

SOME ADVICE FOR PARENTS

Bullying can happen anywhere and to anyone. Most importantly anyone has the potential to bully others.

Trying to stop your child bullying or being bullied

As a parent it is important that you understand what bullying is, are aware of the different types, and recognise the impact on children and young people. This will then help you talk openly with your child about bullying and remind them what they should do if they see or experience bullying.

Think carefully about the advice you give your child and remember their safety is always paramount! Advising them to 'hit back' for example is potentially very dangerous for two reasons. Firstly, it may lead to your child being accused of being the bully rather than bullied and, secondly, hitting out may lead to your child being more seriously hurt.

If you think or are told your child is bullying, you may feel very upset and want to punish your child. Stay calm and try to establish if there is a reason for this type of behaviour – has there been a recent change or disruption or is your child hanging around with a different group of children? Talk to your child and remind them that bullying is not acceptable. Ask them why they are doing it and help them to empathise with the person they are bullying. Most importantly teach your children good behaviours by demonstrating them daily.

Your child's school may also be able to provide additional support but try to make sure this is not confrontational. No child likes to be humiliated.

Trying to help your child if they are being bullied

It is important to reassure your child they have done the right thing in telling you and that it is not their fault. Try to stay calm.

Begin recording all details of the incidents and decide when the right time is to report a concern to your child's school. Remember bullying is easier to stop if reported at the early stages.

Different types of anti-bullying strategies

There are a range of different types of strategies schools can implement to both prevent and respond to bullying. Explore what your child's school has to support an anti-bullying culture:

- * Peer Mentoring
- * Peer Mediation
- * Buddy schemes
- * Circle time
- * School Counselling
- * Solution focussed approaches
- * Friendship benches
- * Reporting boxes
- * Anti-Bullying Charter

Useful contacts

During this process of reporting concerns you can seek information and support by contacting:

Your local Education & Library Board (ELB):

Belfast ELB	028 9056 4000
North Eastern ELB	028 2565 3333
South Eastern ELB	028 9056 6200
Southern ELB	028 3751 2200
Western ELB	028 8241 1411

Your local Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) diocese:

Armagh	028 8775 2116
Clogher	028 6632 2709
Derry	028 7126 1931
Down & Connor	028 9032 7875
Dromore	028 3036 2423

Unfortunately, Boards and Dioceses have different names for sections dealing with bullying. Just ask for the section/individual who deals with bullying.

You can also seek additional support through contacting the [Parents Advice Centre Helpline](http://www.parentsadvicecentre.org.uk) - 0808 801 0722 or for legal advice through contacting the [Children's Law Centre's Chalky helpline](http://www.childrenslawcentre.org.uk) - 0808 808 5678.

If you have proceeded through all the above three stages and are still dissatisfied with the school's response, you can contact the [Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People \(NICCY\)](http://www.niccy.org.uk) - 028 9031 1616.

Reporting Bullying Concerns to Your Child's School

A leaflet for parents and carers



**Northern Ireland
Anti-Bullying Forum**

Acting Together To End Bullying

15 Richmond Park, Belfast, BT10 0HB

Phone: (028) 9043 1123

Fax: (028) 9043 1314

Web: www.niabf.org.uk

E-mail: info@niabf.org.uk

Additional copies of this leaflet can be downloaded from:
www.niabf.org.uk

The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) defines bullying as the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM SCHOOLS?

The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 places specific duties upon the Board of Governors of a grant-aided school:

Article 17 - To safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils at all times when the pupils are at school or in the control or charge of a member of school staff

Article 18 - To ensure that there is a written child protection policy, to determine the measures to be taken to protect pupils from abuse and to review these measures on a timely basis

Article 19 - To consult with the pupils and parents before making or revising the Discipline Policy. Principals are also required to consult with pupils and their parents before determining measures to encourage good behaviour and to prevent bullying.

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

The Department of Education (DE) has issued the following guidance to schools:

June 2001 - '**Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour**' in which there is a section devoted to developing an anti-bullying culture. This document offers detailed guidance, practical initiatives and case studies, and includes specific initiatives for encouraging pupils to report that they have been bullied or have witnessed bullying taking place.

