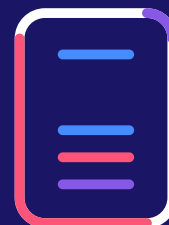


INFORMATION TOOLKIT FOR PARENTS AND CARERS ON BULLYING



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INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is designed to provide parents and carers with information on approaches to handling school-related bullying incidents involving their child. It aims to empower you with information and strategies to help address bullying effectively, ensuring your child receives the support and protection they deserve. It outlines key legal duties, school responsibilities, and practical steps you can take if your child is experiencing bullying.

While this guide aims to offer general guidance, it is not a legal document and does not constitute legal advice. The information provided is for reference only and should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional advice or legal consultation. If you need support with a specific bullying incident, we recommend reaching out to relevant organisations that specialise in bullying, education, and legal matters. See page 18 for a list of organisations who can provide support.

GLOSSARY

Maintained School: Sometimes also known as a public school, maintained schools are funded and controlled by the local authority. Maintained schools must follow the National Curriculum and abide by specific laws and guidance set by the government, such as admission rules and teacher pay scales.

Independent School: Also known as private schools, independent schools are privately funded by fees paid by parents or other sources (e.g., donations). Independent schools do not have to follow the National Curriculum but must meet standards set by the government to ensure education quality.

Academy: (England only) A publicly funded school that operates independently of the local authority. Academies have more freedom over their curriculum, finances, and policies (like term dates or teacher salaries). They are directly funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and managed by an Academy Trust.

Academy Trust: (England only) An organisation (often a non-profit charity) that oversees the operation and management of one or more academies. It ensures the schools under its control meet their educational and financial responsibilities. Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) run several academies as a group.

Free School: (England only) A type of academy that is set up by groups such as charities, teachers, or parents to meet a specific need in the community. Free schools operate independently of the local authority, are publicly funded, and have similar freedoms to academies.



WHAT IS BULLYING?

Unfortunately, many children will experience or witness bullying during their school years: they may be the target of bullying, may be involved in bullying others, may stand by while others are being bullied, or may take positive action to stop bullying. When attempting to tackle bullying, it's important that we are all on the same page and understand exactly what bullying is (and isn't).

The Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as:

"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 can happen anywhere, at any time, and can be verbal, physical, or psychological. Bullying can take many forms, including hitting, shoving, poking, taunting, mocking, humiliating, threatening, bribing, name-calling, making offensive comments, stealing or taking and hiding personal possessions, sending unkind messages, throwing things, telling untrue or unkind tales about people, ostracism, and spreading malicious rumours (this is not an exclusive list).

The person bullying may target aspects about what makes a person who they are – this could include disability, race, faith, gender, sex, sexuality, poverty, talent, appearance, hobbies, or situation at home. For more information about the definition of bullying, including an online training course, see [our website](#).

WHAT BULLYING ISN'T: 'FALLING OUT'

It is common for children to have arguments and friendship fall outs (often referred to as 'relational conflict') and they will occasionally need guidance to resolve conflict, make amends, and move on.

Not all incidences of conflict can be understood as bullying. Relational conflict usually involves individuals who are friends, or a situation with no power imbalance involved. It is generally behaviour which happens occasionally, and offence might be accidental. An example might be an argument or falling out with a friend, or experimental 'banter' that unintentionally offends the person on the receiving end. (We have further guidance around the difference between banter and bullying [on our website](#)). Resolving these incidents sometimes requires adult guidance through an honest conversation, genuine apologies and efforts made to avoid repeating the behaviour.

Knowing how to identify and respond to relational issues and conflicts are an important part of a child's development and preventing situations from escalating into potential bullying.



HOW DO I KNOW MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?

Some children may not tell anyone they are being bullied, often for a variety of reasons. When we speak to young people, they tell us that unclear or inaccessible reporting systems can make it difficult to ask for help. Others fear their concerns won't be taken seriously or that speaking up might lead to negative consequences. This is why it's crucial to have open, ongoing conversations about bullying with your child and check in regularly, even if you don't think they are experiencing any issues. Building this trust early on makes it more likely that they will feel safe and supported in opening up if they ever need to.

