

The School believes that all its members should treat each other with respect, consideration and tolerance. Any infringement of this principle is a serious matter, and these notes set out to explain how the issue of bullying is dealt with at Heathside.

We define a bully as someone who physically, verbally or psychologically abuses another person in such a way that they are left feeling vulnerable, frightened or intimidated. We aim to respond promptly to any case of such behaviour.

What should your child do if s/he is being bullied?

Bullying often comes as a surprise to the family whose child is being bullied, as it does to the parents who find that their child is a bully. Bullying is an emotive word and excuses are sometimes found to offer an alternative explanation for the behaviour.

Bullying is too important not to be reported to an adult. If your child is being bullied s/he must try to talk to a teacher whom s/he trusts at School. Normally we would expect this to be the class teacher but anyone whom s/he considers to be sympathetic will suffice. S/he should not think of this as telling tales, nor should s/he expect to be able to deal with the situation her/himself.

All our pupils are encouraged to support each other by reporting any instance of bullying to a teacher or parent.

Teachers are alert to the fact that bullying may happen at school. You can be assured that the matter will be taken seriously and that it will be investigated sensitively.

What will the school do?

We educate all our pupils about bullying, principally through the PHSI programme undertaken by Class teachers in every year group. We recognise that bullying may start early.

If a teacher is told by a pupil that s/he is being bullied, or that s/he knows someone who is being bullied, the matter will be investigated. Reassurance will be given about the support and availability of teachers, and the pupil will be advised to keep his/her class teacher informed of any future problem. The bully is likely to be punished, which could in a very serious case mean exclusion, but education is also important. The bully needs to help to understand the reasons for his/her behaviour and how this must be modified so that s/he can improve his/her relationships with other people in the future.

How can I know if my child is being bullied?

If you observe one or more of the following signs, it could mean your child is being bullied: s/he becomes inexplicably withdrawn or reticent; s/he shows a reluctance to go to school; there is a deterioration in his/her work; s/he shows an increased desire to be with adults; s/he makes improbable excuses for money or possessions going missing; s/he has unexplained bruises and refuses to say what has caused them. There can of course be other genuine reasons for all these.

What can you do as a parent?

If you think that your child may be being bullied at school you should get in touch with your child's teacher. You should reassure your child that staff are used to handling such issues professionally and that reporting the matter will not make it worse. We can only help if we are told about the problem.

Parents can help a great deal in the follow-up to any case of bullying involving their son or daughter. Bullied children sometimes behave negatively when challenged and their body language and verbal language may on occasion seem to invite bullying. It is important for teachers and parents to work together in helping to raise the bullied child/s self esteem, perhaps to help him or her to be more assertive and to secure a circle of friends who will help support him or her while at school.

The bully, too, often suffers from low self-esteem, despite first appearance. There is much a parent can do to encourage him or her to relate to other children better and to feel more secure about him or herself.

All parents should talk to their children about bullying from time to time. Listen out for any suggestion that bullying is acceptable and counter it. In particular don't accept that boys are always rough with one another or girls catty, that everyone does it, and that you are making an unnecessary fuss. You should be aware that your child could be a bully at school, however s/he may behave at home, and that adults might even reinforce bullying behaviour in children by the way they deal with other people.