



## Anti-Bullying Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians

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This information booklet contains advice taken from Oxfordshire County Council ([Keeping young people and children safe from bullying](#)), and offers advice and support for you and your family if your child is being bullied or involved in bullying. The anti-bullying Alliance (ABA) also has helpful [advice for parents](#) and an [information tool](#). This information sheet sits alongside OLA's *Anti-Bullying Policy*.

- [Types of bullying](#)
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### **Types of bullying**

Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face-to-face and online (Source - [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#)).

Bullying behaviours can include the repeated negative:

- use of body contact to intentionally hurt others
- use of speech, sign language, or verbal gestures to intentionally hurt others
- use of actions, which are neither physical nor verbal, to intentionally hurt others
- use of technology as a medium to intentionally hurt others
- treatment of another incited by a parent/carer.

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is OLA's priority, but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical.

### **An imbalance of power**

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship, which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways; it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay, it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour.

### **Early intervention**

Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

### **Are you worried your child is being bullied?**

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Bullying is a serious problem and can be very upsetting for both you and your child. Children may find it hard to talk about being bullied or bullying others. You may not be sure that your child is being bullied, but some signs may suggest there is a problem. Look out for:

- disturbed sleep
- bed-wetting
- head and stomach aches
- problems with concentration
- changes in behaviour and attitude
- school refusal
- bullying other children
- damaged or missing clothes / money / property
- asking for more money than usual or stealing money
- withdrawn or changes in their usual behaviour patterns or attitude
- distressed or emotional and finds it hard to articulate their feelings
- changes in their eating patterns
- changes in their online activity
- showing evidence of self-harming or even for extreme cases, threatening suicide
- is unusually tired without a reasonable explanation
- has unexplained bruises or marks on their body - some may refuse to change for PE
- seems afraid to be alone and requires more adult interaction

There could be other reasons for these symptoms, so be careful not to jump to conclusions. Could there be anything else bothering your child? Are they finding their school work challenging? Have they fallen out with a friend? Have there been changes in your family like a new baby, a bereavement, a divorce or separation?

Offer your child the chance to talk and hear what they have to say.

### **Has your child been accused of bullying others?**

The important thing to remember is that anyone is capable of bullying behaviour. If your child has been accused of bullying others, OLA will offer support or, if appropriate, refer to external agencies for support.

As parents, you have a key role in helping your child to recognise the harm they have caused and encouraging them to change their behaviour in the future. All parents and carers should speak to their children about what bullying is - and how it makes people feel.

### **Bullying at school**

Research shows that most bullying takes place at school. Schools want to tackle bullying and to work with parents to do this. If you are worried that your child is being bullied in or outside of OLA, refer to the guidance below:

Listen, reassure and report

1. Listen and reassure your child that speaking out was the right thing to do. Try and establish the facts. It can be helpful to keep a diary of events to share with OLA.
2. Assure them that bullying is not okay and that they have family that will support them.
3. Reassure them that you will not take any action without discussing it with them first.
4. Don't encourage retaliation to bullying - such as violent actions. Children need to avoid hitting or punching an abusive peer. Reacting that way has negative and unpredictable results - your child may be subject to further harm and find that they are labelled as the problem. Instead, suggest that they walk away and seek immediate help from a trusted adult
5. Find out what your child wants to happen next. Ask them if they have already reported it to an adult at OLA? If they haven't, encourage them to do so or support them in doing this.
6. In the first instance, you should report any concerns to your child's form tutor/teacher or the Head of Section. For more serious incidents (e.g. physical assault), you should report to the Assistant Head Pastoral Team or the Deputy

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Head or the Head. In discussion with the school, you might also consider reporting serious incidents (and incidents that might constitute a criminal offence) to the police. Thames Valley Police work closely with the Local Authority and Oxfordshire schools to prevent harm and resolve situations where harm has been caused.

7. You might also want to encourage your child to get involved in activities that build their confidence and esteem and help them to form friendships outside of OLA (or wherever the bullying is taking place).

#### Arrange a meeting

If the bullying continues, arrange a meeting with your child's form tutor/teacher or Section Head, to name the behaviour(s) causing concern and consider what has and can be done to effectively safeguard your child and prevent a recurrence of harmful behaviours. OLA will be able to give you a date for a meeting within a few days. If appropriate, a meeting may take place virtually or over the telephone.

