



# ST. DAMIAN'S R.C SCIENCE COLLEGE

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## Preventing and Dealing with Bullying.

Top Tips

for

Parents

## **WHAT IS BULLYING (AND WHAT ISN'T!)**

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At St. Damian's your child will learn that bullying:

1. ...goes on for a while, or happens regularly.
2. ...is deliberate. The other person wants to hurt, humiliate or harm the target.
3. ...involves someone (or several people) who are stronger in some way than the person being bullied. The person doing the bullying has more power; they are older, stronger, there are more of them or they have some 'hold' over the target (e.g. they know a secret about them).

Because these three things have to happen together for something to be called 'bullying', they will learn that bullying is not:

- ❖ A one-off fight or argument.
- ❖ A friend sometimes being nasty.
- ❖ An argument with a friend.

### **Where to find out more:**

For further information about bullying try these helplines and websites:

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) (Tel: 0800 1111)

[www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

[www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk) (Tel: 0808 800 2222)

## WHAT IS ST. DAMIAN'S DOING ABOUT BULLYING?

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We know that bullying sometimes happens and we work really hard as a school to prevent it from happening and in dealing with it well when it does happen.

As a school, by law, we must have an anti-bullying policy. One of the things that we do to prevent bullying is to teach students (from year seven onwards) about bullying – what it is, the effect it has on those who are bullied, the reasons that people bully and what to do if they are bullied or know that bullying is going on.

This work will be part of the personal and social health education (PSHE). We do a lot of work on bullying during National Anti-Bullying Week (which takes place at the end of November).

This work helps us to stop bullying happening by:

- ❖ Making sure that all pupils and adults mean the same thing when they talk about bullying.
- ❖ Helping pupils to understand how bullying feels for the person being bullied.
- ❖ Making sure that all pupils feel OK about telling an adult when they know that bullying is going on.
- ❖ Making sure that all pupils know exactly what to do if they are being bullied, and to feel confident that something will be done to stop it.
- ❖ Helping pupils enjoy, celebrate and respect the ways we are all different, and to feel good about themselves.

## **WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT MY CHILD BEING BULLIED OR BECOMING A BULLY?**

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- ❖ Be a good role model in the way you talk about and treat others; help them to learn that everybody deserves respect – this will be the most powerful influence on your son or daughter.

**Don't worry that your children are not listening to a word you say – worry that they are watching everything you do!**

- ❖ Talk about how other people might feel in bullying-type situations – in real life, TV programmes, books, films etc.
- ❖ Talk openly about what bullying is and how it feels.
- ❖ Make it safe for your son or daughter to talk about bullying – let them know you won't make them feel silly for talking about it.
- ❖ Talk to them about different sorts of bullying. As well as physical harm, threats and taking things, it can include name-calling, leaving someone out (exclusion), rumour spreading (e.g. at school or on social networking sites) or forcing somebody to do something they don't want to do. All of these can be hurtful and humiliating as physical bullying.
- ❖ Teach them how to avoid electronic (or cyber) bullying – through texts, instant messaging, social websites etc.

## How Do I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?

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If you think your son or daughter is being bullied, look out for:

- ❖ Behaviour changes
- ❖ Withdrawal
- ❖ Not wanting to go to school
- ❖ Lots of stomach-aches, headaches or non-specific illness
- ❖ Belongings missing or torn clothes
- ❖ Frequent bruises or other signs of physical harm.

Sometimes these ailments will be real, and sometimes they may be made-up – but whether the illness is real or not, the worry certainly is, so it needs to be taken seriously.

Help your son or daughter to open up to you. They may feel embarrassed and find it hard to talk. Use books, TV plots, what they are doing at school, to begin conversations about bullying. Ask generally about bullying at school without making them talk about themselves. Explain that you are concerned about how they are feeling and would like to know what is on their mind.

## MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED! WHAT CAN I DO?

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- ❖ If your son or daughter tells you they are being bullied, **keep calm!** Getting angry and threatening to visit the school or the parent of the other pupil will terrify them further. Try to avoid the automatic responses that we tend to have – thinking about what should happen to the bully, and how your son or daughter should change themselves. This can confirm to them that they are somehow to blame for the bullying. **THEY ARE NOT!**
- ❖ Praise them for telling you and reassure them that they have done the right thing in letting you know what is happening.
- ❖ Try to find out the facts – what exactly has happened?
- ❖ Use your best listening skills. Accept your son or daughter's feelings, encourage them to talk about their worries by **listening**, and don't belittle what they are going through – however minor it may seem to you, the feelings are very real for them.
- ❖ Don't jump in with advice or immediately try to solve the problem for them. Listen to their ideas and, unless they are likely to end up in serious danger or trouble, agree to let them try out their ideas.
- ❖ Help your son or daughter to think about what they would like to happen, and ask how you can help.
- ❖ Bullying destroys our confidence and your son or daughter will be feeling vulnerable, so work doubly hard to help them feel loved, valued and important.
- ❖ Talk to them about why people bully to reinforce the point that they are not the problem – that the bully is the one with the problem, and that what they say and do says more about them than it does about their targets.

