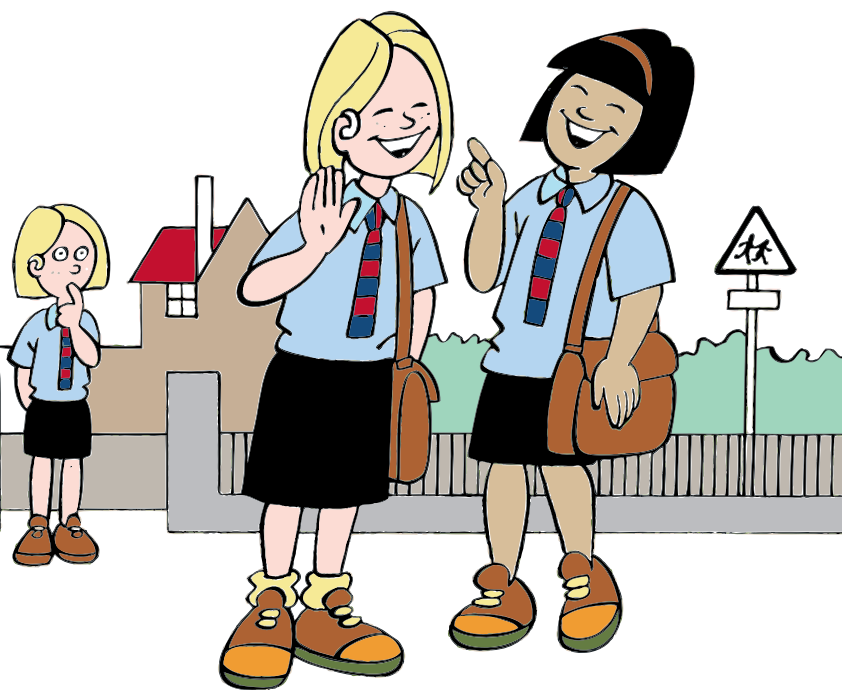


Bullying

and deaf children



A guide for schools

Our vision is of a
world without barriers
for every deaf child.

Note: we use the term 'deaf' to mean all types of deafness, including temporary deafness such as glue ear.

Childhood deafness

As all children are different, two children with a similar level of deafness will not behave or develop in the same way. A deaf child may use speech (although this may be unclear) or sign language or a mixture of both. Whichever method of communication deaf children use, they will find it difficult to interact in a large, noisy classroom or a playground where the level of background noise is usually high.

Deaf children can be isolated from groups. They may find it difficult to join in and to keep up with what other students who can hear (hearing children) are talking about. Hearing children may give up trying to communicate if they cannot understand a deaf child. Using a more 'deaf aware' style of teaching and raising awareness among pupils and staff can go a long way to preventing some of these problems. Contact our Freephone Helpline for a copy of our *Deaf Friendly Schools* and *Deaf Friendly Teaching* booklets.



From talking to families who contact us, we know that the experiences deaf children have in mainstream schools are generally positive. However, the threat of bullying can spoil any child's experience of school. In extreme cases it can also seriously damage their physical and mental wellbeing.

Anti-bullying policy

Statistics on the level of bullying taking place in UK mainstream schools vary widely. All schools must have an anti-bullying policy, whether or not a school considers bullying to be a problem for them.

The first year of secondary school is commonly thought to be a time when children are particularly vulnerable. Adjusting to a new environment can be more difficult for deaf children and young people than it is for hearing children. They may feel isolated from hearing children because of communication difficulties, having to wear a hearing aid, sitting at the front of the class, or having an 'invisible disability'.



What to look for

The situations listed below may apply to any child from time to time. However, if they become regular events or repeated patterns, it is possible that the child may be being bullied. Some schools may believe that they have no problem with bullying. An effective anti-bullying policy would still be useful as a way of dealing with any future incidents and as an indicator of good practice. This list is not complete and only gives a brief idea of possible signs of bullying.