To prepare for a meeting, it would be helpful to look at OLA's Anti-Bullying Policy which is available on the OLA website. If it is not available, contact the school office and ask how you might be able to access this document. The Anti-Bullying Policy will outline the OLA's specific approach to preventing and tackling all forms of bullying.

#### Meeting with the Head

If, following an initial meeting with your child's form tutor/teacher or Head of Section, the bullying has not stopped and your concerns remain unresolved, arrange a meeting with the Head.

Before you meet, it would be useful to write down your concerns, what you have done so far to address them, why you remain concerned and what you feel is needed to resolve your concerns. This can then be shared with the head in advance of a meeting. By doing this, the head will be in a better place to work with you to resolve the situation.

At this stage, if needed, the school might refer to external agencies for advice and support.

#### Escalating your concerns

If you have exhausted all of the above steps and you do not feel that OLA has effectively dealt with the bullying, you may wish to submit a complaint via OLA's procedures.

### **Different types of bullying including links to local and national support**

#### **Cyberbullying – bullying via the Internet or technology**

Young people are increasingly reliant on their phones and the Internet to chat and stay in touch with their friends. For many young people, the distinction between the online world and other aspects of life is less marked than for some adults. The role of parents in keeping them safe and developing their understanding of respectful online relationships is vital. There is a lot of expert advice online to help parents/carers support their children. You can find more on [cyberbullying](#) and in Oxfordshire County Council's [internet safety](#) section.

If you are concerned that your child is involved in or subject to cyberbullying, speak to your child's Head of Section.

#### **Bullying relating to prejudice and difference**

Many children and adults are bullied because they are seen to be 'different'. This is referred to as prejudice-related bullying. It may be that your child is seen as different because of their race, religion or culture, sexuality, gender identity or because of a special educational need or disability they may have.

The Equality Act 2010, which came into force on 5 April 2011, requires public bodies (which includes all schools) to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

For more information on the statutory duty of schools to promote equality and fundamental British Values, use links below:

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- [Equality Act 2010 and schools](#)
- [Promoting Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC in schools](#)

Children can be singled out and bullied for a variety of reasons - e.g. their appearance, mannerisms, affluence, home circumstances, etc. While some young people bully because they perceive their target as 'different', others bully due to unmet needs or a change in another aspect of their life.

If you are concerned that your child is involved in or subject to prejudice-related bullying, speak to your child's Head of Section.

### **Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities**

Unfortunately, children with a Special Educational Need and/or Disability (SEND) can sometimes be a target for bullying. If your child has a SEN and/or disability, OLA should consider whether their SEN and/or disability is a contributory factor when dealing with incidents of bullying. In the first instance, as with any concern about bullying, contact OLA and outline your concerns.

Under the Equality Act 2010, OLA must not discriminate. For disabled children, this includes a duty to make reasonable adjustments to policies and practices. Early intervention to address underlying causes of bullying behaviour should include an assessment of whether appropriate provision is in place to support any SEN and/or disability that a pupil may have.

Should the behaviour of a child with a SEN and/or disability be causing significant harm to others and an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) is in place, it would be advisable to initiate an emergency annual review.

### **Homophobic, Bi-phobic and Transphobic (HBT) bullying**

Homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying is bullying directed at someone who is or is perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans (LGBT). If your child openly identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or is questioning their sexuality or gender identity, OLA should consider whether this is a contributory factor when dealing with incidents of bullying.

In the first instance, as with any concern about bullying, contact OLA and outline your concerns.

Under the Equality Act 2010, OLA must not discriminate. In their teaching of Relationships Education and RSE (Relationships and Sex Education), OLA should ensure that the needs of all pupils are appropriately met and that all pupils understand the importance of equality and respect. OLA must ensure that they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics.

School inspectors expect schools to be environments in which commonalities are identified and celebrated, difference is valued and nurtured, and bullying, harassment and violence are never tolerated. Oxfordshire schools can access free training in LGBT inclusion through the Learner Engagement Service.

[More information and helplines on Homophobic, Bi-phobic and Transphobic \(HBT\) bullying.](#)

### **Bullying related to race, faith or culture**

Britain is a multi-racial and multi-faith country, and everyone has the right to have their culture and religion respected by others. Nobody has the right to call your child names or to mistreat them because of their colour, race or religion. Racist bullying is not just about the colour of your skin; it can be about your ethnic background or religion too. The [national family lives website](#) provides helpful information on racist bullying.

In the first instance, as with any concern about bullying, contact OLA and outline your concerns.