If young people are not telling us about the bullying they are experiencing, there are often signs we can look out for that may indicate bullying is occurring. However, **you know your child best so will be aware of any changes to their behaviour, or if something seems wrong.** Some types of behaviour that might be an indication of bullying are:

- 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 quieter or more withdrawn than usual, or 'acting out' and getting in trouble more often.
- Torn clothes or missing belongings.
- Seeming upset after using their phone, tablets, computers etc.
- Wanting to leave for school much earlier than necessary or returning home late.
- You may also find that their sleep is disturbed, or they are showing other signs of sadness or anxiety.

If your child has been seriously harmed or is at risk of serious harm, either physically or mentally, this is a safeguarding issue and you should seek immediate help (e.g. call 999 and/or your local children's services team).

If your child has been on the receiving end of prejudicial behaviour because of their race or faith, disability, gender, sex or sexuality, even if this was a one-off incident and you don't consider it to be bullying, it's important to alert the school as it may point to a wider issue in the school that needs to be addressed.



WHAT ARE SCHOOLS' LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES?

Schools have a responsibility to keep your child safe at school and other duties that could relate to bullying. We've summarised them below. All schools in the UK are required to publish a written complaints procedure, which should be available to parents on request, or may be found on the school's website. Other relevant laws and legislation vary slightly depending on where in the UK your child's school is based:

ENGLAND

- Schools in England are required by law to determine measures to encourage and promote good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils (Section 89, Education and Inspections Act 2006).
- Maintained schools in England must have a behaviour policy in place that includes measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils (often this is provided in the form of an anti-bullying policy). This policy is decided by the school, and it must be shared with all teachers, pupils, and parents. (Section 89, Education and Inspections Act 2006).
- Academies, Free Schools and Independent Schools are required to ensure that an effective anti-bullying strategy is drawn up and implemented. (The Independent School Standards Regulations 2010).
- The Department for Education (DfE) in England has produced guidance for all schools, which outlines their duties towards preventing and tackling bullying in schools. [You can view that guidance here.](#)
- Schools must have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Child Protection Policy.
- Schools must ensure everything they do is carried out with a view to "safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school" (Education Act 2002, Section 175). This means they may need to address bullying as a child protection concern, "where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm" (Section 47 (1)(b), Children Act 1989).
- Schools have a responsibility to "identify concerns early, provide help for children, promote children's welfare and prevent concerns from escalating" (Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE). They also have the responsibility to take appropriate action to promote the welfare of a child in need of additional support, even if they are not suffering harm or are at immediate risk, and work alongside social services, the police, health services and other services to ensure the safeguarding and promotion of child welfare.
- All schools must follow anti-discrimination law contained within the Equality Act 2010. This means schools and school staff must act to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation within the school or setting.
- Schools have the powers to intervene in bullying incidents outside of the school ground including on home-to-school transport, in the community and online. The Department for Education's guidance for preventing and tackling bullying states that "where bullying outside the school is reported to school staff, it should be investigated and acted on" (Preventing and tackling bullying guidance for schools, DfE 2017).

[1] – 'A relevant school' means: a community, foundation or voluntary school, a community or foundation special school, a maintained nursery school, a pupil referral unit, or a school approved by the secretary of state. Section 89 (5) Education and Inspections Act 2006.

- Headteachers of relevant schools[1] have the legal power to discipline their pupils for bullying incidents that occur outside of schools premises, as described above. The headteacher is only permitted to discipline the pupil to a reasonable extent, in line with the school's discipline policy.
- Where bullying might be taking place online, school staff also have the specific power to search for and delete inappropriate images/files on electronic devices, including mobile phones (Education and Inspections Act 2006, which has been increased by the Education Act 2011).

WALES

- Schools in Wales are required to promote positive behaviour and prevent bullying (School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013).
- Governing bodies of maintained schools in Wales must develop behaviour policies, which must include anti-bullying measures (Section 89 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013). The policy should be publicly accessible and involve pupils, staff, and parents in its creation.
- Schools in Wales must also align with the Welsh Government's Rights, Respect, Equality Guidance, which provides statutory guidance on tackling bullying in schools. Schools are required to assess their policies and practices against this guidance. [You can view that guidance here.](#)
- School staff must safeguard and promote children's welfare. Bullying must be addressed when there is a "reasonable cause to suspect significant harm or risk of harm" to the child (The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014).
- Governing bodies and headteachers are required to promote the welfare of children (Section 175, Education Act 2002) and must act accordingly to investigate and respond to bullying.
- Schools must appoint a Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) to oversee safeguarding and child protection issues (Keeping Learners Safe Guidance). This individual must ensure compliance with safeguarding legislation, such as the Education Act 2002 and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- All schools must also follow anti-discrimination law contained within the Equality Act 2010. This means schools and school staff must act to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation within the school or setting.
- The Education Act 2002 empowers schools to take action when bullying outside of school impacts pupils' welfare. Welsh Government guidance (e.g., Rights, Respect, Equality) also encourages schools to tackle bullying online or in the community.

