

What to do about teasing and bullying

Parents should always talk to their child's teacher immediately, if they have a concern about bullying.

Teasing and bullying are always a worry for parents and you can be confident nowadays that any report of this by you, any other responsible adult, and any child must be taken seriously by all state schools. Independent schools also follow similar good practice guidelines.

The Government has made tackling bullying in schools a key priority and the [Department for Education \(DFE\)](#) has made clear that no form of bullying should be tolerated. Bullying in schools should be taken very seriously; it is not a normal part of growing up and it can ruin lives.

It is compulsory for schools to have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and respect for others on the part of pupils, and to prevent all forms of bullying. The DFE supports all state schools in designing their anti-bullying policies, and their strategies to tackle bullying, by providing comprehensive practical-guidance documents such as the [Safe to Learn](#) material. Regional advisers with expertise in the field of bullying are also on hand to help.

Schools can also sign up to the [Anti-bullying Charter](#) to show their commitment to tackling all forms of bullying, and use the principles of the Charter to self-evaluate their anti-bullying policies and practices. You may wish to ask your child's teacher if the school has signed up to the document.

In spite of all the progress that has been made in highlighting the problems of bullying, there is some research evidence that children who stammer, as their speech appears to be different, are sadly still quite likely to be the subject of comments or worse by other pupils. This is very upsetting for your child and will undermine his self-esteem.

Further information about bullying and children who stammer

There are three recent articles on this topic

[Summer 2007 issue of 'Speaking Out', pages 5-6](#)

[Spring 2008 issue of 'Speaking Out', page 10-11](#)

[Winter 2009 edition of Speaking Out, page 7](#)

Strategies to help your child

Some parents have taken the view, even with young children that the child should stand up for himself against the bullies, even to the extent of hitting them. This is not good advice to pass on to a child as the situation could escalate and a violent incident take place in which the original victim also suffers. **It is always best to contact the school if you suspect bullying so that proper and effective action can be taken.**

At home you can encourage him to think through the situations and try out the following ideas to help him cope.

Strategies to help your child

There is no universal approach that will help every child and will work in every situation but these ideas are worth trying, if you are worried that your child might be bullied. You must be careful to avoid causing him to worry about bullying when you do this. However, most children do worry about it anyway, so it is likely that he will see your helping him as a positive move.

Role play

Stand tall A good strategy is to get your child to think of a time he felt strong and confident and get him to pretend that he is in that situation again. He should **stand up as tall as he can**, imagining himself feeling really confident with good eye contact. Practising this exercise will help to teach your child that when he stands and feels tall and powerful, a bully will think twice before tackling him.

How a child should react to a bully

Don't react

Bullies want a reaction as it rewards them, and thus they continue, because if there is no reaction, bullying's no fun. This strategy is hard for children to understand at first as they often seek revenge. The advice does not mean that children cannot do anything. They can respond, but not react: no screaming, no bursting into tears, no fighting back. They can act as if the taunts are childish. If something is said to the teachers or bullies it needs to be calm and controlled.

Don't argue

Just agree by using terms such as 'If you say so', or 'I'll have to give that some thought.' Pausing before speaking helps too. Pauses suggest personal power, indicating that the speaker is choosing how to respond. This does not mean never argue, just that the child should not be tricked into arguing on the bully's terms. The child should never put him or herself down. If you don't argue, there can be no conflict. An argument always has two sides. If the child does not take a side, the situation is not an argument. It is just a difference of opinion, and the bully will get bored because there is no reaction.

A log of incidents

Keep a log of everything that your child tells you about any incidents to use when you report bullying to the teacher.

The aim is to identify the bully or bullies every time it happened. You should have dates and times, where it happened, who the bullies were, what they did, how the child responded, who was told, who else saw what happened, any injuries that happened.

When bullying is reported to a teacher, the log of incidents can be shown and it will be apparent how serious and constant the bullying is. Teachers are not always able to help as much as they would like, even when a child has been teased or bullied for some time because evidence is not presented.

Remember to stress that in giving names you are only **alleging** that these individuals were involved, as you must appreciate that you are probably relying on information from your child and he may be mistaken.

Support for your child in the family

A social network of family and friends must be formed, to offer children support in a crisis or when they are upset. Furthermore, if parents succeed in remaining calm whilst not dismissing the bullying, it is easier for the child to take the same attitude, because they feel that the adult believes in their ability to cope with the bullying. Even if children are unable to counter the bullying successfully themselves, adults can give the child confidence in being able to find a successful way of dealing with it in the future. In this way, an important step is taken towards coping with bullying.