

# DOWN'S INFANT SCHOOL



## A GUIDE TO BULLYING FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

### INTRODUCTION

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for everybody. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable within our school community. We work hard with the children to help them understand what bullying is, so that they can report it and we can deal with it.

### WHAT IS BULLYING?

We make a distinction between different kinds of behaviours which children may find troubling:

**Rude = Inadvertently saying or doing something that hurts someone else**

This might be things like burping in someone's face, jumping ahead in line or bragging about achieving the highest mark in a test. On their own, any of these behaviours could appear as elements of bullying, but when looked at in context, incidents of rudeness are usually spontaneous and due to thoughtlessness or poor manners.

**Mean = Purposefully saying or doing something to hurt someone once (or maybe twice)**

The main distinction between "rude" and "mean" behaviour has to do with intention; while rudeness is often unintentional, mean behaviour very much aims to hurt or upset someone. Children are being mean to each other when they criticise clothing, appearance, intelligence, coolness or anything else.

**Bullying = Intentionally unkind or aggressive behaviour, repeated over time, that involves an imbalance of power**

Bullying is happening when someone is deliberately hurtful to another over a period of time and the person being bullied finds it difficult to defend themselves. The person doing the bullying may be more powerful because they are bigger, older, have more status, or they may have involved other children in the bullying.

### DIFFERENCE, PREJUDICE AND BULLYING

Children and adults who are seen as different because of their race, religion, disability or sexuality may be more vulnerable to bullying. We promote tolerance and equality as a way to prevent this.

## WORRIED YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?

Your child may tell you about rude, mean, or bullying behaviour. It is important that you talk about it with them and with us to work out whether it is bullying. They may not tell you they are being bullied. However, you may notice some changes in their behaviour including:

- unwillingness to go to school
- feeling unwell, often with a headache
- irritability
- anxiety or lacking in confidence
- aggression towards you or others in your family
- bedwetting
- waking in the night
- missing or damaged belongings.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

If you suspect your child is being bullied, please don't ignore it. Your child will need to know you are there to listen and support them. Find a quiet time to talk to your child. Discuss the different kinds of unpleasant behaviours listed and help them understand if it is bullying. Explain that bullying is unacceptable and that you will help them tell so that it can be stopped.

Make an appointment to see your child's class teacher as soon as possible. Here are some useful tips for the meeting:

- Decide what you want to say and what you'd like to achieve from the meeting before you go.
- Try to stay calm even though you may feel angry and emotional.
- Don't blame the teacher - he or she may be unaware of what's going on.
- Give specific examples of what is happening to your child.
- Discuss what action the teacher will take.
- Arrange to meet again within two weeks to discuss progress.
- Remember that rude and mean behaviours may sometimes be mistaken for bullying and that discussion with the teacher will help you and your child work out whether bullying is taking place. In any case, you will agree actions to start to change the situation.

If you're unhappy with the way your child's teacher deals with the situation - either at the meeting or after the school has taken action - make an appointment to see the headteacher or deputy head and go through the same process described above.

## HOW CAN I HELP AT HOME?

- Value your children for who they are and show you love them.
- Make it clear you are there to listen and that you will not judge or be angry if your child talks to you about being different.
- Try not to focus too much on the names your child is being called but reassure them that bullying is always wrong, whether what the bullies say is true or not.
- Talk about how you feel with a friend or family member.
- Remember you are a role model so use non-bullying behaviour yourself and show respect for other people. Children are programmed to learn by watching, by trying out what they see others doing and by repeating behaviour that is rewarded.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FIND OUT MY CHILD IS BULLYING?

If you find out your child is bullying, it may be an indication that they are not feeling OK. Children sometimes bully because they are unhappy, or feel powerless. Again, you should make time to sit down with your child and listen. Meeting with the teacher or the SENCo can be a way to get support for your child to stop the bullying.

## OTHER INFORMATION

Here are some other websites which you may find useful:

[www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)  
[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)