



Emersons Green Primary School

BULLYING - Guidance notes of Parents/Carers

(Please take a few minutes to read this, and keep it for future reference)

Introduction

Bullying is a problem that has been in schools for a long time, but the press would have us believe that it is on the increase today in schools all over the country. We are conscious that children use the word 'bullying' to describe a wide range of behaviour, so we thought it might be helpful to parents and carers if we published these guidance notes to indicate what bullying is - and what it is not - and how it can be dealt with.

It must always be borne in mind that probably the most important lessons that children have to learn in life concerns their relationships with others, and just as we all learn through making mistakes in academic subjects, so do we in our learning about relationships.

It is also important to know that in school we always take bullying seriously, and always take appropriate action.

What IS bullying?

Bullying is the severe, sustained and systematic verbal or physical abuse of a child or children by another child or group of children. It can include intimidation, repeated violence, calculated spitefulness, continued threats or extortion.

What bullying is NOT?

Children will often say that they are being bullied, but investigation reveals that it is, in fact, one of the following: -

- One-off arguments (or even fights) between children.
- Teasing which stops when corrected.
- Loss of temper by one child with different children at different times.
- Loss of temper during a playground game.
- Retaliation by the victim of a 'one-off' incident.
- Rough play.
- Accidental injury.
- Minor 'one off' insults.
- The falling out of friends (they often make up!).

When these incidents occur in school, they are obviously dealt with - but in a different way to bullying incidents.

It is also worth remembering that in any school there are certain times of year when children's behaviour can deteriorate, e.g. at Christmas, at the end of the Summer term, during a period of wet or windy weather etc.

"How do I know if my child is being bullied" - What to look for: -

Children often won't tell if they are being seriously bullied for fear of reprisals. Some of the indicators to watch for include: -

- Unusual quietness or unwillingness to talk about school when this had not been the case before.
- Persistent bruises which the child is unwilling to explain or talk about.
- Change of behaviour pattern - unusual behaviour including unhappiness.
- Child not wanting parent/carer to approach school (fear of reprisal).
- Child talks about persistent problems with one child or a group of children.
- Unusual bed-wetting.
- Child not wanting to walk to/from school alone (older children).
- Unwillingness to come to school when this has not been a problem before.
- Uncharacteristic and sudden spiteful behaviour to a younger sibling.
- Money/sweets going missing from home (on rare occasions in other schools children have been victims of extortion).

N.B. Most of the above **could** be indicators of other problems/issues apart from bullying.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

Firstly, you need to establish if it is a **genuine** case of bullying (as outlined in the definition).

A **If it is not bullying: -**

- Listen to your child.
- Try to get your child to understand the difference between a bullying and non-bullying occurrence. Talk through the incident with the child.
- Talk through what should happen next - should the child be advised to: talk through the problem with others involved? Make it up with the other children? Forget it? Apologise? Talk to his/her teacher?
- Keep an eye on the situation for any future developments. If in doubt, talk to your child's teacher particularly if you feel that there is potential for things not to improve.
- Adults need to help children to devise strategies to deal with difficult relationships

B **If it IS bullying**

- Listen to your child.
- Reassure your child s/he has done the right thing in 'telling' and that you will support him/her.
- Write down names/places/dates and what happened.
- Discuss with your child what should happen next and how s/he feels about your proposed action.
- **CONTACT THE SCHOOL** (preferably the classteacher or Headteacher). We will discuss the incident(s) with you and your child and decide together what the most appropriate action is. In most cases this will begin with an investigation, about which you will be kept informed.
- **DO NOT** tackle the alleged perpetrator of the bullying or his/her parents/carers yourself as this can lead to misunderstandings and can confuse the issue. **ALWAYS** go through the school.
- The school has a very clear 'Good Behaviour' policy and a 'No Blame Approach to Tackling Bullying', which encourages children to make the right choices about their behaviour towards others. There is, however, a Serious Behaviour Clause, which takes account of the rare cases when the normal 'Good Behaviour' policy has no effect. This deals very severely with bullying, but in a systematic way, which outlines a series of consequences if, behaviour does not improve. The ultimate sanction is permanent exclusion.

CONCLUSION

Genuine bullying incidents are rare and will not be tolerated at school any more than they will be at home. Parents/carers need to be open-minded about incidents, therefore, to ascertain whether or not they are genuine. Other incidents are still taken seriously and are appropriately dealt with, but the key word is "appropriate". However, one of our aims is to develop a close partnership with the home so it is important that if you have any doubts or concerns you should always contact the school to discuss them.

Guidelines updated September 2009

We hope these guidelines have been useful. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further information.