

Friendships / Bullying



What we do

What you can do

Friendships groups

- Girls may experience friendship issues at secondary school, and they may or may not call on you for advice and support.
- The key here is to be led by your child in most cases, and resist the temptation to wade in with lots of worldly advice that they may not want or be able to cope with.

Peer pressure

- Peer pressure can be a very powerful tool and may well result in your teenager doing things that are very out of character and have the potential to change their behaviour.
- One of the reasons that teenagers, and some children of all ages, succumb to peer pressure is based on their friendships and the fact that they want to hold on to them.
- As they mature into young adults they will realise that their true friends will accept them no matter what, but just try telling that to a petulant 15-year-old who has decided that she is in charge!
- Peer pressure becomes very acute during adolescence when the need to be accepted becomes paramount. The problems are compounded by the fact that peers can be very fickle as well as cruel at this age and it is not unusual for a whole group to 'gang up' on one and gossip spreads like wild fire.
- Parents may find it hard to accept that friends seem to be more important to a teenager than their own family, but this is an essential part of growing up.

Parents support

- We can all remember how difficult teenage years can be, and how precious and important our friends suddenly became, so try and understand why your teenager is behaving the way they are and why their friends are so important to them.
- Friends can influence us in major ways during our formative years, and it is natural for your teenager to want to spend more time with their friends than with you. It is also natural and to be expected that they may start dressing the same, listening to the same music and getting involved in the same activities.

What can I do ?

- Teenagers do want and need the support of their parents, however indifferent they may sometimes appear. But there is a fine and difficult line between giving support and “interfering”, in the eyes of the young person. If your teenager wants to talk, be available for them at that time if you possibly can, rather than putting them off until later.
- Try to listen objectively – hard to do if you feel they have suffered an injustice at the hands of so-called friends. Encourage them to come up with possible solutions to the problem, rather than suggesting your own, unless you are asked for them.

What does the school say?

Tips for Making and Keeping friends

- **Be a good listener** – Look at your friends when they are talking to you. Show them that you are paying attention and won't be distracted.
- **Share willingly** – Not just your sweets! Be OK about your friends having other friends too
- **Be loyal** – avoid the temptation to “bad mouth” them to others. If you can't say it to their face, don't say it
- **Say nice things** – give your friends compliments (genuine ones). Show them that you value and like them
- **Be honest** – when asked for your opinion, tell the truth. Don't lie.
- **Show interest** – let people know you are interested in them. Don't just talk about yourself, ask questions about others
- **Give space** – friends need freedom to do things without you sometimes
- **Be accepting** – not all of your friends have to think and act like you do. It would be boring if they did!
- Friendship problems come within the “top ten” issues raised and are frequently linked with other problems such as lack of confidence and low self-esteem.

School

- Students should speak to their Progress Manager
- PM will sit down with the students.
- Issues will be discussed and compromise reached.
- Sometimes parents will be contacted for feedback.
- Situation will be monitored.
- Questions?

Bullying

- Bullying policy on website.
- Policy also in planner.
- We are a 'telling' school and will encourage students to see us and tell us.
- We talk about it in assemblies, form time, PHSE lessons and we have a student anti-bullying group.

What is bullying?

Defining Bullying

- DfE “Preventing and Tackling Bullying – Advice for School Leaders, Staff and Governing Bodies” defines bullying as:
- **“behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally”**

Bullying can be

- **Emotional** – being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- **Physical** – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- **Sexual** – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comment
- **Racist**/racial taunts – graffiti, gestures
- **Homophobic** – because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- **Verbal** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyber** – all areas of internet, such as email and internet chat room misuse, mobile threats by text messaging and calls, misuse of associated technology – i.e. camera and video facilities

Bullying is not

- an odd occasional falling out with friends, name calling, arguments or when the occasional “joke” is played on someone.
- Students do sometimes fall out or say things because they are upset. When occasional problems of this kind arise **it is not classed as bullying.**
- It is an important part of a student’s development to learn how to deal with friendship breakdowns, the odd name calling or childish prank. We all have to learn how to deal with these situations and develop social skills to repair relationships.

Signs

A student may indicate by signs or behaviour that she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a student

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go on the bus
- begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises

What can you do?

- Keep calm, don't get angry or threatening to see parents or to visit the school.
- Praise your daughter for telling you, reassure her that she has done the right thing in letting you know.
- Try to find out the facts – what exactly happened and establish if it is really bullying.
- Listening, encourage your daughter to talk about her feelings, emotions and worries.
- Don't jump in with advice or immediately try to solve the problem for her. Listen to their ideas and agree to let them try out ideas.

What can you do?

- Help your daughter to think about what they would like to happen and ask how you can help. Don't rush this step unless you think your child is in danger.
- Bullying destroys confidence and your daughter will be feeling vulnerable so work doubly hard to help her feel loved, valued and important.
- Talk to them about why people bully to explain that the bully is the one with the problem.
- If you tell your daughter to fight back , they may end up feeling twice as bad.

Student needs to report bullying

- As a “Telling” school, victims of bullying have various routes to voice their concerns.
- **Prefects** – Each Year 7 student is aware of the Year 10 prefects attached to their form groups
- **Peer Mediators** – these students have been trained to help students who are victims
- **Form teacher** or **class teacher** – the form teacher is a member of staff who is primarily entrusted with the well-being of the student in their form. Students are to approach their form teachers regarding incidents and they will be the first person to help
- **Progress Manager** – some students feel more comfortable telling their progress Manager
- **Parents/carers** – are welcome to contact PM to express concerns over bullying

Parents

Parental support is vital for our schools anti-bullying policy procedures. If a parent/carer suspects their child is being bullied, we ask them to **report the incident immediately**. If bullying is happening via a social networking site or mobile phone, **it is very important to keep a record of what is written / posted**.

The following guidelines may be useful for parents/carers wishing to report the bullying of a student

- try to stay calm
- be as specific as possible about what your child says has happened
- make a note of the action the school intends to take
- ask if there is anything you can do to help your child at school
- stay in touch with the school

If your concerns are not being met

- check the school anti-bullying policy to see if agreed procedures are being followed
- discuss your concerns with the parent governor or other parents/carers
- make an appointment to meet the Progress Manager
- if the above fail to help, write to the Chairman of Governors explaining your concerns