

# Identifying, Preventing and Responding to Bullying for Schools, Parents and Carers

THE  
**STOP** CAMPAIGN

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PREVENTING AND TACKLING **BULLYING** IN DERBYSHIRE

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# Bullying Definition

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. All young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the negative behaviour must include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

## Types of Bullying

There are three types of bullying:

- Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes: Teasing  
Name-calling  
Inappropriate sexual comments  
Taunting  
Threatening to cause harm
- Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:  
Leaving someone out on purpose  
Telling other children not to be friends with someone  
Spreading rumors about someone  
Embarrassing someone in public
- Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:  
Hitting/kicking/pinching  
Spitting  
Tripping/pushing  
Taking or breaking someone's things  
Making mean or rude hand gestures

## Where and When Bullying Happens

Bullying can occur during or after school hours. While most reported bullying happens in the school building, a significant percentage also happens in places like on the playground or the bus. It can also happen travelling to or from school, in the youth's neighborhood, or on the Internet.

# The Roles Young People Play

There are many roles that kids can play. Kids can bully others, they can be bullied, or they may witness bullying. When kids are involved in bullying, they often play more than one role. Sometimes kids may both be bullied and bully others or they may witness other kids being bullied. It is important to understand the multiple roles kids play in order to effectively prevent and respond to bullying.

## Importance of Not Labeling Young People

When referring to a bullying situation, it is easy to call the young people who bully others "bullies" and those who are targeted "victims," but this may have unintended consequences. When children are labeled as "bullies" or "victims" it may:

- Send the message that the child's behavior cannot change
- Fail to recognise the multiple roles children might play in different bullying situations
- Disregard other factors contributing to the behavior such as peer influence or school climate

Instead of labeling the children involved, focus on the behaviour. For instance:

- Instead of calling a child a "bully," refer to them as "the child who bullied"
- Instead of calling a child a "victim," refer to them as "the child who was bullied"
- Instead of calling a child a "bully/victim," refer to them as "the child who was both bullied and bullied others."

## Young people Involved in Bullying

The roles young people play in bullying are not limited to those who bully others and those who are bullied. Some researchers talk about the "circle of bullying" to define both those directly involved in bullying and those who actively or passively assist the behaviour or defend against it. Direct roles include:

- **Young People who Bully:** These children engage in bullying behaviour towards their peers. There are many risk factors that may contribute to the child's involvement in the behaviour. Often, these children require support to change their behaviour and address any other challenges that may be influencing their behaviour.
- **Young People who are Bullied:** These children are the targets of bullying behaviour. Some factors put children at more risk of being bullied, but not all children with these characteristics will be bullied. Sometimes, these children may need help learning how to respond to bullying.

Even if a child is not directly involved in bullying, they may be contributing to the behavior. Witnessing the behavior may also affect the child, so it is important for them to learn what they should do when they see bullying happen. Roles kids play when they witness bullying include:

- **Young people who Assist:** These children may not start the bullying or lead in the bullying behaviour, but serve as an "assistant" to children who are bullying. These children may encourage the bullying behavior and occasionally join in.
- **Young People who Reinforce:** These children are not directly involved in the bullying behaviour but they give the bullying an audience. They will often laugh or provide support for the children who are engaging in bullying. This may encourage the bullying to continue.
- **Outsiders:** These children remain separate from the bullying situation. They neither reinforce the bullying behaviour nor defend the child being bullied. Some may watch what is going on but do not provide feedback about the situation to show they are on anyone's side. Even so, providing an audience may encourage the bullying behaviour. These kids often want to help, but don't know how. Learn how to be "more than a bystander."

- **Young People who Defend:** These children actively comfort the child being bullied and may come to the child's defense when bullying occurs.

Most children play more than one role in bullying over time. In some cases, they may be directly involved in bullying as the one bullying others or being bullied and in others they may witness bullying and play an assisting or defending role. Every situation is different. Some children are both bullied and bully others. It is important to note the multiple roles children play, because:

- Those who are both bullied and bully others may be at more risk for negative outcomes, such as depression or suicidal ideation.
- It highlights the need to engage all kids in prevention efforts, not just those who are known to be directly involved

## Early Childhood

Early childhood often marks the first opportunity for young children to interact with each other. Between the ages of 3 and 5, children are learning how to get along with each other, cooperate, share, and understand their feelings. Young children may be aggressive and act out when they are angry or don't get what they want, but this is not bullying. Still, there are ways to help children.