SCOTLAND

- Schools in Scotland are required to secure adequate and efficient education, which includes promoting positive relationships and addressing bullying (The Education (Scotland) Act 1980).
- Scottish schools must adhere to Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People, a framework requiring all schools to implement anti-bullying measures. [You can view that framework here.](#)
- Schools are required to act in the best interests of children. This includes identifying risks to a child's well-being, such as bullying, and working to resolve them (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014).
- Schools must also comply with Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) principles, which include addressing bullying as a safeguarding issue.

- Scottish schools must have a Named Person for every child, who can support families in raising concerns, including issues related to bullying (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014).
- All schools must also follow anti-discrimination law contained within the Equality Act 2010. This means schools and school staff must act to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation within the school or setting.
- While there is no specific legislation for handling bullying outside school, the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 gives schools the power to promote positive behaviour in various contexts. The Scottish Government's [Anti-Bullying Guidance](#) encourages schools to address incidents of online bullying or harassment that occur outside of school.

NORTHERN IRELAND

- All grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland have a duty to address bullying. Schools must have a written anti-bullying policy that outlines how they will prevent and respond to bullying. Schools are also required to record all incidents of bullying and to ensure these are reviewed regularly (Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016).
- Schools in Northern Ireland are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995). Bullying may need to be treated as a child protection issue if it involves significant harm or risk of harm.
- Schools must follow guidance issued by the Department of Education (NI), such as the Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools Guidance (2020).
- The Equality Act 2010 does not apply in Northern Ireland, but the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75) places a duty on public authorities, including schools, to promote equality of opportunity across multiple protected grounds (e.g., disability, race, gender).
- It is unlawful for schools to discriminate against pupils with disabilities, including failing to address bullying related to a pupil's disability (Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005, or SENDO).
- All schools must have a Designated Teacher for Child Protection (Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003). This individual is responsible for ensuring safeguarding policies are followed, including handling bullying concerns.
- While the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 focuses on bullying within the school context, schools are encouraged to address online and community bullying where it affects pupils' well-being. The Department of Education (NI) also recommends that schools consider incidents outside school that impact pupils' safety or education.

If you are interested in finding out more about bullying and the law, [visit our website page here.](#)



WHAT ACTION CAN MY CHILD TAKE IF THEY ARE BEING BULLIED?

Even if your child does not disclose to you that they are being bullied it is a good idea to talk to them about the action they can take against bullying. This is because they may be too frightened to tell you right now and/or they may come across bullying in the future.

There are a number of options to talk through with your child. Talk to them about the pros and cons of each option and let them decide for themselves what they want to do. Your child is the one who will put most of these options into place so encourage them, give them the tools, discuss the strategies with them, and practice each:

- **Walk away** from the situation, avoid / stay clear of the child(ren) doing it. Make friends with children who are not bullying others. There might be lunch time clubs or activities they could join to get to know like-minded peers.
- **Report the bullying** to a trusted adult at school (some schools may have made confidential provision for reporting bullying such as 'worry boxes' or online reporting tools).
- Firmly **ask them to stop** (for example: "I don't like that name, it makes me upset – please don't do it again"), or write a note asking them to stop.
- **Ask a witness/friend** to ask them to stop.
- **Tell a peer mentor** or older student, if this is an option in the school.

There are some additional steps your child can take if they are experiencing bullying online:

- Keep evidence of the bullying by saving screen shots or recordings of content.
- Block or mute abusive users.
- Regularly change your password and never share your password with others.
- Ensure your security settings for your social media accounts are at the highest possible settings.
- Follow the procedures for reporting abusive content on social media platforms.
- In cases of threats of violence or sexualised content, contact the police.

Remind your child that if they are scared for their safety, they should remove themselves from the situation as soon as possible and tell an adult that they trust. No child should face bullying and if they are harmed, or at risk of harm, this is a matter for children's services and/or the police.