- Disruptive behaviour (In response to bullying, children with poor communication skills may become unco-operative and difficult with everyone.)
- The quality of school work falling
- Becoming anxious or stressed about going to school (or the place where bullying occurs)
- Lost or damaged possessions
- Clothes being ripped, missing or dirty
- Unexplained cuts, bruises and so on
- Not eating at school (could indicate loss of lunch money)
- Arriving at school late
- Becoming anxious near home time
- Faking illness to miss school
- Loss of friends
- Not playing with or seeing friends at playtime or after school
- Sitting alone in class
- Asking to stay inside at break times
- Staying near the teacher on duty during breaks
- Becoming withdrawn and not taking part in class

What to do

Start to think about the issues before they arise. This can make things run more smoothly. Some of the pitfalls connected with bullying of hearing children are just as relevant when dealing with bullying that involves deaf pupils. It is surprisingly easy to accidentally support bullying behaviour. For example, this could be by not taking reports of bullying seriously or not acting on reports of bullying. Children and young people need to know that any problem they take to staff will be heard and dealt with. This is particularly true in the case of bullying.

- Take time to listen to the child. Give them time to explain what has happened. Deaf children may take longer to tell you what they want to say. Communication often becomes more difficult for children when they are upset, particularly if they have difficulties expressing themselves.
- All children and young people involved in the incident, including those who saw it, should be involved and kept informed throughout the whole process of solving the problem.
- Read about deaf issues and deaf awareness.
- Look for a teaching assistant with some level of deaf awareness or, where appropriate, signing skills.
- Try to make the classroom as welcoming as possible.
- Environmental improvements (for example putting rubber stoppers on the bottom of chair legs) can significantly reduce the background noise for those who use hearing aids.

- Meet the children individually before school starts to give you both a chance to ask questions and talk about any anxieties. Find out about their communication needs. (It is important to check what type of communication the child feels most comfortable with.)
- Introduce a project on deaf awareness in the class. This could raise awareness of issues relating to deafness, blindness and deafblindness. Concentrating on the idea that everyone is different may reduce the possibility of the deaf child being seen as the 'needy' member of the class.



Preventing bullying

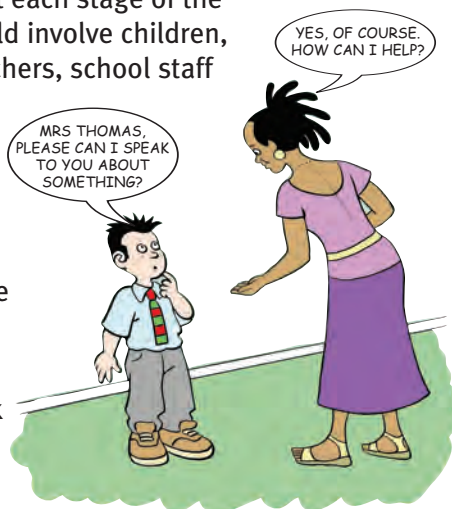
Decide how to define bullying and what sort of policy to have. For the purposes of this leaflet, we have defined bullying as intentionally trying to hurt, threaten or frighten someone. (This definition is based on the one in *Bullying: Home, School and Community*, Tattum & Herbert, 1997.) We know that the pressure on schools is high, and new initiatives are hard when resources are already stretched. However, it is essential to create an atmosphere where bullying is not accepted, and to constantly review anti-bullying policy to make sure it stays effective.

The risk of deaf children becoming victims of bullying can be reduced by positive policies on communication. Provide basic training on deaf awareness for other pupils to make them aware of the communication needs of deaf students. Make sure these needs are consistently met.

Deaf children may be vulnerable if they don't have the right support, and any child wanting to bully will target those who are vulnerable. If teaching staff can identify vulnerable groups, it will make it easier for children to be believed.

There are many examples of excellent policies around the country. The following points are drawn from these policies.

- Involve everyone affected at each stage of the planning process. You should involve children, young people, parents, teachers, school staff and, in some cases, the local community.
- All staff should be involved in deaf awareness and anti-bullying training. If they are not committed, the whole process is weakened.
- Members of staff should be available for children to talk



to when they need to. It might be necessary to reorganise rotas and cover during breaks to allow for this.