## Helping Young Children Get Along with Others

Parents, school staff, and other adults can help young children develop skills for getting along with others in age-appropriate ways.

- Model positive ways for young children to make friends. For example, practice pleasant ways that children can ask to join others in play and take turns in games. Coach older children to help reinforce these behaviours as well. Praise children for appropriate behaviour. Help young children understand what behaviours are friendly.
- Help young children learn the consequences of certain actions in terms they can understand. For example, say "if you don't share, other children may not want to play with you." Encourage young children to tell an adult if they are treated in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, upset or unhappy, or if they witness other children being harmed.
- Set clear rules for behaviour and monitor children's interactions carefully. Step in quickly to stop aggressive behaviour or redirect it before it occurs.
- Use age-appropriate consequences for aggressive behaviour. Young children should be encouraged to say "I'm sorry" whenever they hurt a peer, even accidentally. The apology should also be paired with an action. For example, young children could help rebuild a knocked over block structure or replace a torn paper or crayons with new ones.

# What is Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites.

Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.

## Why Cyberbullying is Different

Young people who are being cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Additionally, children who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the behaviour.

- Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and reach a kid even when he or she is alone. It can happen any time of the day or night.
- Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a very wide audience. It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source.
- Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts, and pictures is extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

## Effects of Cyberbullying

Mobile phones and computers themselves are not to blame for cyberbullying. Social media sites can be used for positive activities, like connecting young people with friends and family, helping students with school, and for entertainment. But these tools can also be used to hurt other people. Whether done in person or through technology, the effects of bullying are similar.

Children who are cyberbullied are more likely to:

- Skip school
- Experience in-person bullying
- Be unwilling to attend school
- Receive poor grades
- Have lower self-esteem
- Have more health problems

## Preventing Cyberbullying

Parents and children can prevent cyberbullying. Together, they can explore safe ways to use technology.

### Be Aware of What Your Children are Doing Online

Talk with your children about cyberbullying and other online issues regularly.

- Know the sites your children visit and their online activities. Ask where they're going, what they're doing, and who they're doing it with.
- Tell your children that as a responsible parent you may review their online communications if you think there is reason for concern. Installing parental control filtering software or monitoring programs are one option for monitoring your child's online behaviour, but do not rely solely on these tools.

- Have a sense of what they do online and in texts. Learn about the sites they like. Try out the devices they use.
- Ask for their passwords, but tell them you'll only use them in case of emergency.
- Ask to "friend" or "follow" your children on social media sites or ask another trusted adult to do so.
- Encourage your kids to tell you immediately if they, or someone they know, is being cyberbullied. Explain that you will not take away their computers or cell phones if they confide in you about a problem they are having.

## Establish Rules about Technology Use

- Establish rules about appropriate use of computers, cell phones, and other technology. For example, be clear about what sites they can visit and what they are permitted to do when they're online. Show them how to be safe online.
- Help them be smart about what they post or say. Tell them not to share anything that could hurt or embarrass themselves or others. Once something is posted, it is out of their control whether someone else will forward it.
- Encourage children to think about who they want to see the information and pictures they post online. Should complete strangers see it? Real friends only? Friends of friends? Think about how people who aren't friends could use it.
- Tell them to keep their passwords safe and not share them with friends. Sharing passwords can compromise their control over their online identities and activities.

## Understand School Rules

All schools have developed policies on uses of technology that may affect the child's online behaviour in and out of the classroom. Ask the school for a copy of the policy or check on their website.

## Report Cyberbullying

When cyberbullying happens, it is important to document and report the behaviour so it can be addressed.

## Steps to Take Immediately

- Don't respond to and don't forward cyberbullying messages.
- Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and descriptions of instances when cyberbullying has occurred. Save and print screenshots, emails, and text messages. Use this evidence to report cyberbullying to web and mobile phone service providers.
- Block the person who is cyberbullying.

## Report Cyberbullying to Online Service Providers

Cyberbullying often violates the terms of service established by social media sites and internet service providers.

- Review their terms and conditions or rights and responsibilities sections. These describe content that is or is not appropriate.