WHAT IF MY CHILD HAS BEEN BULLYING OTHERS?

Children are developing physically, emotionally, and socially and need our help to understand how to behave towards others and when they have crossed a line. For some children it may be particularly difficult to regulate their behaviour or actions, and they may need additional support. Others might be copying prejudicial or harmful behaviour they have learnt from others. **What is important is that we recognise this type of behaviour and endeavour to stop it, and where we have hurt others, learn to take action to put things right.**

If you have been told by others that your child is showing bullying behaviour, it is important to:

1. Stay calm, and ask for examples of the things they have said or done, and the impact this has had on others.
2. Take time to listen to your child's side of the story – but keep an open mind.
3. Remember we are all capable of bullying behaviour: try not to see it as a permanent reflection of their character, but make clear the behaviour you would like to change. Talk about the impact this has had on others and encourage empathy.
4. Make sure they are not bullying others in retaliation for bullying they have suffered.
5. Help your child to realise that no one has the right to pressure them into something they don't want to do – this includes bullying others.
6. Discuss whether there is anything that has upset or hurt them that might have led to that behaviour.
7. Talk about what needs to change about their behaviour, and the actions they can take to show they are sorry.
8. Make it clear that you do not tolerate the use of disrespectful and hurtful language and behaviour as a family (it's vital that you model this as parents).

Many children who bully others are in a difficult place themselves and will need help to explore how they are feeling, what led to the behaviour, and what needs to change.

Ultimately you are not the first, and you will not be the last, parent to have to face this. Don't blame yourself – today is the time for change.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?

IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD MIGHT BE EXPERIENCING BULLYING BUT THEY HAVEN'T TOLD YOU

It is natural to worry about your child and bullying but you have a key role in supporting your child as they face challenges through childhood and adolescence.

If you suspect your child might be experiencing bullying, don't panic or become over-protective – your child must be allowed to experience life and form new relationships, safe in the knowledge that you are always there for them. It is important that you maintain an open and trusting relationship in which your child feels confident to share concerns with you.

Talk to your child about bullying, explain to them what bullying is, what it makes people feel like, and what people might be able to do if it happens to them. These conversations may help your child work out smaller issues on their own, or may encourage them to open up to you.



It helps to encourage your child to develop friendships outside school and to take part in activities that build confidence and resilience (e.g. Brownies, Scouts and Guides, drama and dance, martial arts, team sports, local youth groups). It is also important to encourage your child not to spend all their time on social media, and to have a healthy attitude to relationships online. This includes discussing issues of friendship and trust online and the sharing of personal information.

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING YOUR CHILD'S CONFIDENCE

1. Help your child to make friends and think about **what a good friend is**.
2. Encourage them to **be a good friend** too.
3. **Role play** situations.
4. Let them know it's **ok to tell an adult** if they are worried.
5. Decide **who they will tell and how**.
6. Find them things (possibly out of school) they **enjoy**.
7. Remind them that it's **their right to go to school free of harm** and that you are proud of them.

IF YOUR CHILD HAS TOLD YOU THEY ARE EXPERIENCING BULLYING

If your child discloses that they are being bullied speak calmly and reassuringly to them and use the steps below to guide you (see Appendix A for a flow chart of these steps).

Firstly, don't panic. Your key role is listening, calming and providing reassurance that the situation can get better when action is taken. This is where an understanding of the definition of bullying will be useful (see page 3), so that you are able to discuss with your child what they have experienced and consider the best approach.

Step 1: Your initial reaction

- **Listen and reassure** them that coming to you was the right thing to do. Assure them that the bullying is not their fault and that they have family that will support them.
- Try and **establish the facts**. It can be helpful to take notes of what your child says, particularly names, dates, what happened and where it happened. You could also ask them what they have already tried to do to stop it. Keep any evidence such as pictures of injuries or screenshots of any online messages.
- **Find out what your child wants** to happen next. Help to identify the choices open to them; the potential next steps to take; and the skills they may have to help solve the problems.
- If your child has obvious physical injuries such as a cut, bruises, burn marks, **take them to the GP** so that there is a record of the injuries, or take photos that are dated. If your child's injuries are serious, you should also report it to the police.
- If your child is displaying **signs of mental distress**, for example suffering from panic attacks, depression or anxiety, and you feel this might be directly related to behaviour or treatment they are receiving at school, you should take them to the GP, telling them how the bullying is affecting your child. If necessary, you can ask the GP for a sick note which will give your child authorised absence from school for a period of time.