- Work with parents and families to create positive relations between home and school.
- Let deaf children know about the complaints procedure. Bear in mind that they may need more time to express how they are feeling.
- An anti-bullying policy should be part of a wider policy covering discipline and behaviour in general.
- Any policy and training should include practical examples of bullying situations and ways of solving problems without causing arguments.
- Projects for the move between primary and secondary schools (transition projects) provide an opportunity for pupils moving up to get to know new surroundings before they begin as a new pupil.
- Use a system of student networks or counsellors to encourage responsible behaviour and investment at all levels. Larger initiatives such as this need a considerable amount of planning and commitment throughout the whole school and are better introduced in stages.
- Consult specialist teachers of deaf children, staff of special-needs units, educational social workers or educational psychologists who may help to focus ideas.
- Involve parents and families in developing, introducing and monitoring the policy.
- Make sure there is a consistent approach to children 'telling'. Make sure the procedure for talking about bullying is widely known and is clear to all children.
- Anonymous questionnaires, that pupils fill in without giving their names, seem to work well in helping to assess the scale of the problem. This can include identifying areas where children feel unsafe (for example the playground or changing rooms).

Communication tips

If a deaf child is going to be able to ‘tell’ about bullying, they need to have confidence in your communication skills.

Below are some points to remember when you are communicating with a deaf child. These apply to children who use speech and lipreading, sign language or a combination of both.

- Make sure you have the child’s attention before starting to sign or speak to them.
- Speak clearly and at a normal pace. Speaking too slowly or shouting will distort lip patterns and can make it difficult to lipread.
- Make sure there is good lighting so that your face is not in the shadow.
- Face the child and maintain good eye contact. Don’t sit too close (for lipreading and signing purposes the best distance is between one and two metres apart).
- Try to make sure that background noise is kept to a minimum. In a noisy environment, children with hearing aids, cochlear implants, or those children with mild deafness or deafness in one ear who do not use hearing aids will find it particularly difficult to pick out what is being said.
- Use hand gestures and facial expressions to help children understand what you are saying.
- Make sure children know when there is a new topic of conversation, so that they understand the context.
- Use sentences, rather than words on their own, to help them understand.

- If a child does not understand a word or sign, try and use a different one with the same meaning.
- Do not eat or block the view of your face while speaking. If you have a beard or moustache, it is helpful to keep it trimmed, especially around the mouth.



Useful organisations

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) (England & Wales)

Advice line for parents on all matters concerning schools.
You can download a list of publications from the website.

1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ

Freephone helpline: 0808 800 5793 (voice and text)

Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm

www.ace-ed.org.uk

Bullying Online

Provides information and support relating to bullying for pupils, parents and schools.

PO Box 552, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 9BF

Email: help@bullying.co.uk

www.bullying.co.uk

Childline (UK wide)

Provides a counselling service for children and young people.

FREEPOST, NATN 1111, London E1 6BR

Freephone helpline: 0800 1111 (voice)

24 hours a day, seven days a week

Freephone text: 0800 400 222, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 9.30pm, Saturday and Sundays, 11am to 8pm

Bullying line (Scotland only): 0800 441111 (voice)

Monday to Friday 3.30pm to 9.30pm

www.childline.org.uk

Children 1st – Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Free support and information.

83 Whitehouse Loan, Edinburgh EH9 1AT

Freephone parent line: 0808 800 2222

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, Tuesday and Thursday open until 9pm

www.children1st.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre

Provides legal advice and representation to children, their carers and professionals throughout the UK.

University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex CO4 3SQ

Phone: 01206 872466 (voice)

National Education Line via Community Legal Advice:

0845 345 4345, Monday to Friday 9am to 6.30pm

Fax: 01206 874026

Email: clc@essex.ac.uk (immediate response not guaranteed)

www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Enquire (Scotland)

Advice on all aspects of education for children in Scotland with special educational needs.

Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh,
Scotland EH2 4RG

Phone: 0845 123 2303 (voice)

Text: 0131 222 2439

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm,
Tuesday and Thursday open until 7pm

Fax: 0131 228 9852

Email: info@enquire.org.uk

www.enquire.org.uk

Kidscape

Produces leaflets on bullying and gives advice. Provides a phone helpline for parents. Provide training for people working with children. Provides assertiveness training for children who have been bullied.

2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH

Parents' Anti-bullying Helpline: 0845 120 5204 (voice)

Calls charged at local rate

Fax: 0207 730 7081

www.kidscape.org.uk

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline (England, Scotland and Northern Ireland)

Provides information, advice and counselling to anyone concerned about a child's safety.

Western House, 42 Curtain Rd, London EC2A 3NH

Freephone: 0808 800 5000 (voice) help and advice for adults

Freephone text: 0800 056 0566

Asian Helpline: 0808 800 500 (offering assistance in English, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu)

Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC Cymru/Wales Child Protection Helpline (bilingual service)

Information, advice and counselling (in Welsh or English) for anyone in Wales concerned about a child's safety .