- Visit social media safety sites to learn how to block users and change settings to control who can contact you.
- Report cyberbullying to the social media site so they can take action against users abusing the terms of service.

## Report Cyberbullying to the Police

When cyberbullying involves these activities it is considered a crime and should be reported to the Police.

- Threats of violence
- Child pornography or sending sexually explicit messages or photos
- Taking a photo or video of someone in a place where he or she would expect privacy
- Stalking and hate crimes

## Report Cyberbullying to Schools

Cyberbullying can create a disruptive environment at school and is often related to in-person bullying. The school can use the information to help inform prevention and response strategies.

# Who is at Risk

Bullying can happen anywhere, but depending on the environment, some groups may be at an increased risk. Learn what factors increase the risk of children being bullied or children more likely to bully others and what warning signs can indicate that bullying may be happening. You can also find out how bullying can negatively impact young people.

## Risk Factors

No single factor puts a child at risk of being bullied or bullying others. Bullying can happen anywhere—cities, suburbs, or rural towns. Depending on the environment, some groups—such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT) youth, youth with disabilities, and socially isolated youth—may be at an increased risk of being bullied.

## Children at Risk of Being Bullied

Generally, children who are bullied have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Are perceived as different from their peers, such as being overweight or underweight, wearing glasses or different clothing, being new to a school, or being unable to afford what other children consider “cool”
- Are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves
- Are depressed, anxious, or have low self esteem
- Are less popular than others and have few friends
- Do not get along well with others, seen as annoying or provoking, or antagonise others for attention

However, even if a child has these risk factors, it doesn't mean that they will be bullied.

## Children More Likely to Bully Others

There are two types of kids who are more likely to bully others:

- Some are well-connected to their peers, have social power, are overly concerned about their popularity, and like to dominate or be in charge of others.
- Others are more isolated from their peers and may be depressed or anxious, have low self-esteem, be less involved in school, be easily pressured by peers, or don't identify with the emotions or feelings of others.

Children who have these factors are also more likely to bully others;

- Are aggressive or easily frustrated
- Have less parental involvement or having issues at home
- Think badly of others
- Have difficulty following rules
- View violence in a positive way
- Have friends who bully others

Remember, those who bully others do not need to be stronger or bigger than those they bully. The power imbalance can come from a number of sources—popularity, strength, cognitive ability—and children who bully may have more than one of these characteristics.

# Warning Signs

There are many warning signs that may indicate that someone is affected by bullying—either being bullied or bullying others. Recognising the warning signs is an important first step in taking action against bullying. Not all children who are bullied or are bullying others ask for help.

It is important to talk with children who show signs of being bullied or bullying others. These warning signs can also point to other issues or problems, such as depression or substance abuse. Talking to the child can help identify the root of the problem.

## Signs That a Child is Being Bullied

Look for changes in the child. However, be aware that not all children who are bullied exhibit warning signs.

Some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Children may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem
- Self-destructive behaviours such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide

If you know someone in serious distress or danger, don't ignore the problem. Get help right away.

## Signs that a Child is Bullying Others

Young people may be bullying others if they:

- Get into physical or verbal fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Get sent to the principal's office or to detention frequently
- Have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Blame others for their problems
- Don't accept responsibility for their actions
- Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity

## Why don't young people ask for help?

Statistics show that an adult was notified in only about a third of bullying cases. Children don't tell adults for many reasons:

- Bullying can make a child feel helpless. They may want to handle it on their own to feel in control again. They may fear being seen as weak or a snitch.
- They may fear backlash from the person who bullied them.
- Bullying can be a humiliating experience. Young people may not want adults to know what is being said about them, whether true or false. They may also fear that adults will judge them or punish them for being weak.
- Children who are bullied may already feel socially isolated. They may feel like no one cares or could understand.
- They may fear being rejected by their peers. Friends can help protect them from bullying, and children can fear losing this support.

# Effects of Bullying

Bullying can affect everyone—those who are bullied, those who bully, and those who witness bullying. Bullying is linked to many negative outcomes including impacts on mental health, substance use, and suicide. It is important to talk to young people to determine whether bullying—or something else—is a concern.

