

The Rock Community Project (The Rock)

How to help a friend who is worried about bullying at school

Introduction

What is Bullying?

Forms that bullying may take

How a parent might recognise bullying is taking place

How parents can help children who are being bullied

What a school can and cannot do

Anti-bullying policy

Questions/Comments

What is bullying?

Some definitions:

“One or more individuals inflicting physical, verbal or emotional abuse on another”.

“Bullying is a form of aggression, a kind of behaviour that deliberately sets out to intimidate or hurt another person by causing them physical or psychological distress”.

“It is the wilful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone”.

Other definitions include the following words:

UNPROVOKED

REPEATED ACTION

STRONGER

My Definition (no way is it perfect)

“The repeated breaching of an individual’s barriers of acceptability”.

Forms of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms and include (in no particular order):

Extortion

Racism

Sexism

Verbal Threats

Physical Violence

Exclusion/Isolation

Criminal Damage

Coercion

Name Calling

Spreading of Rumours

Unacceptable Teasing

Homophobic comments

How a Parent/Carer may recognise bullying is taking place

Frightened to walk to school/ask to be driven

Be unwilling to go to school

Avoid going to school

Take a different route to school

Have clothes or books or school work torn or destroyed

Begin doing poorly at school

Come home hungry

Become withdrawn

Start hitting other children

Lose their appetite

Develop stomach troubles

Lose sleep

Cry themselves to sleep

Begin bed wetting

Have nightmares "Leave me alone"

Have unexplained bruises/scratches/cuts

Missing possessions

Ask for or steal money

Refuse to say what's wrong

Bullying is a likely cause of the above though not the only possibility

How a Parent/Carer can help children who are being bullied

Watch for signs of distress.

Encourage your child to talk, be supportive and patient. They may not tell you they are being bullied the first time of asking/enquiring.

Take an active interest in your child's social life. Discuss friendships, how playtime is spent and the journey to and from school.

If you think your child is being bullied inform the school immediately and ask for an interview with an appropriate member of staff. (Do not necessarily go right to the Head).

Keep a written record if the bullying persists. It will be painful but it will provide supportive evidence regarding WHO, WHAT, WHERE and WHEN.

With an appointed member of staff, devise strategies that will help your child and provide her/him with support inside and outside school.

Do not encourage your child to hit back. It will only make matters worse. Such behaviour could be contrary to your child's nature.

Encourage your child to recruit friends. A child who has friends is less likely to be bullied. Encourage them to meet friends at playtime and stay in more "open" areas.

Reassure your child there is nothing wrong with them. They are not the only victim.

Do not threaten the school with tabloid newspapers or lawyers.

Don't go round to the home of the alleged bully.

What a school can and cannot do

CAN

Be supportive of the victim and family. Offer strategies

Give advice and monitor the situation.

Make the unacceptable nature of the behaviour, and the consequences or any repetition, clear to the bully and his/her parents/carers.

Work with the bully and his/her family to attempt to change the behaviour.

Punish the bully if we have sound evidence.

Patrol areas of the school, using staff or prefects.

Develop an ethos in the school that bullying will not be tolerated.

Use pupils as counsellors to resolve problems.

Keep up the dialogue with parents.

Keep detailed records.

Pass on information to new staff

If things stop – don't forget what had happened earlier and keep an eye on things.

Stop individual cases

CANNOT

Remove the bully permanently

Protect children all the time they are in school

Stop bullying

Anti-bullying Policy

Many schools have now developed anti-bully policies and, considering the amount of help and advice which is available, there is no excuse for those which have not. Bullying happens in every school in the country, although research suggests that some have more than others.

There are, in my view, three prerequisites for a successful anti-bullying policy:

Honesty: an acknowledgement that there is a problem.

Openness: the creation of a supportive and accountable regime.

Involvement: make sure staff (teachers and non-teachers), parents and pupils are involved in formulating the policy as they all have a vested interest in making sure it succeeds.