Step 2: Engaging with your child's school

- **Request a meeting** to discuss the situation with your child's teacher or tutor – or the lead adult wherever the bullying is taking place. Remember, every child has a right to a safe environment in which to learn and play.
- Familiarise yourself with the school's **anti-bullying policy** (sometimes found within their behaviour policy) which should detail their general approach to bullying, including how to report it and their procedure for responding to it. You should be able to access this on their website or you can contact them to send it, which they must provide you with by law. Familiarise yourself with this document so that you know what to expect when working with the school.
- When meeting with the teacher, **explain** what has been happening as well as what your child has already tried to do to stop it. This may be the first time they become aware of the problem, so be realistic about what you want them to do. The teacher should look into the allegations and take reasonable steps to stop the bullying and protect your child.
- Ask the teacher for a **reasonable timeframe** for action to take place, and make a note so you can follow up at a later date.
- **Make notes** of what you do, the date, to whom you speak and what they say and do.

Step 3: Speak to the Headteacher

- If you are not satisfied with the class teacher's response, or if the bullying continues or worsens, you should make an appointment to **speak to the Headteacher** or another member of the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT), such as the Head of Year or the staff member responsible for behaviour or for safeguarding.
- It is a good idea at this stage to get this in writing, so you may want to **send a letter** telling the Headteacher what the issues are. See Appendix B for an example letter
- You should ensure that you take a copy of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy or Behaviour Policy with you. You can then **refer to the policy** if you feel that the school is not following it.
- If you have not already done so, **take your child to the GP** and inform them how the bullying is affecting your child so that it can be documented and, if you think it would benefit your child, ask the GP for a sick note which give authorised absence from school for a period of time.
- You should also ask for a copy of the school's Complaints Policy (all schools must have one).

Step 4: Making a formal complaint

- If the Headteacher fails to address the bullying problems, you need to make a formal written complaint to the school's governing body (or other relevant recipient – refer to the school's Complaints Policy to find out who this should be addressed to).
- You should draft your complaint in the way prescribed in the school's Complaints Policy, but see Appendix C for an example letter you can use as a template.
- If your child has Special Educational Needs or has developed mental health problems because of the bullying, you might be eligible for Legal Aid. It would at this juncture be prudent to contact the Civil Legal Advice Helpline. Details about this service and eligibility can be found at www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice for England and Wales. For Scotland, visit the Scottish Legal Aid Board <https://www.slabb.org.uk>. For Northern Ireland, visit Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/legal-aid.

WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT AFTER MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

The response you get after making a formal complaint will vary from school to school, as each school has the power to set its own complaints procedure. See below for the procedure schools must follow for complaints (depending on the type of school):

Maintained Schools in England, or schools in Wales, Scotland & NI:

- Must have a written complaints policy^[2] that is published and easily accessible (e.g., on the school's website).
- The policy should outline how complaints will be handled, including clear timescales.
- The policy should allow for at least two stages:
 1. Informal resolution (e.g., discussion with a teacher or Headteacher).
 2. Formal complaint heard by the governing body or a panel of governors.

After these stages, if you are not happy with the response you receive from the school, or the issue remains unresolved, you can escalate your complaint to the local authority. It is important to note that not all local authorities will look into school issue complaints, particularly if they feel it can be addressed within the internal school management system.

If the local authority fails to address the complaint adequately, or the complaint relates to issues they cannot resolve, then the next step would also be to escalate to the Department for Education (DfE) in England (gov.uk/complain-to-dfe), the Children's Commissioner for Wales (childcomwales.org.uk), or the Education Authority for NI (eani.org.uk). You can also escalate to the Public Services Ombudsman in Wales (ombudsman.wales), Scotland (spso.org.uk), and Northern Ireland (nipso.org.uk).

Academies & Free Schools (England only):

- Must have a complaints procedure that complies with the 2014 Education Regulations and is available to parents.
- The procedure must:
 - Include at least three stages:
 1. Informal resolution (e.g., meeting with staff or Headteacher).
 2. Formal investigation by the Headteacher or other senior staff.
 3. Formal complaint to the governing body or complaints panel.
 - Allow for a panel hearing that includes at least one independent person (i.e., someone not involved in the day-to-day management or running of the school).
 - Provide a timeline for responses at each stage.