## Young People Who are Bullied

Young people who are bullied can experience negative physical, school, and mental health issues. Those who are bullied are more likely to experience:

- Depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. These issues may persist into adulthood.
- Health complaints
- Decreased academic achievement, they are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school.

## Young People Who Bully Others

Children who bully others can also engage in violent and other risky behaviours into adulthood, they are more likely to:

- Abuse alcohol and other drugs in adolescence and as adults
- Get into fights, vandalise property, and drop out of school
- Become involved within the court system
- Be abusive toward their romantic partners, spouses, or children as adults

## Bystanders

Children who witness bullying are more likely to:

- Have increased mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
- Miss or skip school

## Considerations for Specific Groups

Schools and communities that respect diversity can help protect children against bullying behavior. However, when children perceived as different are not in supportive environments, they may be at a higher risk of being bullied. When working with kids from different groups—including lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) youth, youth with disabilities or special health care needs, race, ethnicity or national origin, and religion and faith—there are specific things you can do to prevent and address bullying.

# Preventing Bullying

Parents, school staff, and other adults in the community can help young people prevent bullying by talking about it, building a safe school environment, and creating a community-wide bullying prevention strategy.

Parents, school staff, and other caring adults have a role to play in preventing bullying. They can:

- Help children understand bullying. Talk about what bullying is and how to stand up to it safely. Tell them bullying is unacceptable. Make sure they know how to get help.
- Keep the lines of communication open, check in often. Listen to them. Know their friends, ask about school, and understand their concerns.
- Encourage them to do what they love. Interests, and hobbies can boost confidence, help them make friends, and protect them from bullying behaviour.
- Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.

## Help Children Understand Bullying

Children who know what bullying is can better identify it. They can talk about bullying if it happens to them or others. They need to know ways to safely stand up to bullying and how to get help.

- Encourage them to speak to a trusted adult if they are bullied or see others being bullied. The adult can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can't solve the problem directly. Encourage the child to report any bullying
- Talk about how to stand up to others who bully. Give tips, like using humour and saying "stop" directly and confidently. Talk about what to do if those actions don't work, like walking away
- Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other young people.
- Urge them to help peers who are bullied by showing kindness or getting help.

## Keep the Lines of Communication Open

Research tells us that children really do look to parents and caregivers for advice and help on tough decisions, talking can reassure them that they can talk to their parents if they have a problem. Start conversations about daily life and feelings with questions like these:

- What was one good thing that happened today? Any bad things?
- What is lunch time like at your school? Who do you sit with?
- What is it like to ride the school bus?
- What are you good at? What would do you like best about yourself?

Talking about bullying directly is an important step in understanding how the issue might be affecting young people. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but it is important to encourage them to answer them honestly. Assure them that they are not alone in addressing any problems that arise. Start conversations about bullying with questions like these:

- What does "bullying" mean to you?
- Describe what children who bully are like. Why do you think people bully?
- Who are the adults you trust most when it comes to things like bullying?
- Have you ever felt scared to go to school because you were afraid of bullying? What ways have you tried to change it?
- What do you think parents can do to help stop bullying?
- Have you or your friends left others out on purpose? Do you think that was bullying? Why or why not?
- What do you usually do when you see bullying going on?
- Do you ever see children at your school being bullied by others? How does it make you feel?
- Have you ever tried to help someone who is being bullied? What happened? What would you do if it happens again?

There are simple ways that parents and caregivers can keep up-to-date with their children's lives.

- Read class newsletters and school flyers. Talk about them at home.
- Check the school website
- Go to school events
- Meet teachers and go to parents evenings or reach out by email.

## Encourage Kids to Do What They Love

Help children take part in activities, interests, and hobbies they like. They can volunteer, play sports, sing in a chorus, or join a youth group or school club. These activities give them a chance to have fun and meet others with the same interests. They can build confidence and friendships that help protect them from bullying.

## Model How to Treat Others with Kindness and Respect

Children learn from adults' actions. By treating others with kindness and respect, adults show the young people in their lives that there is no place for bullying. Even if it seems like they are not paying attention, children are watching how adults manage stress and conflict, as well as how they treat their friends, colleagues, and families.

## Prevention at School

Bullying can threaten students' physical and emotional safety at school and can negatively impact their ability to learn. The best way to address bullying is to stop it before it starts. There are a number of things school staff can do to make schools safer and prevent bullying.

