

What is Bullying?

It is vital that schools and settings have an **agreed definition of bullying**. This will enable everyone within the school community to **prevent, identify** (including avoidance of misidentification) and **respond** when incidents of bullying occur.

The [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#) and its members have an agreed shared definition of bullying based on research from across the world over the last 30 years:

'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'.

There are **four key elements** to this definition:

- 1. Hurtful**
- 2. Repetition**
- 3. Power imbalance**
- 4. Intentional**

Bullying behaviour can be:

- **Physical** – pushing, poking, kicking, hitting, biting, pinching etc.
- **Verbal** - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats, teasing, belittling.
- **Emotional** – isolating others, tormenting, hiding books, threatening gestures, ridicule, humiliation, intimidating, excluding, manipulation and coercion.
- **Sexual** – unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comments, homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate films etc.
- **Online /cyber** – posting on social media, sharing photos, sending nasty text messages, social exclusion
- **Indirect** - can include the exploitation of individuals.

Bullying rarely takes place between a 'victim' and a 'bully' alone. It tends to be a **group behaviour**. Others can have a significant influence on the outcomes of behaviours among children and young people intentionally or otherwise.

Bullying behaviour can be displayed by children as young as 3 years of age. Early Years providers have a vital role to play in providing good opportunities for young children to develop their understanding of developing healthy relationships, including how to play and communicate together. See these [top tips](#) for Early Years providers.

These [free resources](#) can be used to engage the whole-school community work together to understand and define bullying.

If you would like to increase your knowledge on understanding bullying, please see the [guidance](#) from the Anti-Bullying Alliance.

What is the impact of Bullying?

In April 2022, the DfE published a [report](#) that found **21% of all pupils had experienced bullying within the last year.**

There are **short and long-term impacts** of bullying. The longer the bullying is sustained, the greater the risk of long-term impact that can last into adulthood.

Short-term impacts can include, but are not limited to:

- **Barriers to learning**
- **Missing school** (At any one time over 16,000 young people aged 11-15 are missing education primarily due to bullying, Natcen)
- **Being excluded** (children that experience daily bullying are x3 more likely to be excluded, LSYPE)
- Retaliate
- Place **strain on families/carers**
- Self-harm and experience depression
- Have **impaired wellbeing**

Long-term impacts can include, but are not limited to:

- Experience a range **mental health issue** as an adult including **suicide ideation**
- **Earn less** money
- not be in employment, education or training (**NEET**) into adulthood
- Be **obese** (particularly in women)
- **Unstable relationships**, including committing or being a victim of **domestic violence**
- Be **homeless**

Some children and young people are more likely to experience bullying. Below are some resources and tools to help you support them:

- [Racist and faith targeted bullying](#)
- [Looked after children](#)
- [Young carers and bullying](#)
- [Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\)](#)
- [Special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\)](#)
- [Identity-based bullying](#)
- [Appearance targeted bullying](#)
- [Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic](#)
- [Sexual and sexist](#)
- [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller \(GRT\)](#)

What must schools and settings do?

There are several laws and guidance that schools and other settings must have regard to:

- The Department for Education (DfE) has produced guidance for all schools, including academies and free schools, which outlines its duties towards preventing and tackling bullying in schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>
- The Education Act 2002 Section 175 placed a legal duty on maintained schools and Local Authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Some incidents of bullying may also be a child protection issue. A bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection issue under [the Children Act 1989](#) when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. These concerns must be reported to the member of staff in school responsible for child protection and then reported to the local authority's children's social services.
- [Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) states that maintained schools must have measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. Some schools choose to include this information in an anti-bullying policy, whilst others include it in their behaviour policy. These measures must be communicated to all pupils, school staff and parents. The head teacher must follow through and adopt the policy and all students, parents and teachers should be notified of it once it has been decided.
- The [Independent School Standards \(England\)\(Amendment\) Regulations 2012](#) state that the proprietor of an academy or other independent school is required to ensure that an effective anti-bullying strategy and health & safety strategy is drawn up and implemented.
- Under the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010, schools and childcare providers must take steps to prevent and respond to discriminatory language. **All schools must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty (PSED)**. This means your school needs to be proactive in preventing and tackling discriminatory bullying for those with 'relevant protected characteristics'. These include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.
- 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.

- Most bullying incidents are not crimes. But some types of bullying are illegal and should be reported to the police. This includes bullying that involves violence or assault; theft; harassment and intimidation over a period of time including calling someone names or threatening them, making abusive phone calls, and sending abusive emails or text messages (one incident is not normally enough to get a conviction); and anything involving hate crimes.
- Some cyberbullying activities could be criminal offences under a range of different laws, including the [Malicious Communications Act 1988](#) and the [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#). There have been some instances of such prosecutions in the UK.

There are lots of evidence-based resources to support your school to meet these requirements:

- Evidence highlights that a **whole-school approach is most effective** to tackle bullying in schools. This [guidance](#) provides evidence based [principles](#), [top tips for teachers](#), [policy](#), [curriculum](#), [peer support strategies](#) and much more!
- Participate in the DfE funded [United Against Bullying programme](#), fully-funded for schools until August 2024.
- **Provide training** to anyone that works with children and young people access the Anti-bullying Alliance [free CPD certified online training](#).
- Share this [guidance](#) for **TA's to provide good support** to children and young people who have experienced bullying, and receive TA support.
- Actively participate in [anti-bullying week](#).
- **Signpost parents and carers** to [information and tools](#) to help them [spot the signs](#) of bullying, stay calm and take the right action if their child is [being bullied](#) and/or if their child has been [accused of bullying](#) others.