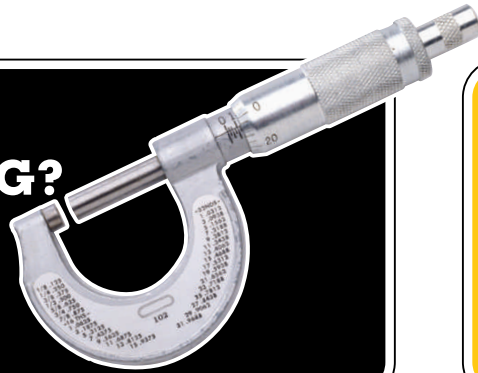




parents advice centre

## WHAT IS BULLYING?



BULLYING CAN AFFECT  
A CHILD'S CONFIDENCE  
AND SELF-ESTEEM.

**This booklet has been produced by the Parents Advice Centre, after consulting with parents. We hope it will give you the help you need to understand bullying better and to tackle the problem successfully and with confidence.**

**Bullying itself can take many forms, including:**

- Hitting or kicking
- Calling a child names or making hurtful comments
- Being threatening or taking another child's belongings
- Leaving a child out, spreading stories about them or making rude signs at them.

Whatever form it takes, bullying is frightening and demoralising and can affect a child's confidence and self-esteem.

Bullying is never the bullied child's fault. Sometimes, children can be 'picked on' and bullied because they look different, their skin is a different colour, they are a different religion or even because they are small or tall.

**As a parent, you may feel:**

- **ANGRY** at the bully or at the school where the bullying is taking place
- **FRUSTRATED** and **HELPLESS** about the problem
- **ISOLATED** with no-one to turn to
- **VICTIMISED** why my child and my family ?

# IS MY CHILD BEING BULLIED?

Sometimes children who are being bullied are afraid to tell anyone what is happening. They may fear that 'telling' will only make the bullying worse.

## Your child may be being bullied if they:

- Refuse or do not want to go to school (their schoolwork may also get worse)
- Cry themselves to sleep, have nightmares or wet the bed
- Have possessions that go missing
- Have unexplained cuts and bruises
- Become withdrawn or aggressive, or change their behaviour in any other way
- Ask for money or steal money

- Bully you or their brothers or sisters
- Are afraid to travel on the school bus or beg you to drive them to school
- Have mood swings and want to be close to you.

In extreme cases, a bullied child might also attempt suicide.

# HOW DOES A BULLIED CHILD FEEL?

**ANGRY** - venting this anger against family or pets

**ANXIOUS** - worried about going out or to school

**DEPRESSED** - feeling that no-one cares

**SICK** - headaches, pains and aches

**ISOLATED** - why is this happening to me ?

**SHY** - lacking confidence in himself or herself

**UPSET SLEEP** - disturbed or crying out

**VULNERABLE** - constantly expecting an attack.



# MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED; WHAT DO I DO?



- 1 Find out the facts**
- 2 Reassure your child** that you will do everything you can to sort out the problem
- 3** Make sure your child knows what bullying is, that it is wrong, and that **no-one deserves to be bullied**
- 4** Stress that he or she needs to **tell the truth**
- 5 Accept what your child is saying** and allow him or her plenty of time to explain what is happening. You may need to encourage your child to talk about his or her feelings

REMEMBER, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS HOW A BULLIED CHILD **FEELS**.

- 6 Write down:**  
*What happened and when*  
*Who else saw it*  
*How it affected your child at the time and later on.*  
  
Taking positive action about bullying makes many parents feel so much better. It will help you and it will also help your child.  
  
**Remember**, the most important thing is how a bullied child feels.

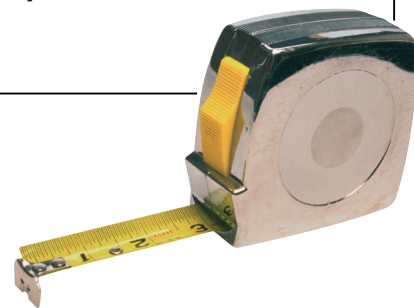
## IF YOUR CHILD SAYS, "PLEASE DON'T GO TO MY SCHOOL"

When bullying happens, parents, children and the school need to work together to solve the problem. You may feel torn between your child's fears and wondering whether you should approach the school.

- **Talk the situation over** with someone you know or call the Parents Advice Centre
- **Explain to your child** what would happen when you talk to the teacher and so promote the benefits of involving the school
- If everyone is very emotional then have a **'cooling off' period** before talking it through again.

## IF YOUR CHILD SAYS, "OK, PLEASE TALK TO MY SCHOOL"

- **Make an appointment** to speak to someone at the school as soon as possible
- **See the right person.** In primary schools, the class or head teacher. For post-primary, the year teacher or pastoral care teacher
- **Ask the school** to give you information on how they deal with bullying issues.



## HOW DO I APPROACH A MEETING AT THE SCHOOL?

When you're there:

- Be respectful and assertive
- Describe the facts about the bullying
- Explain how your child has been affected, what he or she is afraid of and what he or she feels might help
- Ask what the school is going to do
- Ask for an assurance from the school that the matter will be dealt with and that you will be kept informed
- Listen carefully and if you wish, make a note of what is being said.

YOU MAY FIND IT HELPFUL TO  
BRING ALONG YOUR PARTNER  
OR A FRIEND.



- If there is something you are not sure about - ask for a clearer explanation
- Ask exactly what your child should do if he or she is bullied again
- Agree how you will keep in touch with the school to monitor progress.

You should feel that you've been listened to and that you understand the school's position. You should also have agreed what the next steps will be.

Continue to be aware of your child's feelings and make a note of any more bullying incidents.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE BULLYING DOESN'T STOP?

If the bullying continues, then there are further steps that can be taken. You can:

- Make **another appointment** with the school
- Write to the chair of the **board of governors** at the school
- Contact your local **Education & Library Board** or the **Council for Catholic Maintained Schools** for advice and information.

## WHAT ABOUT THE BULLY?

The bully needs help too. Don't expect the school to expel the bully because this might not be the best thing to do. You might consider talking to someone at the school about getting help for him or her.



# ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP

## Parents Advice Centre - helplines

Belfast 028 9023 8800

Derry 028 7126 6663

Dungannon 028 8775 2900

Ballymena 028 2565 0099

## Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities

028 9023 8645

## Chinese Welfare Association

028 9028 8277

## Save the Children

028 9043 1123

You can contact any of the four organisations above for a copy of **Bullying at School : Advice for Parents**, which deals with the issue of racist bullying. The booklet is published in English and Cantonese.

## Education and Library Boards

Contact the appropriate board:

Belfast 028 9056 4000

North Eastern 028 2565 3333

South Eastern 028 9056 6200

Southern 028 3751 2200

Western 028 8241 1411

## Chalky Line

(Children's Law Centre)

0808 8085678

## ChildLine

0800 1111

## Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)

Contact the appropriate diocese:

Armagh 028 8775 2116

Clogher 028 6632 2709

Derry 028 7126 1931

Down & Connor 028 9032 7875

Dromore 028 3026 2423



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[www.pachelp.org](http://www.pachelp.org)

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