

The Hermitage School



Bullying

A Guide for Parents

What is Bullying?

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons.

Bullying can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and all forms of harassment.

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

How does bullying differ from teasing, falling out with friends or other types of aggressive behaviour?

- There is a deliberate intention to hurt or humiliate.
- There is a power imbalance which makes it hard for the victim to defend themselves.
- It is usually persistent.

It is important to make the distinction between bullying and friends falling out with each other. Falling out with friends is an inevitable part of a child's life that they need to learn to stand up to.

However, bullying is neither inevitable nor acceptable.

Although bullying can occur between individuals, it can often take place in the presence (physically or virtually) of others who become the 'bystanders'.

Bullying can be:

- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, scratching, spitting, or any use of violence.
- Verbal: name calling, teasing, put downs, sarcasm, insults, threats.
- Relational: silent treatment, excluding, spreading rumours, taunting, making friendship conditional.
- Cyber: use of internet and related technologies to harm people in a deliberate, repeated and hostile manner.
- Sexist: bullying based on sexist attitudes that when expressed demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender. These attitudes are commonly based around the assumption that women are subordinate to men.
- Sexual: negative attitudes and feelings towards people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
- Racist: the repeated aggression against people because of their race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin, with the purpose of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment.
- Religious: conduct or words or practices which disadvantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin.

What to do if your child is being bullied:

- Calmly talk to your child about the incident.
- Consider if what your child is describing is bullying.
- Make a note of what your child says, including how often the bullying has occurred, where it happened and who is involved.
- Reassure your child that you will be working with the staff at the school to ensure that the bullying stops.
- Inform the school via your class teacher.
- It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse.

Signs and Symptoms:

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Parents/carers should be aware of these signs. If you do notice a change in the behaviour of your child, please keep the class teacher informed so that they are able to monitor the situation.

Signs that your child is being bullied could include your child:

- Being frightened of walking to or from school
- Begging to be driven to school
- Changing their usual routine

- Being unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- Beginning to truant
- Becoming withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- Starting to stammer
- Attempting or threatening suicide or running away
- Crying themselves to sleep at night or having nightmares
- Feeling ill in the morning
- Beginning to do poorly in school work
- Coming home with clothes torn or books damaged
- Having possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- Asking for money or stealing money (to pay bully)
- Having dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- Having unexplained cuts or bruises
- Coming home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- Becoming aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Bullying other children or siblings
- Stopping eating
- Being frightened to say what's wrong
- Giving improbable excuses for any of the above
- Being afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Being nervous and jumpy when a cyber-message is received

Possible reasons why a child may bully:

- They feel powerless.
- They have low self-esteem.
- To gain admiration and attention from friends.
- For fear of being left out if they don't join in.
- They don't understand how someone else is feeling.
- They are taking out their angry feelings on others.
- They are being bullied themselves

Ways to help at home:

If they are the victim:

- Listen to them and encourage them to talk.
- Praise them to build self-esteem and confidence.
- Develop and practise appropriate responses to threatening situations, for example, acting out ways to cope and/ or shouting NO in the mirror.
- Encourage them to practise standing and walking confidently.
- Encourage them to write or draw about their feelings.
- Help them to develop friendship skills and interests.
- Remind them that they are not alone and that they must not feel guilty about being a victim or telling.
- Help them to develop strategies to stand up to the teasing.

If they are the bully:

- Criticise the behaviour, not the child.
- Explain the consequences of their behaviour.
- Set clear expectations of behaviour and explain what changes are expected.
- Praise positive behaviour and work on building self-esteem.
- Don't allow excuses.
- Ensure that they apologise to the victim.
- Act out or discuss social situations to help develop social skills.

Actions Against Bullying at School:

- The Hermitage School has a clear system to report bullying for the whole school community, including staff, parents/ carers, the Local Governing Committee and children.
- All reported incidents will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

Reporting systems for parents:

Children may make disclosures to you at home or you may notice changes in behaviour that are not evident in school.

It is important that you feel confident to come to school with any concerns. You should speak to your child's class teacher as a first port of call, followed by a member of the Senior Leadership Team if the bullying continues.