If you are not happy with the response you receive from an Academy, or the issue remains unresolved, you can escalate your complaint to the wider academy trust (if the school's Complaints Policy hasn't already included the trust). If the procedure has already involved the trust, or it is a Free School, you can escalate your complaint to the DfE: gov.uk/complain-to-dfe.


Remember, bullying is a child protection issue, so can be reported to the local authority children's services team and to the police.

[2] – As required by the Education Act 2002, Section 29 in England and Wales, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 in Scotland and Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, Article 123 in NI.

COMPLAINING TO THE SCHOOL INSPECTORATE

If an issue remains unresolved, you can alert the School Inspectorate, depending on where you are based:

- **England:** Ofsted, via Parent View parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or their complaints website complain.ofsted.gov.uk
- **Wales:** Estyn estyn.gov.wales
- **Scotland:** Education Scotland education.gov.scot
- **Northern Ireland:** Education and Training Inspectorate etini.gov.uk



Inspectorates cannot investigate individual complaints, and complaining will not trigger an immediate inspection of the school. However, it may be worth informing them as they may use the information you've provided to help them decide what areas to focus their next inspection on.

BULLYING AND THE POLICE

Bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the United Kingdom. Some incidents of bullying are not actually crimes and therefore might not be a matter for the police.

However, there are some types of bullying that are illegal and can be reported to the police. These include bullying that involves the following (whether face to face or online):

- violence or threats of violence;
- assault (including sexual assault);
- malicious communication;
- harassment e.g. name calling, threatening behaviour, abusive phone calls, text messages, e-mails and Facebook messages;
- theft;
- intimidation;
- any of the above that are committed because of the victim's disability, gender-identity, race, religion, belief, or sexual orientation.

WITHDRAWING YOUR CHILD FROM SCHOOL

Withdrawing your child from school is a significant decision and should be carefully considered. Elective Home Education (EHE) can be a positive choice for some families, but it's important to ensure it is a decision made freely and in your child's best interests. **Schools are not allowed to suggest or pressure you into home educating your child as a way to address attendance or support concerns.**

If your child is struggling to attend school – due to bullying, mental health challenges, or other factors – you may want to explore all available support options before deciding on EHE. It is the school's duty to provide your child with a suitable education while they are on the school roll, and if the school is unable to meet your child's needs, the local authority has a legal duty to step in and ensure appropriate provision is made.

If your child is refusing to attend school or cannot attend due to a significant risk to their mental or physical health, you should:

- Speak with your GP to discuss the possibility of obtaining a medical certificate that would authorise their absence.
- Notify the school and discuss your concerns with them.
- Consider contacting social services, your education welfare officer (if applicable), and your local SENDIAS service for advice and support (if your child has special educational needs or a disability).

If you decide to home educate, remember that this is a substantial commitment. You will become responsible for ensuring your child receives an appropriate education at home. Many families thrive in this arrangement, but it's important to fully understand the responsibilities and implications.

For parents of children who have special educational needs or a disability, you can access tailored advice and support on navigating these issues, including exploring alternative solutions to school attendance challenges or understanding your options around EHE, by contacting [your local SENDIAS service](#).

SOURCES OF ADVICE AND SUPPORT

FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

We have a free anti-bullying information tool for parents and carers on our website. This tool includes what bullying is, how to work with your school in relation to bullying and how to support your child. Go to our website to access it: <https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/parenttool>.

Other organisations across the anti-bullying sector also have lots of tools and resources that can help you:

- **SENDIASS** is a free, impartial, and confidential service offering information to young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their parents and carers. Find your local service [here](#).
- **NSPCC** has a free helpline for parents and carers / 0808 800 5000 / www.nspcc.org.uk
- **Kidscape** provide workshops for children that need support with bullying issues as well as a helpline for parents and carers / 0300 102 4481 / www.kidscape.org.uk
- **Family Lives** gives support and advice for parents on any aspect of parenting and family life, including bullying / 0808 800 2222 / www.familylives.org.uk
- **Contact** has a helpline for families with disabled children – they can give advice on bullying issues / 0808 808 3555 / www.contact.org.uk
- **Red Balloon Learner Centres** provide intensive, full-time education for children aged between 9 and 18 who feel unable to return to school because they have been severely bullied. There are Red Balloon Centres all over England, and they also have a programme of online support / www.redballoonlearner.org
- **YoungMinds** provides advice and information about young people's mental health and have a parent helpline / 0808 802 5544 / www.youngminds.org.uk
- **Papyrus UK** provide suicide prevention support for young people and have a helpline / 0800 068 4141 / www.papyrus-uk.org
- **Childnet** gives advice for parents and carers to help support children and young people in their safe and responsible use of the internet / www.childnet.com
- **Internet Matters** provides regularly refreshed content to support parents and carers with all aspects of e-safety. Includes lots of advice on technology that can help you to protect your child online and helpful content relating to cyberbullying / www.internetmatters.org
- **The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)** provides help and advice on cyberbullying / www.ceop.police.uk
- **Report Harmful Content Online** (provided by the UK Safer Internet Centre and South West Grid for Learning) have a website which has support about reporting harmful online content: www.reportharmfulcontent.com



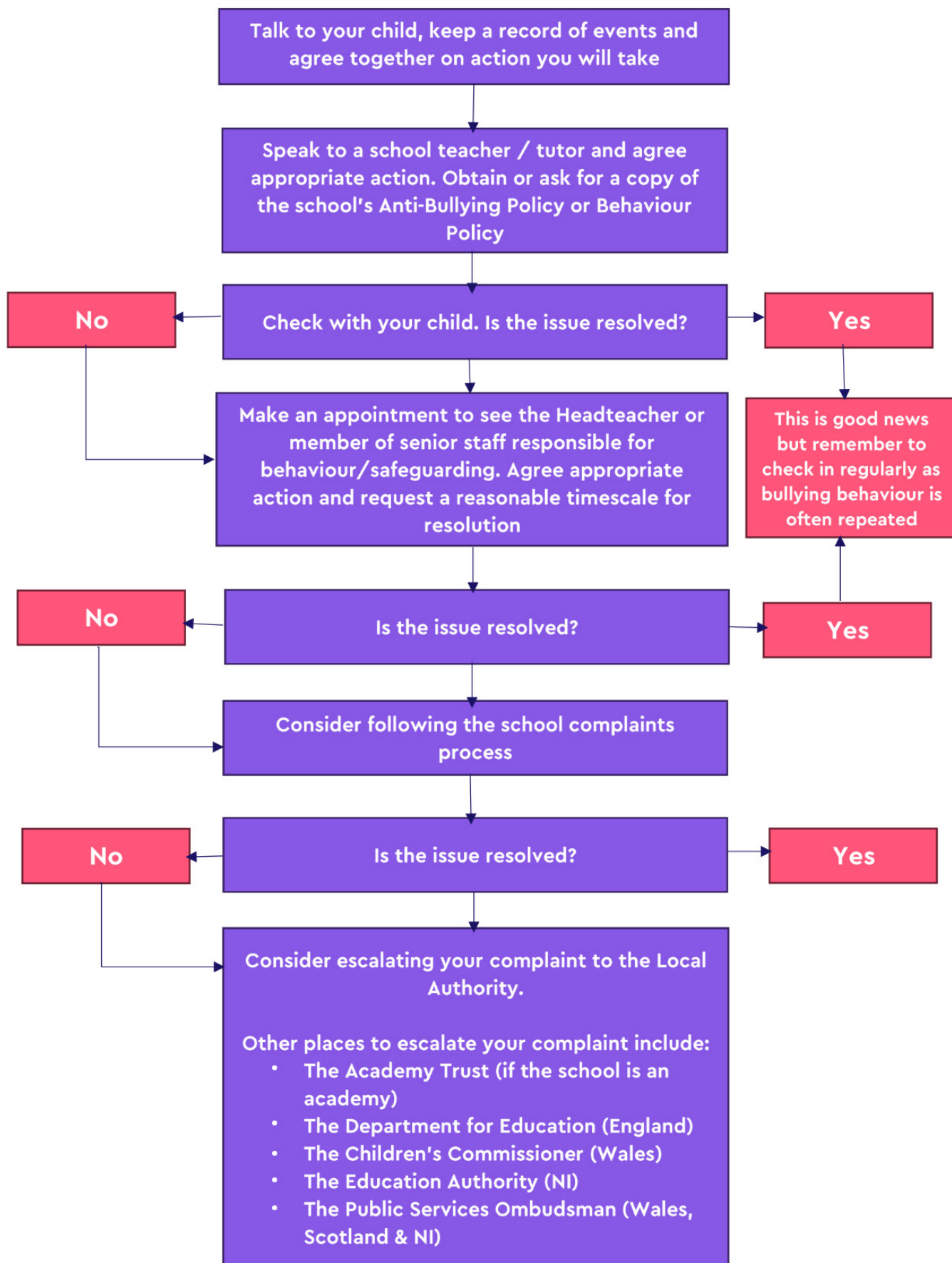
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- **Childline** is a free, confidential helpline for children and young people available any time, day or night / 0800 1111 / www.childline.org.uk
- **The Mix** provides support for under 25s for a range of issues, including bullying / text THEMIX to 85258 / www.themix.org.uk
- **Kidscape** has information for young people about what to do if they are being bullied / www.kidscape.org.uk/advice/advice-for-young-people/what-should-i-do-if-im-being-bullied
- **The Diana Award** has tips and advice on what to do about bullying on their anti-bullying website / www.antibullyingpro.com
- **Think U Know (from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre)** is a website for children and young people about staying safe online / www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- **Childnet** has advice and support for young people about online harms / www.childnet.com/young-people
- **Papyrus UK** provide suicide prevention support for young people and have a helpline / 0800 068 4141 / www.papyrus-uk.org