[More information and helplines on race, faith or culture.](#)

### **Intersectional Identities**

We all have unique identities. Intersectional identity theory highlights that people are often disadvantaged or privileged by multiple sources: their race, age, gender identity, [sexual orientation](#), religion and other identity markers. While one aspect of somebody's identity can make them more susceptible to bullying, having an intersectional identity can make them even more vulnerable.

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If you believe your child's intersectional identity has contributed to their experience of bullying (e.g. a Muslim male who identifies as gay), contact OLA so that they can consider this when dealing with incidents of bullying.

### **Local support services**

#### SENDIASS

[SENDIASS](#) provide free and impartial information, support and advice to parents of children with special education needs and disabilities (ages 0-25).

#### Family Information Service

[Oxfordshire Family Information Service](#) provides a broad range of information to help parents and carers support their children (ages 0-20) including information on locally-available parenting support.

#### SAFE! Support for Young People Affected by Crime

[SAFE! Support for Young People Affected by Crime](#) is a local charity which provides free, individually tailored support (up to 6 sessions) for young people who have been victims of crime and bullying who are finding it hard to recover their sense of safety and confidence. For further information about the support SAFE!

If you are concerned that bullying is having a serious effect on your child's wellbeing, speak to your child's school, GP or health visitor who will refer you on to the appropriate services.

#### Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

[PCAMHS \(Primary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service\)](#) is a service for children and young people under the age of 18 to help with behavioural, emotional and mental health issues.

Referrals, with the consent of a parent/carer and their child, can be made by any professional working with them (e.g. teacher, social worker, GP, health visitor).

#### Oxfordshire Mind

Provide mental health advice for people across Oxfordshire. They've put together an Oxfordshire Mind Guide to make sure you can always find the right support for your situation. It's a directory of all the mental health services across Oxfordshire, from recovery groups to community mental health teams.

[Visit the Oxfordshire Mind website](#) for further information.

### **National support**

#### Family Lives

[Family Lives](#) gives advice to help you support your child, work with your child's school and what to do if you have problems trying to sort things out. They have comprehensive web pages with on dealing with bullying generally.

You can also phone Family Lives for free, confidential advice on anything to do with being a parent, including bullying, 24 hours a day.

#### Children's Legal Centre

The [Children's Legal Centre \(CORAM\)](#) provides free legal advice on all aspects of the law affecting children and young people, including bullying.

#### Anti-Bullying Alliance

The [Anti-Bullying Alliance \(ABA\)](#) brings together over 100 organisations into one network to develop and share good practice across the whole range of bullying issues. They have information and advice for both parents/carers and young people.

#### Kidscape

[Kidscape](#) is a charity established to prevent bullying and promote child protection. They advise young people, professionals and parents about different types of bullying and how to tackle it. They also offer specialist training and support for school staff and assertiveness training for young people.

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NSPCC

The [NSPCC](#) provide information and advice about bullying. You can also phone them to report concerns about a particular child.

Contact a family

Contact is an organisation for parent/carers of disabled children which provides a free helpline for parents and families and a leaflet - [Guide to Dealing with Bullying for Parents of Disabled Children](#).

National Bullying Helpline

The UK's only charitable organisation addressing adult and child bullying. [Visit the National Bullying Helpline](#) for further information.

### **Resources for young people**

Oxme.info

[oxme.info](#) is our website for children and young people aged between 8 and 19. It includes information for young people on [how to deal with bullying](#) and how to keep safe on the internet.

Childline

Get help and advice about bullying and a wide range of issues. You can call Childline on 0800 1111, talk to a counsellor online, send an email or post on message boards. They also provide information and advice about cyberbullying. Visit the [Childline website](#) for further information.

CEOP Thinkuknow

The [CEOP Thinkuknow website](#) provides a wide range of age-specific advice and resources for young people on e-safety and cyberbullying.

Don't stick it

Is a [website for young people with learning difficulties](#) with advice for their parents or carers.

Topaz

[TOPAZ](#) is run with and for young people who would like a safe space to explore their feelings and gain a better understanding of themselves, particularly those young people (13-25) who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender.

This group is also for people who are unsure about their sexuality or gender identity and might be questioning it. Friends of young people are also welcome at their first couple of meetings for support, and support is available for parents of young people who are trans, LGBTQ or questioning.

Young Minds

[Young Minds](#) are working to make sure young people get the best possible mental health support and have the resilience to overcome life's difficulties.

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