## Assess Bullying

Assessments—such as surveys—can help schools determine the frequency and locations of bullying behaviour. They can also gauge the effectiveness of current prevention and intervention efforts. Knowing what's going on can help school staff select appropriate prevention and response strategies.

Assessments involve asking school or community members—including students—about their experiences and thoughts related to bullying. An assessment is planned, purposeful, and uses research tools.

## What an Assessment Can Do

Assess to:

- Know what's going on. Adults underestimate the rates of bullying because young people rarely report it and it often happens when adults aren't around. Assessing bullying through anonymous surveys can provide a clear picture of what is going on.
- Target efforts. Understanding trends and types of bullying in your school can help you plan bullying prevention and intervention efforts.
- Measure results. The only way to know if your prevention and intervention efforts are working is to measure them over time.

An assessment can explore specific bullying topics, such as:

- Frequency and types
- Adult and peer response
- Locations, including "hot spots"
- Staff perceptions and attitudes about bullying
- Aspects of the school or community that may support or help stop it
- Student perception of safety
- School climate

## Develop and Implement an Assessment

Schools may choose to use school-wide surveys to assess bullying. There are several steps involved:

- Choose a survey. There are many free, reliable, and validated assessment tools available. Choose a set of measures that covers the questions you want answered, is age appropriate, and can be answered in a reasonable amount of time.
- Obtain parental consent if needed.
- Administer the survey. School staff are best equipped to judge how to carry out a survey at school, but these tips can help:

Administer surveys early in the school year. Schedules surveys after students are settled in a routine but there is still time to use the findings in the school year's prevention efforts.

Assess at least once every school year. Some schools like to survey students at the start and end of the school year to track progress and plan activities for the following year.

Decide which students will be surveyed to ensure statistically significant results. Schools may choose school-wide surveys or surveys of specific year groups.

Plan to administer the survey when all students can take it at once. This will reduce the chance that they will discuss it and affect each other's answers.

Analyse and distribute the findings to students, staff and parents.

Make sure you continue to protect students' privacy by ensuring that no personally identifiable information is accessible.

Make sure that you are prepared to respond to the results of the survey. Have a clear plan for prevention and intervention in place or in development.

## Engage Parents & Youth

School staff can do a great deal to prevent bullying and protect students, but they can't do it alone. Parents & youth also have a role to play in preventing bullying at school. One mechanism for engaging parents and youth, a school safety committee, can bring the community together to keep bullying prevention at school active and focused.

### Benefits of Parent and Youth Engagement

Research shows that school principals, can play a powerful role in bullying prevention. They can inspire others and maintain a climate of respect and inclusion. But a principal cannot do it alone. When parents and carers are involved in the solutions:

- Students feel safer and can focus on learning.
- Parents worry less.
- Teachers and staff can focus on their work.
- Schools can develop more responsive solutions because students are more likely to see or hear about bullying than adults.
- School climate improves because students are engaged in taking action to stop bullying.
- Parents can support schools' messages about bullying at home. They are also more likely to recognise signs that a child has been bullied or is bullying others.

### How Parents and Youth Can Contribute

Schools can set the stage for meaningful parent and carer involvement, but it doesn't happen overnight. Parents and youth need to feel valued and be given opportunities to contribute their

expertise. To sustain parent and youth involvement, schools need to provide meaningful roles for them. For example:

- Students can contribute their views and experiences with bullying. They can take leadership roles in school to promote respect and inclusion, communicate about bullying prevention with their peers, and help develop rules and policies.
- Parents can contribute to a positive school climate through the parent teacher association, volunteering, and school events.
- School staff can keep parents informed, make them feel welcome, and treat them as partners. Schools can consider identifying a school coordinator to support parent and youth engagement strategies. Schools can set meeting times that are convenient for parents and youth.

## Anti-Bullying Interest Groups

An Anti-Bullying Interest Group is a small group of people focused on bullying concerns—is one strategy to engage parents and youth, as well as others, in bullying prevention. Using members from the whole school community can make positive contributions to the Anti-Bullying Interest Group:

The primary activities of the school safety committee could be to:

- Plan bullying prevention and intervention programs. Set measurable and achievable goals.
- Implement a bullying prevention effort. Meet often enough to keep momentum and address barriers.
- Develop, communicate, and enforce bullying prevention policies and rules.
- Educate the school community about bullying to ensure everyone understands the problem and their role in stopping it.
- Conduct school-wide bullying assessments and review other data, such as incident reports.
- Evaluate bullying prevention efforts and refine the plan if necessary.
- Advocate for the school's work in bullying prevention to the entire school community.

