



Derbyshire Information Advice & Support Service for SEND

Providing impartial advice for special educational needs and disability

Bullying

What is bullying?

The Anti Bullying Alliance and its members say that bullying is

‘The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online’.

Bullying is hurtful, repetitive, involves a power imbalance and is intentional.

Find out more about [‘power imbalance’](#)

Bullying can be

- Physical – pushing, poking, kicking, hitting, biting, pinching etc.
- Verbal - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats, teasing, belittling.
- Emotional – isolating others, tormenting, hiding books, threatening gestures, ridicule, humiliation, intimidating, excluding, manipulation and coercion.
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comments, homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate films etc.
- Online /cyber – posting on social media, sharing photos, sending nasty text messages, social exclusion

- Indirect - Can include the exploitation of individuals.

What does the Law say?

Most bullying incidents are not crimes. But some types of bullying are illegal and should be reported to the police. This includes bullying that involves violence or assault; theft; harassment and intimidation over a period of time including calling someone names or threatening them, making abusive phone calls, and sending abusive emails or text messages (one incident is not normally enough to get a conviction); and anything involving hate crimes.

Bullying and SEN

Research shows that children who have Special Educational Needs or a disability are more likely to be bullied than their peers.

Children who have SEN may:

- not recognise bullying behaviour; that they are being bullied, that their own behaviour may be seen by someone else as bullying, or that they are being challenging and therefore inflaming bullying situations.
- not remember what happened to them clearly,
- find it harder to resist bullies as they may already be more isolated, not have many friends and not understand that what is happening is bullying.
- have specific difficulties telling people about bullying or reporting it; staff need to provide extra support including the need for staff to carefully check their understanding. Many children with autism for example are assumed to understand much more than they do in social situations

Schools should have a whole school approach involving staff and pupils, and clear policies to tackle bullying you will find them on the school website

How do I spot the signs?

The type of behaviour that might mean your child is being bullied includes

- a reluctance to go to school.
- unexplained tummy upsets or headaches.
- showing signs of distress on a Sunday night or at the end of school holidays.
- becoming either quiet or withdrawn or playing up.
- torn clothes and missing belongings.
- seeming upset after using their phone, tablets, computers etc; and
- wanting to leave for school much earlier than necessary or returning home late.

What can I do?

- Reassure your child that the bullying is not their fault.
- Try to establish the facts
- [Keep a diary or log to share with school or college](#)
- Don't suggest retaliation, this can lead to your child being viewed as 'the problem'
- Find out what your child wants to happen next, talk about choices and ways to keep safe or solve problems
- Encourage activities outside school to build positive friendships and self esteem
- Speak to the headteacher or person in charge where the bullying is happening. Remind them of their policies if they are not doing what they say they will. Make a joint plan. Arrange to meet again

What is a False Friendship?

'False friendships' are when someone pretends to be your friend, or is your 'friend' sometimes, but uses their power to bully you.

- Some children are more likely to have false friendships, for example disabled children, it is especially important that disabled children understand what makes a good friend.
- Talk to your child about what it is to be a good friend. For example, a good friend is kind and makes you feel good about yourself. This will help to highlight where there may be false friendships.
- Talk to your child about the difference between banter and bullying. Banter is playful where both parties find it funny. Bullying is repetitive and hurtful. It also involves a power imbalance. Tell them that if someone constantly puts them down, they are not a real friend/ boyfriend/ girlfriend and not worth their time.
- Speak to your child's teacher with your child. Does the teacher fully understand what is going on?

If your child is being bullied by someone who they thought was their friend, this can be especially hurtful. Make sure you praise them for telling you and agree a way forward together. Tell them it is not their fault.

What is Coercion?

Coercion means persuading or forcing someone to do something that they may not want to or that can make them unsafe. For example, children with SEN and disabilities can be persuaded to give away possessions or take part in illegal or dangerous activities which they are left with the blame for.

Further advice and resources

[Anti-bullying Alliance](#)

[Contact A Family](#) - 0808 808 3555

Mencap - 0808 808 1111

National Autistic Society - 0808 800 4104

Kidscape - 08451 205 204

Family Lives - 0808 800 2222 (24 hours)

Childline - 0800 1111

Who can I contact if I need further help or advice?

Parent / Carer Advice line

01629 533668

Staffed Monday – Friday 9.30am -
3.00pm

Email: ias.service@derbyshire.gov.uk

Leave a message and all calls and
emails will be returned as soon as
possible

**Derbyshire Information Advice and Support Service for Special
Educational Needs and Disabilities Website**

Or use our [online contact form](#)

If you, or someone you know, would like a copy of this information sheet in large print, an audio version or in languages other than English, please contact us.