March 1999 - '**Pastoral Care in Schools : Child Protection**' which is currently being updated by the Department.

All of the above guidance can be accessed online at www.deni.gov.uk

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM PARENTS?

Within a school's anti-bullying policy it should clearly state the different stages for parents to report a bullying concern. This is therefore a general guide to best practice.

Please refer to a copy of the school's anti-bullying policy for specific details of their reporting stages.

The key stages in order to reporting a bullying concern within school are:

1. Stage 1 – Report to the Class Teacher / Form Teacher / Year Head
2. Stage 2 – Report to the Principal
3. Stage 3 – Report to the Board of Governors

It is advisable that you complete **all three stages of reporting concerns in order**, to ensure that you have given the school a fair opportunity to resolve your concern. Unfortunately there is not necessarily a quick resolution and so it is important that you try to allow the school adequate time to implement their proposed action. To do this however, parents need to be confident that 'something is being done' and so it is in the school's best interest to keep parents informed of progress. Communication between teacher, parent and pupil is key. For you as a parent it is really important to provide as much information regarding incidents at each stage and as soon as possible. To support this, you and your child could use the Childline Recording Diary (available to download from the NIABF website).

Stage 1 – Reporting concerns to the Class/Form Teacher or Year Head

Inform the child's class teacher, either at a meeting or over the phone, of the bullying concerns, giving details of incidents, times/dates, people involved etc. Agree with the teacher what will be done by the school/you and in what timescale. During this time when the school is taking action, keep talking to your child at home and keep recording any bullying incidents that occur. Give this new information to the teacher. It is also important that you present a confident demeanour to your child with the expectation that this matter will be resolved. Remember, try to give an appropriate length of time to see results from a school's action- there is not always a quick resolution. Make contact with the teacher according to the agreed timescales to check on progress.

If the bullying incidents continue, or you are dissatisfied with the response from the teacher, then you can move onto Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Reporting concerns to the Principal

Phone or write to the Principal and request a meeting to discuss your child. If you want you can take a friend or family member to the meeting for support. Inform the school of your intention to do this. In advance of the meeting try to prepare an account of the incidents that have occurred (including details such as date, time, location of incidents, people involved etc.), and highlight from your knowledge what the teacher's response has been, following your previous discussions (Stage 1).

At the meeting ask if someone is taking notes and request a copy. Explain your concerns, providing details of incidents, people involved and

how your child has been affected. Refer to the school's anti-bullying policy identifying procedures and strategies that may help, which still need to be implemented.

Discuss and agree with the Principal actions, timescales and follow up meeting to report progress. During this time when the school is taking action, keep talking to your child at home and keep recording any bullying incidents that occur, again maintaining to your child a confident expectation of a positive resolution to the issues.

Remember, try to give an appropriate length of time to see results from the school's action – there is not always a quick resolution. You should be in contact with the Principal according to the agreed timescales.

Try to keep all copies of letters and notes from meetings for your records.

If you are dissatisfied however with the response from the Principal then you can move on to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Reporting concerns to the Board of Governors

Write to the Chair of the Board of Governors, requesting a meeting to discuss your child with the school's Governors. Inform the secretary if you intend to take a friend or family member to the meeting for support. In advance of the meeting prepare an account of the incidents that have occurred (including details such as date, time, location of incidents, people involved etc.), and highlight from your knowledge what the school's response has been, following your previous discussions (Stages 1 & 2). Again, refer to the school's anti-bullying policy, identifying procedures and strategies that may help, which still need to be implemented.

At the meeting ask if someone is taking notes and request that a copy is made available to you. Explain your concerns, providing the list of incidents. Discuss and agree with the member(s) of the Board of Governors actions and timescales and agree who will be your point of contact to check how the situation is progressing.

During this time when the school is taking action, keep talking to your child at home and keep recording any bullying incidents that occur.

Remember, try to give an appropriate length of time to see results from a school's action – there is not always a quick resolution but in the meantime you can keep checking in with the person agreed above as to progress.

Try to keep all copies of letters and notes from meetings for your records.