

However, be aware that some children are very easily intimidated into silence to avoid playground or out-of-school retribution.

If you continue to be concerned after the school response, or things do not improve, then involve the Head Teacher.

If you are still not satisfied, you have the right to make a written complaint if you wish to do so. If you put your complaint in writing, state the facts and keep it brief. Send your complaint to the Chair of Governors at your school.

All complaints made in writing are recorded and must be investigated.

Some helplines and websites you may find useful:

Helpline for children

Childline 0800 1111

Helplines for Parents and Carers

Kidscape (10.00 - 4.00) 0845 1205 204

Parentlineplus 0808 800 2222

Anti-Bullying Campaign 0207 378 1446

Citizens Advice Bureau (your local office)

NSPCC 0808 800 5000

Helpful Websites

www.kidscape.org.uk

www.antibully.org.uk

www.bullying.co.uk

www.childline.org.uk

www.habi.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.sortit.org.uk

Some of the above websites are specifically designed to engage young people and some are designed for adults. All offer further information.

For more help and advice about bullying, contact Hertfordshire County Council's

Customer Services Centre on 01438 737500

Callers from 01923 or 0208 dialling codes may wish to use 01923 471500 in order to be charged at local rates



CSF4291 - November 2005

Bullying at School

Information and advice for parents and carers

"Working together to make a difference"

Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall, Pegs Lane,
Hertford SG13 8DE

Children, Schools & Families
Telephone: 01438 737500
www.hertsdirect.org



As parents we all want our children to be happy, healthy and safe. Unfortunately, some children experience such damaging "teasing", "verbal and physical abuse", "theft", "ridicule" and "intimidation" that they refuse to go to school or out to play.

All children fall in and out of relationships, it's a painful part of growing up which may feel like the end of the world at the time.

However, damaging behaviour such as bullying is done intentionally and takes the form of verbal or physical attacks, threats of physical attacks, exclusion from a peer group, theft or threat of theft, rumour spreading, damage to property, intimidation by phone or e-mail or even stalking. It changes with the times and now includes filmed assaults transmitted by mobile phone as threats to potential victims.

Physical violence and abuse is always wrong. Stealing is wrong, whatever is taken. Theft is a criminal offence. Abusing someone because of their race is wrong and a criminal offence.

Abusing people because of their disabilities, dress code, interests, academic ability, sexuality or personal appearance is also wrong and causes emotional wounds that can last a lifetime. The use of foul and abusive language is also damaging behaviour.

Positive action is needed from all responsible adults, to stamp out this damaging behaviour.

Doing nothing makes it appear acceptable and we are our children's main role models.

Q What is bullying?

Hertfordshire describes bullying as deliberately hurtful behaviour from other children which is repeated over time and where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. This bullying behaviour can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (eg hitting, kicking, theft) verbal (eg name calling, racist remarks) or indirect (eg spreading rumours or excluding someone from social groups).

The key point is that bullying is defined as something that is "repeated over time".

For example, a "Happy Slapping" attack may only happen once, but it can still have a life-long effect. This is a serious assault, which should be dealt with accordingly by the school using its over-arching behaviour policy but is not recorded as bullying.

Q What signs should I look for that might indicate my child is suffering?

- Scared of going to school, or out in the community
- Receives noticeably fewer phone calls or e-mails from friends
- Receives abusive or threatening messages or dropped calls
- Friends do not visit and invitations stop
- Becomes withdrawn or moody at home (difficult to know with some teenagers) - home may be the only place they feel safe enough to vent their feelings
- Their school work slips, or they get into trouble with teachers - a good clue if this is out of character
- Unexplained bruises, scratches or cuts
- Lateness, excessive hunger (lack of lunch), unexplained loss of property, or the sudden onset of illness when woken in the morning

- Asks odd questions about their sexuality or appearance
- Asks for money without giving a clear reason

Q My child is very unhappy but doesn't want me to make a fuss at school, or I feel the school are not doing enough, who else can I speak to?

There are several really good helplines with staff trained to listen to you and signpost you to local help and advice, listed on the back page.

- Try to stay calm. Encourage your child to talk about what's happening. Don't over-react. Just be there and keep listening.
- Ask your child to keep a diary of events as it's hard to remember what happened and who said what, when asked later on.

Q I need to work with the school. What is the best approach?

Talk to your child's class or form teacher or head of year. Ask if they have noticed anything different. Explain your suspicions, but do not cast blame wildly.

You can always take a friend (advocate) with you to any meetings if you feel uneasy, or if English is not your first language. You also have the right to involve the police for serious incidents.

Your fears should be heard and investigated tactfully. Ask to see your school's anti-bullying policy. This local authority is encouraging teachers, governors and parents to work together in developing effective anti-bullying policy and practice.

The school will want to hear both sides of the story so do check how they usually handle this. Some choose one-to-one conversations, whereas others prefer to use a different approach, inviting all parties involved to a single meeting.