



# PARENT ADVICE ON BULLYING

With recent stats showing that possibly 12,000 UK parents apply for their children to move school. Our head instructor Richard, has written a helpful advice piece for parents before such drastic actions are taken.

## “HELP.....I’m getting bullied at school”

Obviously, no parent or carer wants to hear the above words coming from their child or loved one. However, before emotions take over and you start thinking about taking drastic actions (such as moving schools or starting to plan a home schooling itinerary), it maybe a good idea to think about taking the below steps and advice first.

Before we start, I would like to highlight that obviously hearing the words “I’m getting bullied at school” isn’t something any parent or carer wants to hear, however please take great comfort in the fact you are hearing this in the first place. This shows that not only does your child want your help but more importantly you can provide it. When we look at some of the statistics relating to self harm and suicide as a result of bullying, unfortunately in lots of cases, these drastic, upsetting actions were first signs they needed help. Too many children don’t have the courage to speak out and tell anyone. So if yours is, you are now in a great position to help and prevent future statistics rising. The recommended below steps will undoubtedly help.

### No1: *Finding out.*

Try your hardest to KEEP CALM! I heard a great quote once, “Emotions are the enemy of logic” and this fits this scenerio perfectly. On first finding out, proceed with caution as your next actions are extremely important and will have a massive impact on your loved ones emotional state. Even though inside you will undoubtedly be panicking, getting upset and possibly angry, please try your hardest to remain calm on the outside, this will not only comfort and reassure them that they have done the right thing in speaking out, but will also allow you to look at the problem with a clear head. Again to reinstate from earlier, finding out means you can help, which all of us want at the end of the day. If we make this first interaction a positive experience, it will help encourage them to do the same in the future if they ever need to.

### No2: *Reassurance.*

Before you even start looking at what has been happening, provide some well needed reassurance. Tell them not to worry, that they have done the right thing in speaking to you and that everything is going to be okay. Now you can sit down and chat calmly. Find out what exactly has been happening and for how long. It may not even be a bullying issue.

When working in schools with young people, without doubt the most common thing I hear from staff, is that the word ‘bullying’ is so often overused by children. Many will use the word at home, following a falling out or argument with a peer at school and at that point, emotions take over and the next morning the school is faced with an angry, upset and worried parent demanding action be taken.

Bullying is when someone or group of people have ‘repeatedly’ acted in a way to intentionally hurt or

upset another. Usually, there is also a clear imbalance of power being displayed. Friendship issues, even mean behaviour from time to time would not class as bullying. This is not to say they don't need help, however the action taken would be somewhat different, also far less worrying.

### **No3: *Making a plan.***

Assuming that you have established your child is being bullied, it's important to make a plan of action with them. Having them feel involved in the process is again important. Making sure they are happy with what steps are taken next will put them at ease. Something I hear from, young people a lot is "I can't tell Mum / Dad as I am worried about what they may do next". This is happening to them, so keep them involved. Steps will need to be taken, such as speaking to school etc, but make sure your child understands that these steps are necessary in order to get some help and ultimately get things to stop. I find highlighting that quite often, others can display bullying behaviour without even knowing, so a small confidential chat with the perpetrator could be enough to get things to stop.

### **No4: *Check school policies.***

Obviously you are going to need to speak with staff at your child's school. However, before you do, it would be a good idea to check their anti-bullying policy. All schools have behaviour and anti-bullying policies that are available for parents and carers to view (most of these are easy to find on the schools website, if not just ask the school). These tend to differ slightly between schools and can often be changed and updated, so always check. This is a great way of knowing before you speak in person what steps the school have mapped out to help your child.

### **No5: *Keep a record.***

As I mentioned earlier, bullying is any unwanted behaviour to another that is happening on a repetitive basis. It's going to help both you and the school, if you have a detailed chain of events written down. Don't see this as compiling a case against the perpetrator for future conviction and punishment, but instead giving all the information needed to help your loved one.

### **No6: *Work with the school.***

Finding blame, for what is unfortunately been happening is a natural emotional response and it is quite often that blame is directed at the school. Please remember your child's school is here for you and have a legal duty to protect their pupils. Just because you have just found out, doesn't automatically mean they know. Plus there are quite often complex reasons why bullying behaviour is taking place. The bully could be experiencing bullying themselves or even have problems outside of school. Just because someone is behaving incorrectly most certainly doesn't mean they are horrible, nasty and need to be removed from school. Be patient and work with your school and young person to get things back on track. Unfortunately lots jump to moving schools far too soon. Without finding out how and why bullying is happening in the first place, can in some cases mean that it continues at their new school too. Don't rush into taking such drastic actions too soon. This should only be considered in extreme cases and as a last resort.

Bullying needs to be an education process for all involved and hopefully with the correct information and steps taken things will start to improve.

"Emotion is the enemy of logic" and when we look at bullying logic is in most cases all we need.

**Keep calm and use logic.**

**Article by:** Richard Pomfrett, Founder and Head Instructor of Stay Safe! Workshops.

