



My child is being bullied

A guide for parents & carers



Dear Parent or Carer,

If you're reading this because your child is being bullied, I want you to know - you're not on your own. We've written this guide in conjunction with parents, carers and schools to offer some reassurance, practical advice, and a clear starting point.

I know what it's like to be bullied at school. And later, as a teacher and Deputy Head, I worked closely with children who were being bullied - and with children who were bullying others. I've seen how complicated and emotional these situations can be for families, and how much children need the adults around them to respond with care and clarity.

That's why I set up More Than Flags and Rainbows - to help schools become safer, kinder places where every child feels they belong.

Every school has bullying. What matters most is how a school deals with it, and how home and school work together to put things right. It can be easy to vent on social media, or to try to take matters into your own hands, but these rarely, if ever make the situation better.

This booklet is here to help you take calm, confident steps if you're worried about bullying. It's full of advice I wish more families had been given sooner.

Whatever stage you're at - whether you've just noticed something's wrong, or you're in touch with the school, I hope this guide helps you feel supported and empowered.



Ian Timbrell

Founder
More Than Flags and Rainbows CIC

About us

**MORE THAN FLAGS
AND RAINBOWS**
Helping schools be more inclusive



More Than Flags and Rainbows is a not-for-profit organisation working to make schools safer, more inclusive places for all.

We offer training, advice, and resources to help schools tackle bullying, improve relationships, and include every family in school life

We know that inclusion is about more than posters and policies - it's about what happens every day in classrooms, corridors and playgrounds. We support teachers and school leaders to make real, lasting changes that help every child feel like they belong.

MTFAR was founded by Ian Timbrell, a former Deputy Headteacher with 17 years of experience in education. Ian set up MTFAR after years of supporting children and families affected by bullying, exclusion, and discrimination.

Our work is guided by three key aims:

- To reduce all forms of bullying
- To improve LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools
- To help all members of school communities feel safe, seen and supported.

Whether you're a parent, carer, teacher or pupil, we believe we all have a role to play in creating safe and respectful schools.

To find out more, visit:

www.morethanflagsandrainbows.com

Our approach

Every child deserves to feel safe, seen and supported at school.

This guide is built on four simple ideas that help families and schools work together to stop bullying and protect children's wellbeing.

01 Work together with the school

Bullying is best tackled when home and school work as a team. Good communication and shared plans help your child feel supported.

02 Listen to and support your child

Let your child talk about what's happening, how it makes them feel, and what they need. Just knowing you believe them can make a huge difference.

03 Stay calm and practical

It's natural to feel upset or angry. But staying calm helps you take clear steps, ask the right questions, and get the right support.

04 Know your rights & the school's role

Schools have a duty to prevent and respond to bullying. You have the right to expect that they'll take your concerns seriously and take action.

What is bullying?

Bullying is more than just a one-off falling out. Bullying is:

- Repeated – it happens more than once, not just a single incident.
- Intentional – it's meant to hurt, embarrass or upset.
- Unfair – there is usually a difference in power, such as one child being more confident, popular, or physically stronger than the other.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- Name-calling, teasing or spreading rumours
- Being left out on purpose
- Pushing, hitting or threatening
- Online bullying through messages, social media or games

Not all bullying is easy to spot in schools. In some instances, school will only be able to take action once it is reported by the child or an adult that they have reported it to.

“They didn’t mean it that way” isn’t an excuse.

Even if a child says they were “only joking,” bullying is about the impact - not the intention. If your child is repeatedly upset, worried or excluded, it matters and deserves to be taken seriously.

Every child deserves to feel safe, respected and included at school.

Step 1: Listen to your child

The most important first step is to make sure your child feels heard, believed and safe



Create a calm and quiet moment to talk

Choose a quiet time when you won't be interrupted - during a walk, a car journey, or while doing something together at home. It can help to talk side by side rather than face to face, as avoiding eye contact can make some children feel less like they're being interrogated.