Freephone helpline: 0808 800 5000 (voice)

Freephone text: 0808 100 1033

(Monday to Friday 10am to 6pm)

Fax: 01248 361 085

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

Parentline Plus

A national charity, providing a range of services including a free helpline, groups, workshops and courses, information leaflets, website, and a number of services designed to support families in need.

520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road,
London NW5 1TL

Freephone: 0808 800 2222 (voice),

24 hours a day, seven days a week

Text freephone: 0800 783 6783,

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Email: parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Parents Advice Centre (Northern Ireland)

A helpline for parents in Northern Ireland.

1st floor, Andras House, 60 Great Victoria Street,
Belfast, BT2 7BB

Freephone helpline: 0808 8010 722 (voice),

Monday to Thursday 9am to 8pm and Friday 9am to 5pm

www.parentsadvicecentre.org

Scottish Child Law Centre

An independent charity organisation providing a free telephone advice service on all aspects of Scottish law relating to children and young people.

54 East Crosscauseway, Edinburgh EH8 9HD

Information helpline: 0131 667 6333 (voice),

Freephone helpline (for under 18s): 0800 328 8970 (voice),
(both open: 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Friday)

Fax: 0131 662 1713

Email enquiries@sclc.org.uk

SMS text message: text 'sclc' and your question to 80800

www.sclc.org.uk

Books, videos and other resources

Forest Books

A bookshop specialising in deafness and deaf issues.

Ellwood Road, Milkwall, Coleford, Gloucestershire GL16 7LE

Phone: 01594 833 858 (voice and text),
9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

Fax: 01594 833446

www.forestbooks.com

Kidscape

An organisation producing information on preventing bullying and sexual abuse. Information to buy or download from the website.

2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH

Phone helpline: 08451 205204 (voice), charged at local rate

Fax: 0207 730 7081

www.kidscape.org.uk

Lucky Duck Books

www.luckyduck.co.uk

The Safechild

An American website with information on preventing bullying, developing life skills and community awareness, and suggested reading and links.

www.safechild.org

Useful websites

Bullying online

Online advice for parents, teachers and children being bullied.

Email: help@bullying.co.uk

www.bullying.co.uk

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

Advice for children, parents and teachers.

www.dcsf.gov.uk/bullying

Kidscape

Information for parents, professionals and children on preventing and dealing with bullying.

www.kidscape.org.uk

Metropolitan Police

Information for children being bullied and those who are bullying.

www.met.police.uk/youngpeople/bullying.htm

There4me.com

NSPCC website for young people aged 12 to 16.

www.there4me.com

NDCS provides the following services through our membership scheme. Registration is simple, fast and free to parents and carers of deaf children and professionals working with them. Contact the Freephone Helpline (see below) or register through www.ndcs.org.uk

- A Freephone Helpline 0808 800 8880 (voice and text) offering clear, balanced information on many issues relating to childhood deafness, including schooling and communication options.
- A range of publications for parents and professionals on areas such as audiology, parenting and financial support.
- A website at www.ndcs.org.uk with regularly updated information on all aspects of childhood deafness and access to all NDCS publications.
- A team of family officers who provide information and local support for families of deaf children across the UK.
- Advice on special educational needs (SEN) disability discrimination in education and welfare benefits.
- Representation at SEN and Social Security Appeals Tribunals from our Legal Casework Service.
- An audiologist and technology team to provide information about deafness and equipment that may help deaf children.
- A children's equipment grants scheme and the opportunity to borrow equipment to try out at home.
- Family weekends and special events for families of deaf children.
- Sports, arts and outdoor activities for deaf children and young people.
- A quarterly magazine and regular email updates.
- An online forum for parents and carers to share their experiences, at www.ndcs.org.uk/parentplace.

NDCS is the national charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people.

NDCS Freephone Helpline:
0808 800 8880 (voice and text)

Email: helpline@ndcs.org.uk
www.ndcs.org.uk

Published by the National Deaf Children's Society
15 Dufferin Street, London EC1Y 8UR
Tel: 020 7490 8656 (voice and text) Fax: 020 7251 5020
NDCS is a registered charity in England and Wales no. 1016532 and
in Scotland no. SC040779. © NDCS February 2009
This publication can be requested in large print, in Braille and on audio CD.

