

**Insight - a closer look at**  
**Bullying**





# Education

## Bullying contents

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Introduction            | 1 |
| Setting the standard    | 2 |
| Taking action           | 3 |
| Cyber bullying          | 4 |
| Bullying outside school | 4 |
| Conclusion              | 4 |



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# Bullying

This guidance has been produced to provide guidance to schools on the prevention of bullying.

Whilst there is no significant history of claims being made against schools in relation to children suffering from bullying, this note is included in a series of risk management guidance notes from QBE to assist in protecting the safety, health and well being of those involved in the independent school sector.





The common perception may be that pupils are most at risk of bullying but between 1996 and 2004 around 20% of the callers to the UK National Workplace Bullying Advice Line were in the teaching profession.



### Setting the Standard

Independent and private schools have a much larger degree of autonomy with regard to how they are run and managed when compared to state schools. There is no local education authority to oversee their behaviour management policy. If bullying does occur there are two organisations parents can turn to on behalf of their child, the Independent Schools Council and the DFE (Department for Education), which provide helpful information and advice for families who are dealing with school bullying.

All independent schools in the UK have to be registered with the DFE and are regularly inspected by Ofsted. The inspections by Ofsted focus specifically on the prevention of bullying, harassment and cyber bullying. However, most schools are also accredited to the standards set by other organisations such as the Independent Schools Council or the Independent Schools Inspectorate, which means their management standards are scrutinised and they are rigorously inspected on a regular basis. All these associations except the HMC (Head Masters and

Headmistresses Conference) insist that any school seeking membership is assessed by the Independent Schools Inspectorate which operates broadly along the same lines as Ofsted.

In addition, boarding schools are subject to the 1989 Children Act and governors, heads and private owners all have a duty under this act to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils. Social services departments also have to be satisfied that the welfare arrangements are adequate.



### Taking Action

Typical actions to be taken by the school could include:

- All staff made aware of the issue of bullying through specific training, regular training updates.
- Robust reporting processes that the whole school understands and knows how to use.
- Use of mentoring programmes.
- School staff will deal with bullying in different ways, depending on how serious the bullying is. They might deal with it in school, e.g. by disciplining bullies, or they might report it to the police or social services. Any disciplinary measure taken must take account of special educational needs or disabilities that the pupils involved may have. It is vital to have a clear and robust policy on bullying and harassment so that teaching staff can take consistent and meaningful action when bullying is identified.

Children over the age of 10 are over the age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales. The following issues are best reported to the police:

- Violence or assault
- Theft
- Repeated harassment or intimidation, e.g. name calling, threats and abusive telephone calls, emails or text messages.

## Bullying - did you know..?

A 2014 survey from Bullying UK suggests that pupils have assaulted **40%** of teachers and that around **40%** of pupils have been bullied in the last **2 years**.





### Cyber bullying

With the exponential growth in smart phone ownership and similar growth in the popularity of social media platforms, cyber bullying has also increased. Parents and guardians need to be aware that most children have or will be involved in cyber bullying in some way, either as a victim, perpetrator, or bystander. By its very nature, cyber bullying tends to involve a number of online bystanders and can quickly spiral out of control.

If you're investigating or making a report of cyber bullying to a third party organisation, keep a record of the date and time of the calls, emails or texts - don't delete any messages that have been received.

All forms of bullying (including cyber bullying) should be handled as a community issue for the whole school. School leaders, teachers, school staff, parents and pupils all have rights and responsibilities in relation to cyber bullying and should work together to create an environment in which pupils can learn and develop. School staff must also be allowed to teach to the best of their ability without the worry of harassment and bullying from colleagues or pupils.

Young people routinely access social media and much of their social lives are online. This can create a false sense of security; for example chatting online feels different from chatting face to face. It can be easier to say and reveal things that wouldn't be said face to face; be cruel, aggressive or flirtatious. It is important for young people to remember that there are offline consequences to online behaviour. Comments intended to be funny can often be misinterpreted online whereas if said face to face. These issues make an environment of good communication and education on cyber bullying issues essential to reducing the incidence of problems.

Recommended steps to prevent against cyber bullying amongst school children include:

- Schools should support parents on how to help their children engage safely and responsibly with social media, through a parents' evening, advice in a school newsletter or signposting to other sources of support and advice.
- Create good school-parent relationships to help create an atmosphere of trust that encourages parents to raise concerns in an appropriate manner.
- Schools are recommended to issue clear guidance on the subject. The guidance should:
  - Clearly state that it is not acceptable for pupils, parents or school staff to denigrate and bully anyone via social media in the same way that it is unacceptable to do so face to face
  - Encourage all members of the school community including parents to use social media responsibly
  - Help protect every member of the school community and to ensure that sanctions are appropriate and consistent. To be effectively communicated to and discussed with employees, pupils and parents
  - Provide parents with guidance on parental control software
  - Provide information to children on how to use the blocking feature on social media sites.
  - Provide guidance to parents on which organisations can assist in the event of bullying being identified.
- There are ways to help prevent a child from being cyber bullied and to help them cope and stop the bullying if it does happen.



### Bullying outside school

Schools can act over bullying on the way to and from school. In 2004 the Department for Education (DfE) issued guidance to schools reminding them they can take action on bullying on the journey to and from school so if bullying is carried out by pupils in school uniform then the school may receive a complaint.

### Conclusion

Schools with strong guidance and policy statements on prevention of bullying are in the strongest position to prevent and minimise all types of bullying and harassment from occurring. It is almost impossible to police the use of a smart phone with a 3G or 4G connection in the hands of a child so like so many areas of risk management, education and communication remain key.







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