



# Top Tips for Supporting Children Who Are Experiencing Bullying

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit [nationalcollege.com](https://nationalcollege.com).

## Top Tips for Supporting Children Who Are EXPERIENCING BULLYING

In a DfE survey, 36% of parents said that their child had been bullied in the past year, while 29% of secondary school headteachers reported bullying among students. Public Health England states that young people who maintain positive communication with their family were less likely to experience bullying – so it's important that parents, carers and educators know how to talk to children about bullying.

- 1. WATCH FOR BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES**  
Children who are experiencing bullying may become quiet, withdrawn, or anxious; however, they may also act on the pain and anger that they're feeling. A shift in attitude towards their existing friends (or not mentioning them any more at all) or refusing to new friendships which seem notably different could also be warning signs. It's important to be alert to such changes and talk to your child about them if they occur.
- 2. THINK THINGS THROUGH**  
Before acting, ask yourself if this is the right time and place to address concerns about bullying. Might your worries trigger strong feelings – perhaps from your own experiences – that could discourage your child from opening up to you? You could try discussing what you've noticed with another trusted adult who knows your child well.
- 3. BE OPEN AND UNDERSTANDING**  
Try to outline to your child the changes that you've noticed in their body language, appearance, behaviour, or tone of voice – and do so without sounding judgemental. Help them to describe what they're feeling – be it anger, sadness, fear or something else – as accurately as possible. If they say they're 'angry', do they mean 'frustrated' or 'resented'? This will help them to understand how they're feeling and why.
- 4. LET THEM SPEAK FREELY**  
Use open questions and a welcoming tone to encourage your child to talk. Listen closely and attentively what they're said at appropriate points. Deliberately without interrupting, demonstrate that you're understanding clearly. Bullying may have undermined your child's sense of control, and they may fear that you'll judge them, overreact or impose consequences – so this conversation can reassess them being honest with you was the right decision.
- 5. CALL A TIME OUT**  
A conversation about bullying could leave both you and your child feeling distressed. It's important to recognise this and pause at suitable moments to calm down. Take deep breaths, enjoy a hot drink or even have a cathartic cry. This can reinforce trust, while also helping you both feel that you have control over the situation and the emotions that you're feeling.
- 6. STAY INFORMED**  
Make sure you know your child's school's definition of, responses to and relevant contacts for bullying. This information should be in their anti-bullying policy, which ought to be available on the school's website. Check teachers or form tutors are usually the first point of contact, though there may be dedicated support teams or key workers to help your child, depending on the specific situation.
- 7. PREP YOUR CHILD FOR THE RESPONSE**  
Schools' responses to bullying vary depending on whether they're resolving disagreements and arguments, or addressing unwanted verbal or physical harm and so on. It's important to work out with your child whether any harm was intentional, how much control they had over the situation and how often such incidents have occurred. Repeating concerns accurately will get the best outcome for your child more quickly.
- 8. SUMMARISE YOUR CHILD'S EXPERIENCE**  
When you contact the school, make sure you've precisely described what your child experienced: what happened, when, where, and who was involved. This will help the school to investigate further, identifying any witnesses, as well as those who were directly involved. It can also help the school to know how your child is feeling and how they'd like the matter to be resolved.
- 9. LIAISE WITH THE SCHOOL**  
Any school has a duty to ensure that the members of its community feel safe and included. It's important for children to learn their role in this. The school must determine how best to restore these feelings of safety and respect. It's often best for schools to keep parents and carers informed of any action taken – and for families to avoid taking matters into their own hands.
- 10. CHECK IN FREQUENTLY**  
Once the issue has been resolved and the bullying behaviour has stopped, your child may still feel anxious and might find it difficult to rebuild relationships or develop new ones. Parents, carers and the school should all keep an eye on how the child is feeling and acting over the following months. Any relevant information should be shared, so that further support can be planned if necessary.

**Meet Our Expert**  
Bob Bosley is the Director of Anti-Bullying Quality Mark-UK, which challenges and supports schools to develop sustainable whole-school approaches to prevent bullying, including working with parents and carers. More than 80 schools in England and Wales currently hold the quality mark.

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**The National College**

Source: 'Help! I've been bullied' by Nicky Jones, published by National Online Safety, 2019. <https://www.nationalonlinesafety.com/anti-bullying/parents-carers/parents-carers-what-to-do-if-your-child-has-been-bullied>

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The latest bullying research from the DfE makes for upsetting reading 😞 Almost half (40%) of schoolchildren in the UK have been bullied within the past 12 months – with 21% of them experiencing negative changes to their behaviour, including avoiding going to school. In 15% of those cases, the victim's behaviour suffers to the extent that they are ultimately excluded themselves.

Understanding and honest conversation can be an immense benefit to children who have become the target of bullying – but it's such a delicate subject that it can often be hard for trusted adults to know where (or how) to start.

Our #WakeUpWednesday guide this week contains ten practical tips for supporting a child who is experiencing bullying.

Please [click here](#) to download the guide.