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FLOWCHART FOR IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED:



APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE OF LETTER TO HEADTEACHER OR MEMBER OF SLT

Headteacher/ Member of SLT
School Name
Address line one
Address line two
Town
Postcode

Date

Dear [name of Headteacher/ Member of SLT],

RE: [child's name and date of birth]

My child, A, has been bullied over a period of ... weeks/months by X, Y and Z. The incidents complained of are as follows:

- [List the bullying incidents, including dates, times and locations]

I have spoken to A's class teacher on numerous occasions (listed below) and I am not satisfied with the way in which the matters have been dealt.

- [List the occasions on which the class teacher was spoken to]
- [Details of any medical problems associated with the bullying – both physical and mental – should also be included]

I should like you to undertake a full and thorough investigation of these bullying incidents. Please let me know what action you will be taking, both in relation to the bullying which has occurred and to ensure that my child is not bullied in the future.

Yours sincerely,
[Your signature]
[Your name]

APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE OF A FORMAL LETTER OF COMPLAINT TO GOVERNING BODY:

Governing Body
School Name
Address line one
Address line two
Town
Postcode

Date

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: [child's name and date of birth]

I wish to make a formal complaint.

My child, A, has been bullied over a period of ... weeks/months by X, Y and Z. The incidents complained of are as follows:

- [List the bullying incidents, including dates, times and locations]

I have spoken to A's class teacher and the Headteacher on numerous occasions. These are listed below:

- [List the occasions on which the class teacher and the Headteacher were spoken to]
- [Details of any medical problems associated with the bullying – both physical and mental – should also be included]

I should like a full and thorough investigation of these bullying incidents. Please let me know what action you will be taking, both in relation to the bullying which has occurred and to ensure that my child is not bullied in the future.

Yours faithfully,
[Your signature]
[Your name]

ABOUT THE ANTI-BULLYING ALLIANCE

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) coordinates Anti-Bullying Week in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. We are a



**ANTI-BULLYING
ALLIANCE**

unique coalition of organisations and individuals, working together to achieve our vision to: stop bullying and create safer environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play, and learn. We welcome membership from any organisation or individual that supports this vision and support a free network of thousands of schools and colleges

The ABA has three main areas of work:

1. Supporting learning and sharing best practice through membership
2. Raising awareness of bullying through Anti-Bullying Week and other coordinated, shared campaigns
3. Delivering programme work at a national and local level to help stop bullying and bring lasting change to children's lives

ABA is based at leading children's charity the National Children's Bureau.

While we provide these resources free of charge, we are in desperate need of donations to fund this work. As such, we ask you to consider making a donation to enable us to continue our work. Donate



Our members are the lifeblood of the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) and we are always delighted when we receive new applications for membership. Please consider becoming a member [HERE](#)



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