This group is not a forum for discussing individual student behaviors.

## Anti-Bullying Policies

The Anti-Bullying Policy is a written document that sets out the schools aims in relation to bullying behaviour, together with a set of strategies to be followed.

The document is supported by systems and procedures within the school to ensure that it's aims and strategies are effectively implemented, monitored, maintained and reviewed.

The whole school community should be involved in the creating/reviewing of the policy, through awareness and consultation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The anti-bullying policy of a school should be clearly stated in the school prospectus, displayed in a prominent place in school buildings which is visible to parents and visitors and a copy should be given to all staff.

A child friendly version of the policy which includes all forms of bullying should also be created and given to every pupil or displayed on a notice board.

## Establish a Reporting System

Schools can establish clear procedures for reporting any bullying behaviour by students, parents and staff. Reporting systems help track individual incidents and responses as well as trends over time.

Some tips for establishing a reporting system:

- Make it easy. People are more likely to report when it's easy to do.

- Maintain reports in a way that shows emerging problems and patterns over time.
- Keep reports confidential and private. School staff and students should be encouraged to report incidents without fear of retaliation.

## Build a Safe Environment

A safe and supportive school climate can help prevent bullying. Safety starts in the classroom. Students should also feel and be safe everywhere on the school site. Everyone at school can work together to create a climate where bullying is not acceptable.

## Create a Safe and Supportive Environment

In general, schools can:

- Establish a culture of inclusion and respect that welcomes all students. Reward students when they show thoughtfulness and respect for peers, adults, and the school.
- Make sure students interact safely. Monitor bullying “hot spots” in and around the building. Students may be at higher risk of bullying in settings where there is little or no adult monitoring or supervision.
- Enlist the help of all school staff. All staff can keep an eye out for bullying. They also help set the tone at school. Messages reach young people best when they come from many different adults who talk about and show respect and inclusion.
- Set a tone of respect in the classroom. This means managing student behaviour in the classroom well. Well-managed classrooms are the least likely to have bullying.

## Manage Classrooms to Prevent Bullying

Teachers can consider these ways to promote the respect, positive relations, and order that helps prevent bullying in the classroom:

- Create ground rules.
- Develop rules with students so they set their own climate of respect and responsibility.
- Use positive terms, like what to do, rather than what not to do.
- Support school-wide rules.
- Reinforce the rules.
- Be a role model and follow the rules yourself. Show students respect and encourage them to be successful.
- Make expectations clear. Keep your requests simple, direct, and specific.
- Reward good behavior. Try to affirm good behavior four to five times for every one criticism of bad behavior.
- Use one-on-one feedback, and do not publicly reprimand.
- Help students correct their behaviours. Help them understand breaking the rules results in consequences: “I know you can stop [negative action] and go back to [positive action]. If you choose to continue, then [consequence].”

## Classroom Meetings or Circles

Classroom meetings or circles provide a forum for students to talk about school-related issues beyond academics. These meetings can help teachers stay informed about what is going on at school and help students feel safe and supported.

These meetings work best in classrooms where a culture of respect is already established. Classroom meetings are typically short and held on a regular basis. They can be held in a student’s main classroom, home room, or registration period.

The circle represents a fundamental change in the relationship between students and authority figures. It creates a cooperative atmosphere in which students take responsibility for their actions. Students respond because they feel respected and realise that what they say matters.

Circles provide a practical forum for the resolution of underlying feelings that intrude into the classroom and disrupt learning. The circle allows young people to express their feelings, and in doing so, reduce their intensity. The circle creates opportunities for students to recognise that others have similar issues and that they are not alone. By expressing feelings and getting acknowledgment from others, most students are then able to put their problems aside and move on with the school day.

## Educate About Bullying

Training school staff and students to prevent and address bullying can help sustain bullying prevention efforts over time.