The member of the staff that you speak to will make notes at this meeting, of which a copy will be given to the Executive Headteacher. The member of staff that you speak to will inform you of any actions that will be taken as a result of your concerns, and will inform you of the outcome of any action taken.

We always prefer that incidents of bullying are dealt with in school and discourage parents intervening themselves.

The Hermitage School's procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying:

The Hermitage School has a three-tiered approach to stopping bullying in the school. It is based on prevention, detection and response (low-level, escalation and high-level).

1. Prevention

The Hermitage School promotes a safe school environment through a variety of strategies, including:

- Ensuring that all staff and pupils value relationships.
- Ensuring that through the curriculum pupils learn to build positive relationships, develop conflict resolution skills and emotional health and well-being.
- Ensuring that all staff promote the anti-bullying message at all times, including through assemblies and circle time.

- Adopting an open-door policy in which pupils and parents feel safe to inform staff of any worries or issues and know that matters will be treated confidentially.
- Teaching online safety.
- Having a pro-active and very visible School Council who establish a student voice.
- Vigilant staff who ensure children have an enjoyable playtime experience.
- Ensuring that teaching assistants and midday supervisors are vigilant in monitoring and following school policy.

2. Detection

All initial reports of bullying usually will be investigated and dealt with, in the first instance, by the class teacher, teaching assistants and midday supervisors. If the incident is found to be that of bullying, a record will be made on the school's online reporting system (CPOMS) and members of the Senior Leadership Team, including the Executive Headteacher, will be informed.

In serious cases, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Executive Headteacher may be involved immediately.

3. Response

All levels including low-level:

When analysing incidents of bullying, teachers will seek to answer questions of: what, where, when, who and why.

If a group is involved then all members will be spoken to separately, including bystanders. Other pupils may also be spoken to in order to get a clearer picture.

Written records of any reports of bullying and of such discussions will be logged on the school's online reporting system (CPOMS). These records will be analysed and monitored to impact upon future practice and policy.

It may also be appropriate for pupils to write down their own accounts of events and for these to be attached to the logged report.

Escalation:

If it is established that systematic or serious bullying has taken place, parents/carers of victims and aggressors will be contacted by the Executive Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team, so that they have an opportunity to come into the school and discuss what has happened. Teachers and parents can then work together to provide appropriate support to those involved.

Staff may use indirect mediation where pupils do not wish to meet but where a resolution is necessary in order for both parties to feel safe in school. If appropriate, this meeting will be held after school so that parents are able to attend.

Where appropriate, the parents/carers of both parties will be met with to explain the actions being taken and to discuss ways in which they can help or support the school's actions. If required, separate follow-up meetings with both parties will also be arranged.

The victim and aggressor, as well as bystanders, will be supported. The victim will receive support in order to deal with their feelings and the aggressor in order to change this type of behaviour and prevent further incidents occurring. Mentoring intervention may be appropriate and if so will be arranged as soon as possible.

Consequences of bullying will follow the school's Attachment Aware Behaviour Regulation Policy.

High response:

Where appropriate high-level responses may include:

- A mentoring referral;
- A restorative conference (where a bullying incident occurs all those involved are asked to attend to acknowledge the harm caused and discuss what needs to be done to repair the damage and prevent it from happening again);
- A referral to outside agencies (including the police, social services, councillors and voluntary agencies such as Victim Support).

Consequences will follow the school's Attachment Aware Behaviour Regulation Policy and may include exclusion in severe cases.

Complaints Procedure:

Not all allegations of bullying can be resolved easily and in a few cases it may not be possible to find a solution which is acceptable to all those involved immediately.

Any complaint raised will be treated seriously and confidentially, in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy – please see The SWAN Trust Complaints Procedure.

Our Anti-Bullying Policy is available to view and download from our website:

<https://www.hermitage.surrey.sch.uk/page/?title=Policies&pid=26&action=saved>

Further Information and Help:

The following organisations have useful information, helplines and resources to support you further if needed:

NSPCC	www.nspcc.org.uk	Tel: 0808 800 5000
Bullying UK	www.bullying.co.uk	Tel: 0808 800 2222 (24hrs)
Kidscape	www.kidscape.org.uk	Tel: 08451 205 204 (Mon – Fri 10am – 4pm)
Childline	www.childline.org.uk	