Let them speak in their own words, and try not to jump in too quickly with solutions or questions. If they don't want to talk about it at that moment, give them some time and then go back to the conversation at a later point.

Ask open questions and let them lead

Open questions help children describe what's happened without feeling pressured to give the 'right' answer.

Try asking things like:

- "What happened next?"
- "How did that make you feel?"

Avoid leading and yes/no questions such as, "Were they horrible to you again today?" as these can shape or even confuse the story and they give you answers that they think you want.

Step 1: Continued



Take notes - but not in front of them

It's helpful to keep a clear record of what your child tells you, especially if you need to speak to the school.

But avoid writing things down while they're talking, as it can feel formal or make them worry they're in trouble. Jot things down afterwards instead.



Remember: you're hearing one side

It's natural to feel protective, but try to stay open. Your child's feelings are always valid but their version of events is one part of the picture.

For the school to help, they'll need to speak to others involved and build a fuller understanding of what's been happening. This may take some time and so you might not get answers immediately.

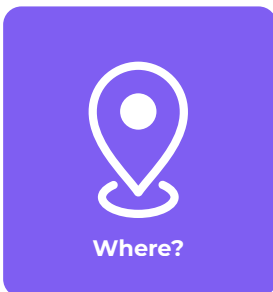
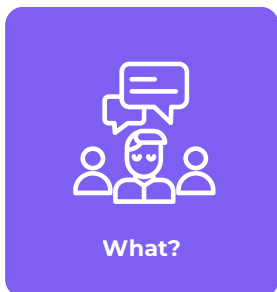
Avoid posting on social media

It can be tempting to vent your frustration online, but this can quickly make the situation worse. Once something is public, it's harder for the school to respond, and it rarely benefits your child. Focus instead on building a solution together with the school.

Step 2: Keep a record

Keeping a simple, factual record can really help when you're working with the school to understand what's been happening and how to move forward.

This isn't about blame - it's about making sure everyone has the right information to support your child. It also helps you stay calm, clear and confident when speaking to the school.



What to write down

- The date and time of anything your child tells you
- What they said happened (use their words if possible)
- Where they said it took place and who was involved
- How it affected your child (e.g. changes in mood, avoiding school, physical signs)

Why it matters:

These notes help you share a fuller picture with the school and notice any patterns over time. That makes it easier to work together on the right next steps. If there are incidents happening over time, these records can help you and the school spot patterns. It might be frustrating that this takes time, but if the school is going to tackle this effectively, they need as much detailed information as possible.

Step 3: Talk to the School

Once you've listened to your child and made notes, it's time to get in touch with the school. This can feel daunting but remember, you're not complaining, you're starting a conversation. Most schools want to help, and the earlier they know there's a problem, the quicker they can take action.

Start with the class teacher or form tutor

They usually know your child best and can speak to them directly. You can request a chat in person, by phone, or via email - whatever feels easiest to begin with.

The teacher may ask to arrange a separate meeting. This isn't a delay - it's to make sure the conversation happens in the right place and that they have time to gather any relevant information before you speak.

Be calm, clear and open

Explain what your child has told you, without placing blame. Use your notes to give a clear picture and avoid trying to solve everything at once.

Try: "I wanted to share something that's been upsetting [your child's name]."

Ask what happens next

It's OK to ask questions like:

- "What happens now?"
- "When can I expect an update?"
- "How will you get in touch with me?"
- "How will you look after [your child's name]?"

Step 4: Make a Plan & Follow Up

Once you've spoken to the school, the next step is to agree a clear plan - and keep checking in to make sure it's working.

Remember: you and the school are on the same team

Ask what actions the school will take

Every school should have an anti-bullying policy.

You can ask:

- "Can I have a copy of the policy?"
- "What support will my child have?"
- "How will you follow this up with others involved?"
- "What should I tell my child to expect?"

Agree how you'll stay in touch

Ask how and when you'll be updated - whether by phone, email or a follow-up meeting.

It helps to have a named contact who can keep you in the loop.