## Staff Training on Bullying Prevention

To ensure that bullying prevention efforts are successful, all school staff need to be trained on what bullying is, what the school's policies and rules are, and how to enforce the rules. Training may take many forms: staff meetings, one-day training sessions, and teaching through modelling preferred behaviour. Schools may choose any combination of these training options based on available funding, staff resources, and time.

Training can be successful when staff are engaged in developing messages and content, and when they feel that their voices are heard. Learning should be relevant to their roles and responsibilities to help build buy-in.

## Stop Bullying on the Spot

When adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behaviour they send the message that it is not acceptable. Research shows this can stop bullying behavior over time. There are simple steps adults can take to stop bullying on the spot and keep kids safe.

Do:

- Intervene immediately. It is ok to get another adult to help.
- Separate the kids involved.
- Make sure everyone is safe.
- Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
- Stay calm. Reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
- Model respectful behaviour when you intervene.

Avoid these common mistakes:

- Don't ignore it. Don't think kids can work it out without adult help.
- Don't immediately try to sort out the facts.
- Don't force others to say publicly what they saw.
- Don't question the children involved in front of other peers.
- Don't talk to the children involved together, only separately.
- Don't make the ones involved apologise or patch up relations on the spot.

## Find Out What Happened

Whether you've just stopped bullying on the spot or a child has reached out to you for help, follow the steps below to determine the best way to proceed.

## Get the Facts

- Keep all the involved children separate.
- Get the story from several sources, both adults and young people.
- Listen without blaming.
- Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.

It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple students are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyberbullying. Collect all available information.

## Determine if it's Bullying

There are many behaviors that look like bullying but require different approaches. It is important to determine whether the situation is bullying or something else.

To determine if this is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:

- What is the history between the kids involved? Have there been past conflicts?
- Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. It is sometimes not easily recognised. If the targeted child feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
- Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?

Remember that it may not matter "who started it." Some young people who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.

Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support the kids involved.

## Support the Children Involved

All young people involved in bullying—whether they are bullied, bully others, or see bullying—can be affected. It is important to support all kids involved to make sure the bullying doesn't continue and effects can be minimised.

## Support Children Who are Bullied

Listen and focus on the child. Learn what's been going on and show you want to help.

Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.

Know that kids who are bullied may struggle with talking about it. Consider referring them to a school counsellor or school nurse..

Give advice about what to do. This may involve role-playing and thinking through how the child might react if the bullying occurs again.

Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child. The child, parents, and school may all have valuable input. It may help to:

- Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe. Remember that changes to routine should be minimised. He or she is not at fault and should not be singled out. For example, consider rearranging classroom plans for everyone. If bigger moves are necessary, such as switching classrooms or bus routes, the child who is bullied should not be forced to change.
- Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the school and parents. Discuss the steps that are taken and the limitations around what can be done based on policies and laws.

Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.

Avoid these mistakes:

- Never tell the child to ignore the bullying.
- Do not blame the child for being bullied. Even if he or she provoked the bullying, no one deserves to be bullied.
- Do not tell the child to physically fight back against the child who is bullying. It could get the child hurt, suspended, or excluded.

Parents should resist the urge to contact the other parents involved. It may make matters worse. School or other officials can act as mediators between parents.

Follow-up. Show a commitment to making bullying stop. Because bullying is behaviour that repeats or has the potential to be repeated, it takes consistent effort to ensure that it stops.

## Address Bullying Behaviour

Parents, carers and school staff all have a role to play.

Make sure the child knows what the problem behaviour is. Young people who bully must learn their behaviour is wrong and harms others.

Show them that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behaviour when addressing the problem.

Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied. For example:

- Sometimes children bully to fit in. These young people can benefit from participating in positive activities. Involvement in sports and clubs can enable them to take leadership roles and make friends without feeling the need to bully.
- Other times children act out because something else—issues at home, abuse, stress—is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These young people may be in need of additional support, such as mental health services.

Involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:

- Write a letter apologising to the student who was bullied.
- Do a good deed for the person who was bullied or for others in your school community.
- Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.

Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good friend.

## Support Bystanders Who Witness Bullying

Even if young people are not bullied or bullying others they can be affected by bullying. Many times, when they see bullying, they may not know what to do to stop it. They may not feel safe stepping in in the moment, but there are many other steps they can take.