What if my child is bullying others?

It may come as a surprise to many parents and carers that their child has been bullying others. There are many reasons why young people bully others, sometimes they are copying someone else, or being encouraged by others. It may be because they are having problems themselves or haven't learnt other ways of mixing with other children.

All children need to be taught how to empathise with the feelings of others. They need to understand that ignoring or encouraging others who are bullying is unacceptable and take responsibility for reporting bullying when it occurs.

Talk with your child and explain why their behaviour is wrong, and encourage them to think about the impact of their behaviour on others.

Cyberbullying

More and more children are using mobile phones or the internet to bully others by sending threatening or hurtful messages and photographs, and spreading rumours. This is illegal and, like any serious form of bullying, the school may advise parents and carers to involve the police.

- Be aware of your child's use of technology and try to monitor what they are sending and receiving. Try to keep up-to-date with the technology yourself.
- Encourage your child to be very careful to whom they give their contact details.
- If your child knows the sender of the bullying messages, and is at the same school, contact the school as soon as possible, even if the messages happen outside of school hours.
- Save the messages to show to the school. They will pass them on to the police as necessary.

What you can do as a parent or carer to work with schools to stamp out bullying.

- Try not to jump to conclusions or be hasty.
- Try to remain calm and make balanced decisions regarding your child's well-being and safety.
- Work with the school to find a resolution, and stay in regular contact with the school.
- Keep an open mind about which solutions will be best for your child.
- Keep your child involved and don't try to protect them to the point where they don't know what is happening.
- Keep listening to your child throughout. Also listen to school staff, as they have considerable expertise and experience in these situations.
- Try not to make the decision to remove your child from the school. This may not be the answer and could have a detrimental effect on the positive relationships your child already enjoys at school. Remember that you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance.

Useful contacts

Derbyshire County Council-Call Derbyshire - 01629 533190 (Monday-Friday, 8am-8pm)
Derbyshire Police - Call 101
Parent Partnership - Information, support and advice to parents of children in Derbyshire with Special Educational Needs 01629 533660
Parentline Plus - Advice and information on all aspects of parenting 0808 800 2222 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
Advisory Centre for Education - Independent advice service for parents 0808 800 5793 (Monday-Friday, 10am-5pm)
Kidscape - National charity 08451 205 204 (Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm)
Childline - Free 24-hour helpline for children in distress or danger 0800 1111
Anti-Bullying Alliance - www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
DfE - www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/index.htm

Parent and Carers Guide to Tackling Bullying

This leaflet has been designed to help parents and carers identify and address bullying which is in some way related to school. It has been produced on behalf of Derbyshire Schools who are committed to preventing bullying and dealing with it in a positive and consistent way when it does happen.

What are schools doing?

> "No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect."
> (Kidscape2005)

Derbyshire schools do not tolerate bullying or harassment of any kind. Every school has a behaviour policy that will include what the school does to deal with bullying. In many schools a separate anti-bullying policy will have been drawn up. It is your right as a parent or carer to ask the school to provide a copy of this policy. The best place to ask is the school office, or look on the school website.

What is Bullying?

"Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, physically or emotionally." (Safe to Learn DCSF2007)

The four main types of bullying are:

- physical (e.g. hitting, pushing, taking belongings or any unwanted physical contact);
- verbal (name calling or sarcasm that can include comments related to race, disability, sexual orientation, gender etc);
- indirect (e.g. spreading rumours, ignoring or isolating someone);
- cyberbullying (e.g. bullying by text, emails or social networking sites).

Signs that your child may be being bullied

If your child is being bullied they may tell you or another adult about it, or they may:

- complain of being unwell - to avoid going to school;
- avoid certain children or activities e.g. walking home rather than catching the bus;
- change their behaviour e.g. tantrums, bedwetting, moodiness, bullying a younger sibling or a friend;
- be unwilling to talk about school;
- come home with cuts and bruises, torn clothes, or damaged or lost belongings;
- attempt to change their appearance e.g. refuse to wear glasses;
- take things / money from home to give to other children;
- change their eating habits e.g. loss of appetite;
- truant without your knowledge.

There could be other reasons for these symptoms, so try and avoid jumping to conclusions. Could there be anything else bothering your child? Have there been changes in your family that may have affected your child?

What to do if you think your child is being bullied

- Calmly talk to your child about it and reassure them that if they are being bullied you and the school will take them seriously and can help them.
- Make a note of what your child says has happened, who was involved and how often incidents have occurred. Listen to your child and value their feelings and worries.
- Talk to your child's teacher or form tutor as soon as possible. Ask to see the school's anti-bullying policy which should tell you how they will support you and your child.
- Be ready to hear other sides of the story and listen to the school's solution.
- Keep a record of what is suggested by school staff and allow staff time to investigate and deal with the situation, in the way they feel is most appropriate. Arrange a time to talk again.
- If you are unhappy with the teacher's response, or the bullying continues, contact the year head, deputy head or the head teacher.
- As a final resort you can make a complaint in line with the school's complaints procedure. It is unhelpful to tell your child to do anything that will escalate the situation or to tackle other parents or children yourself.

What will the school do?

School staff will begin by investigating the situation thoroughly and will then decide on an appropriate course of action. This may include:

- support for the child being bullied;
- working with the person doing the bullying to change their behaviour;
- speaking to the parents or carers of all parties;
- encouraging empathy, a genuine and meaningful apology and reconciliation;
- assemblies or class activities;
- involving other agencies if appropriate;
- deciding on appropriate consequences in proportion to the individual circumstances and incidents, in line with the school's behaviour policy;
- monitoring future behaviour of individuals.

THE STOP CAMPAIGN

PREVENTING AND TACKLING BULLYING IN DERBYSHIRE