Step 4: Continued

Ask how your child will be supported in school

You can ask:

- “Will someone check in with them regularly?”
- “Is there a safe space or trusted adult they can go to?”

Your child should feel reassured that they are being taken seriously and won't face this alone.

Keep following up

Sometimes change takes time. It's OK to check in again if things don't improve or if new issues come up.

You can say:

- “Thank you for your support so far. I just wanted to check how things are going and whether anything else is being planned.”

In most situations, things will improve quickly. It's important to keep monitoring the situation, but also thank the school for resolving the situation.

If Things Don't Improve

Most of the time, schools will act quickly and supportively when bullying is reported. But sometimes, things don't get better straight away - or you may feel not enough has been done. If that happens, there are positive steps you can take.

It's also important to know that schools cannot share sensitive or personal details about other children involved. This means you might not always be told exactly what has been said or what consequences have been given.

Sometimes this can feel like nothing is happening - but you still deserve to be informed about the actions being taken to keep your child safe and supported.



Ask for a follow-up meeting

If new incidents happen, or the situation doesn't improve, request a meeting with a senior member of staff, such as the Deputy Head. Take your notes with you so you can clearly explain what's still happening.



Be clear about your concerns

When you meet, it's OK to say something like:

"I don't feel the current plan is working, and I'm still worried about my child's safety and wellbeing. What else can we try?"

If Things Don't Improve (Continued)



Seek outside support

You don't have to handle this alone. Charities such as Kidscape, the Anti-Bullying Alliance, or Childline can give advice and guidance.

Avoid asking for help on social media, as you will often get unhelpful suggestions from people who don't know the full story.



Escalate if needed

If you feel the school hasn't acted appropriately, you can:

- Contact the Chair of Governors (or the academy trust, if relevant)
- Use the school's formal complaints procedure
- Contact your local authority if your child is in a maintained school

Remember: Challenging bullying can take time. Keeping calm, clear and consistent will give your child the best chance of feeling safe again.

Prejudiced based bullying

Sometimes bullying involves insults linked to who a child is, such as their race, religion, disability, gender, or family. Children may also experience homophobic or transphobic name-calling - even if they aren't LGBTQ+ themselves.

These kinds of insults are sometimes called prejudice-based bullying. They can be especially damaging because they attack an important part of who a child is, or the people they care about.

- Name it clearly – “What they said was racist/homophobic/unkind. That’s not OK.”
- Reassure them – remind your child it’s not their fault.
- Explain why it matters – insults hurt, even if someone says they were “only joking.”
- Offer simple responses – practise replies with your child like “Don’t say that - it’s not OK.”
- Show support – remind them you’ll work with the school to make sure it’s taken seriously.

Schools have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to protect children from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Racist, homophobic, or other prejudice-based bullying should always be recorded and acted upon.

Even if ‘they didn’t mean it that way’ or if ‘they didn’t know what it meant’, it should still be recorded as a prejudiced based incident. For example, if someone says ‘You’re so gay’ to your child, it should be recorded as a homophobia, regardless of intention.

You're not alone

We know how worrying it is when your child is affected by bullying, but you don't have to face it alone. With calm steps, clear communication, and steady support, things can and do get better.

Most bullying is tackled successfully when schools and families work together. By listening to your child, keeping good records, and building a constructive partnership with the school, you give your child the best chance of feeling safe, confident and included again.

From all of us at More Than Flags and Rainbows, we wish you and your child the very best. Remember - you are not alone, and every step you take makes a difference.

Thank you

More Than Flags and Rainbows is a not-for-profit organisation. Everything we do - from training and resources to research and campaigns - is only possible because of the support of people like you.

If you'd like to help us continue our work, you can:

- Purchase one of our lanyards, t-shirts, badges or books at www.morethanflagsandrainbows.com.
- Spread the word: share what you've learned, post online, and tag us on Instagram and LinkedIn.

Together, we can make sure every child grows up in a school where they feel safe, seen and supported.



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