

# Emerging Minds Families

## FACT SHEET

# Taking action to stop your child from being bullied

### Definition

Emerging Minds acknowledges that families come in many forms. For the purposes of easy reading, the term 'parent' encompasses the biological, adoptive, foster and kinship carers of a child, as well as individuals who have chosen to take up primary or shared responsibility in raising that child.

It's natural to want to fly into action when you find out your child has been bullied. However, it's important to first take time to check your emotions, understand your child's bullying experience and plan how to respond together with your child.

### If you haven't already, take a look at:

- [Finding out your child is experiencing or engaging in bullying](#)
- [Understanding your child's experience of bullying](#)
- [Making a plan with your child to address bullying](#)

Then you can respond or support your child to take action.

The aim is not just to have the bullying stop, but to help your child deal with the situation, and to prevent or reduce any harmful impacts on them.



This guide offers tips for:

- addressing bullying at school
- dealing with online bullying; and
- knowing when to seek help.

The tips for addressing bullying at school are mostly appropriate for responding to bullying that happens in other settings too. While other organisations like sport clubs or community groups might not have formal policies or written procedures, the adults who are supervising children in those settings are expected to take bullying seriously.

## Addressing bullying at school

Whether the bullying behaviour is happening on the school grounds or off campus, if it involves students you should contact the school.

There is no reason to worry or feel embarrassed about asking schools to address a bullying issue. Schools, and the staff who work in them, are legally required to protect children from harm, including harms caused by bullying, and will appreciate you bringing the behaviour to their attention so it can be addressed. School staff have the authority, process and skills to get directly involved and improve the situation.

Often children who are experiencing bullying do not want their teachers, educators or other school staff to be involved. This might be because they:

- feel embarrassed, or are afraid they will be embarrassed if “everyone” at school knows
- think the school won’t do anything
- think if the school does take action, it won’t help, and could make the bullying increase or get worse.

Help your child understand why it’s important to tell the school. Remind them that bullying is common and their school will have experience in handling it.

If your child doesn’t want to tell the school but the bullying is continuing, getting worse or their safety is an issue, explain to them that you understand why they don’t want to talk to the school but why it’s important to do so.

### What you can do

- Ask your child which teacher, educator or staff member they have a good relationship with and they’d feel comfortable with knowing about the bullying.
- If your child is at primary school the best person to contact is their class teacher or educator; if they’re at high school it might be their head of house or year coordinator. Other parents have found it helpful to talk to a school counsellor or wellbeing coordinator, principal, out-of-school-care coordinator, or a previous teacher who might know the background to the situation.
- Call, rather than email, the school and request a meeting so you can have a face-to-face conversation about how to address the bullying behaviour.
- Be clear and calm about why you want to meet without making accusations. For example, ‘X has told us about some difficulties they’re having with another child at school. Can we meet to discuss what’s happening and what to do?’
- Ask for a copy of the school’s bullying policy, so you can read it before your meeting.
- Remember that contacting or approaching the child involved or their family is not the right solution. This could increase the bullying or make the situation worse for your child in other ways.

When you meet with the school:

- Involve your child in the process as much as possible (depending on their age and the situation). Let them talk about what has happened and their ideas for responding.
- Ask how each of the steps in the school’s bullying policy is being addressed.
- Ask when and how someone will let you know what action has been taken and how it went.
- Ask what mental health supports are available, such as a school counsellor or psychologist your child can talk to.
- Stay in touch with the school staff member you met with and contact them if the bullying behaviour continues or something new develops.
- Share your child’s or your ideas about what might help stop the bullying. For example, one parent we spoke to asked if she could talk to her daughter’s class about her medical condition and treatments to help her classmates understand why some of their comments were upsetting.

Keep in mind that the school wants to stop the bullying and protect your child from harm just as much as you do. They might have more understanding of the situation and the other child or children involved than you do.

By working together, you can get the best outcome for your child.



## Dealing with cyberbullying

If your child has experienced cyberbullying, it's important to think through how best to respond and to support them.

It might seem like taking away their phone or computer is the simplest solution. But that will not stop the bullying behaviour or teach your child how to deal with bullying if they experience it again. Withdrawing access to their devices can also cause more harm by cutting off their connection with friends who can support them. It also teaches your child that when they come to you with a problem it may have negative consequences for them, like having their phone taken away.

Instead, help your child take back some control and learn skills to respond to cyberbullying. Ask how you can support them to have down time without dealing or worrying about online bullying – by enforcing phone-free time at night, for example. Or you could suggest they delete an app for a while or unfollow or block someone. For example, you might say: 'What X has done is not OK. Have you blocked them, so that you don't have to see those messages anymore?'

Cyber safety experts agree that these are the key things you should tell or help your child to do if they're experiencing online bullying:

- **Keep evidence**  
Do not immediately delete bullying messages or posts – you may need them to report bullying. Tell your child to take screenshots or recordings, to note the usernames and display names of people involved, and to keep URLs (web addresses) as well as message links (for Discord).
- **Block or mute the person engaging in the bullying**  
Your child can block the person or people engaging in bullying, or change settings on their phone/device or account to ignore, hide or mute them so they won't see their messages, posts or comments. See [the eSafety Commissioner's guide](#) for advice about how to do this.
- **Ask the person engaging in bullying to stop**  
If they feel safe to do so your child could ask the person who is bullying to stop and to delete the message, post or shared content. Suggest they write something like: 'What you're doing is bullying and I want you to stop it'. It might not work – but sometimes children do things without thinking about the consequences, so they might stop (and delete the harmful content) if they're called out and realise that what they did is causing harm.

- **Report and get harmful content removed**  
Encourage or help your child to report cyberbullying to the social media, gaming platform, website or app that was used. If the site, game or app doesn't remove the harmful content, and the cyberbullying is serious, the Australian Government eSafety Commissioner can ask them to delete it (see [More information and advice](#), following).
- **Check in**  
If your child has already tried any of these options, check in with them to find out how it went and see if they need your help to take further action.

You can help your child take back some control and learn skills to respond to cyberbullying.

## More information and advice

- The Raising Children Network website has some helpful advice for [working with teachers to address bullying at school](#).
- Learn more about [how to protect your child from cyberbullying and report it on the eSafety Commissioner's website](#).
- Further [advice on staying safe online](#) is available on the Be Connected website.
- The eSafety Kids site has information about online bullying for [parents and carers](#), for [teens and tweens](#) and also for [younger children](#).



## Seek help

Bullying can have serious impacts on a child's mental and physical health – both for children who experience it and those who are engaging in bullying behaviour.

It's important to seek help if you notice changes in your child's mood, behaviour or appetite, or if they stop wanting to do things they used to enjoy or are refusing to go to school. Speaking to your family doctor/GP, another health professional or school counsellor/wellbeing officer is a great place to start.

There is a list of [national and state-based parent support helplines and hotlines](#) on the Raising Children Network website.

### Immediate support and advice

If you are concerned your child might harm themselves, [contact a mental health crisis service](#).



## More information and advice

It might take some time for the bullying behaviour to be addressed and hopefully stop. In the meantime there are things you can do to support your child and [protect them from the harmful impacts of bullying](#).

AVAILABLE HERE

**Protecting your child from bullying harm**

