problems like depression and anxiety
- have fewer friendships
- aren't accepted by their peers
- are wary and suspicious of others
- have problems adjusting to school, and don't do as well.

All children who are affected by bullying can suffer harm – whether they are bullied, they bully others or they witness bullying.

Who's at risk

Any child can be bullied for any reason. If a child is seen as different in some way, or seen as an easy target they can be more at risk.

This might be because of their:

- race or ethnic background
- gender
- sexual orientation.

Or it could be because they:

- appear anxious or have low self-esteem
- lack assertiveness
- are shy or introverted.

Popular or successful children are also bullied, sometimes because others are jealous of them. Sometimes a child's family circumstance or home life can be a reason for someone bullying them.

Disabled children can experience bullying because they seem an easy target and less able to defend themselves.

Support

For parents and carers

You might experience a huge range of emotions if you discover a child's being bullied. Whether it's a child in your care or someone you know, we have tips to help you cope.

1. Talk to them about bullying and cyberbullying

If you suspect your child is being bullied, explain to them what bullying is, and ask if anything like that has happened to them. Keep calm, and listen carefully to what they say.

They may feel really scared, embarrassed or ashamed that they're being bullied, and they may be worried about what will happen if they tell anyone.

Once you know your child is being bullied, remember to check in with them regularly. Remind them that they can talk to you about how they're feeling whenever they want.

Not sure how to start the conversation? Check out our advice on [talking about difficult topics](#).

2. Let them know who to ask for help

If they don't want to talk to you, suggest they have a chat with another trusted adult, such as a teacher or family member.

You could also suggest they contact [Childline](#), where a trained counsellor will provide a listening ear.

They don't have to give their name and they can talk about anything that's worrying them.

3. Help them relax and take a time out

Children and young people may lack confidence as a result of bullying. Help them find things to do that make them feel good, like listening to, or playing, music, or doing sport. Give them opportunities to help build their confidence.

Remember to reassure them that it's not their fault and that they're loved and valued.

4. Report bullying on social media and online gaming

As well as supporting your child emotionally, there are practical steps you can take if the bullying has taken place on an online platform, such as a social media app or online gaming chat room.

- Don't stop them from using the internet or their mobile phone. It probably won't help keep them safe, it may feel like they're being punished and could stop them from telling you what's happening.
- Make sure your child knows how to block anyone who posts hateful or abusive things about them on each app or online service they use. You can usually find details of how to do this in the help or online safety area, under Settings.
- Report anyone who is bullying your child to the platform that's carried the offending comments, audio, image or video. Follow these links to contact some of the most popular social media platforms and learn more about blocking and reporting:
[Instagram](#)> [Snapchat](#)>
[WhatsApp](#)> [Facebook](#)>
[Skype](#)>
- You can find details of more apps and games children and young people use, and how to contact them, on our [Net Aware](#) site.
- [Thinkuknow](#) has advice on online safety for young people that's suitable for different age groups. The website shows children how to contact social media sites if they believe someone has posted something upsetting about them.
- [Block'em](#) is a free app for Android users that blocks unwanted calls and text messages from specified numbers. Its website also provides advice for iOS users.

5. Report bullying videos shared online

Get in contact with the site the video's been shared on as soon as possible. Social networks are more likely to take the video down if the child involved in the video or their parents make the report. Depending on their terms and conditions, they may be able to remove it from the site. If you need help, call the Online Safety Helpline on [080 880 05002](tel:08088005002).

6. Talk to your child's school or club

If your child is being bullied, you can talk to their school. It doesn't matter whether the bullying is happening on the premises, outside or on the internet. All schools have a responsibility to protect their pupils from bullying.

If your child is being bullied at a club, talk to the person in charge.

Arrange a meeting with their teacher

- Take another person along with you for support if you feel it will help you.
- Take a notebook so you can jot down what's said at the meeting.
- Bring any evidence you have of the bullying, such as text messages, a record of incidents, or screenshots if the bullying is happening online.
- Tell them what effect the bullying is having on your child, and make it clear you expect them to respond.
- Ask for a copy of the school or club's anti-bullying policy, behaviour policy and complaints procedure. These may be available to you before the meeting on the school or club's website.
- Ask the teacher or organiser what action they're going to take, making sure you all agree on what they propose to do.
- Arrange a date to speak to them again so you can see what progress has been made.
- The school may inform the Police if the bullying involves ongoing harassment and intimidation, or a hate crime, such as racism or homophobia.

If the bullying continues

Write a letter of complaint to the head teacher and arrange to meet them to discuss your concerns.

Continue to keep a record of incidents with as much information as you can including:

- photographs of any physical injuries or damaged property
- the date, location and approximate time of each incident
- any contact (letters, emails etc) you've had with the school.

If that doesn't resolve it, you will need to follow different advice depending on the type of school your child goes to.

If your child goes to a maintained/state school

Write to the chair of governors at the school address. The school office will be able to provide you with the chair's name if it's not on the school website.

Explain the situation and include copies of letters between you and the school, as well as any evidence of the bullying.

If the bullying still isn't dealt with, you can then make a formal complaint to the Local Education Authority (LEA) in the area where the child goes to school.

If your child goes to a Free school or Academy

If you're unhappy with the head teacher's response, the academy or free school should organise a hearing with a panel made up of at least 3 people not involved in the complaint.

For further advice contact the [Department for Education](#).

If your child goes to an independent/private school

Write to the chair of governors at the school address. The school office will be able to provide you with the chair's name if it's not on the school website.

Explain the situation and include copies of letters between you and the school, as well as any evidence you have of the bullying.

If the bullying continues, a complaint can be made to the [Department for Education](#), which can consider reports of a major failure to ensure a child's safety.

We're here to support you, no matter your worry. Call us on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000), email help@nspcc.org.uk or fill in our [online form](#).

For children

We understand how difficult it is for children to talk about bullying. Whether it's happening now or happened in the past, Childline can be contacted 24/7. Calls to [0800 1111](tel:08001111) are free and confidential. Children can also contact [Childline online](#).

Childline has lots of advice about [different types of bullying](#) and a tool to help them [bounce back from bullying](#).

Prevent bullying

There are steps we can all take to keep children and young people safe from bullying.

Be available for your child to talk to you about their worries and make sure they know where they can go to for support. That could be yourself, a teacher they trust or [Childline](#).

You can ask your child's school to book a free [Speak out Stay safe assembly](#) for primary school children. Our specially trained staff and volunteers hold assemblies and workshops, covering topics like bullying and abuse, but without using any scary words or adult language.

If your child has bullied someone

If you find out your child has done something to hurt someone else, you're likely to feel angry, disappointed or any number of other strong emotions.

Explain that what they're doing is unacceptable. Children and young people don't always realise what they're doing is bullying, or understand how much their actions have hurt someone.