- ❖ If you tell your son or daughter to fight back, or say something ‘clever’ to the people bullying them, they may well end up feeling twice as bad. They might get into trouble, they might get hurt, they might be laughed at more, and they will feel a double failure – not only are they bullied, but they have failed to stop it as well.

***If your child feels in danger, you will need to make sure that they have a plan for keeping safe. Talk about ways of avoiding those doing the bullying e.g. staying with a group of friends, staying in safe areas, knowing who to go to for help etc. Tell them that you have to involve their tutor or another adult at the school at this point, and agree who this might be and how you can do it in the best way for them (so that other children aren't aware of the visit for example).***

## FURTHER STEPS TO TAKE IF THE BULLYING DOESN'T STOP

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- ❖ Collect any evidence. Keep any text messages, emails, website comments or postings.
- ❖ Alert the school. Make sure you talk to your son or daughter before you do this but be clear that this is what you must do. Agree with them when the best time is for you to go (maybe when the other pupils have gone home), as they will worry that this will make things worse.
- ❖ When you talk to the school stay calm. Ask what they will do about it and also what they would advise you to do. Remember that you are partners and you both want the best for your son or daughter.

## WHAT SHOULD MY CHILD DO WHEN THE BULLYING HAPPENS?

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Unfortunately, there is no sure-fire recipe for dealing with bullying when it happens. Individuals will find that certain strategies that work for them may not work for other people. The most important things are to try to prevent the bullying from happening. Offer these tips:

- ❖ Avoid the people doing the bullying as far as possible.
- ❖ Stay with a group of friends whenever possible – bullying is less likely when you are in a group.
- ❖ Encourage them to tell an adult they trust and to talk to them about the situation. All the research shows that adults nearly always need to be involved in stopping bullying and it is the responsibility of adults to make sure that young people are kept safe at school. Understand that it may be difficult for them to tell (for fear of retaliation or because they feel embarrassed or that they might be to blame).
- ❖ When faced directly with bullying, we know that aggression and physical retaliation are likely to make the situation worse. The target is often the one to end up coming off worst and, sadly, often the one to get into trouble, being unwilling to tell the truth about the bullying.

## BULLYING IS GOING ON AT THE SCHOOL. WHAT CAN I DO?

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- ❖ Listen to your son or daughter's concerns. Let them talk about their feelings without jumping in with opinions and advice.
- ❖ There is always strength in numbers. Encourage them to talk to others at school who feel the same way that they do, and to swap ideas about what to do.
- ❖ Encourage your son or daughter to confront those doing the bullying if they feel able to (perhaps with a group of friends) and to tell them that they don't like what they are doing, and will tell an adult if it doesn't stop. They may be afraid to do this, for fear that they may become the next victim, so be understanding about this – it is a very real fear!
- ❖ Even if they do not feel able to confront the bully directly, suggest that they walk away and refuse to have anything to do with the bullying. Bullying without an audience isn't much fun!
- ❖ Talk to them about what they can do to support someone who is being bullied. The most useful thing they can do is to befriend the other pupil and be kind to them. Maybe they could stay with the person, walking with them to lessons etc – bullying tends to happen when the target is alone.

- ❖ Perhaps they could offer to tell an adult what is happening, or to go with the person being bullied to tell an adult what is happening. If the bullying is serious, they might decide that they must tell an adult at school even if the target doesn't want them to.
- ❖ Help them to look at bullying in the same way as they would any situation in which someone might get seriously hurt, and to see reporting it to an adult in the same way. They would not consider reporting a small child who is about to cross a dangerous road as 'grassing', and bullying can be just as dangerous!

## MY CHILD IS BULLYING OTHER PEOPLE. WHAT CAN I DO?

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- ❖ If you are told that your son or daughter is bullying others, stay calm! Don't immediately dismiss the idea ('What? My John – never!') or rush into punishing them severely. Try not to call them a 'bully' – a label can stick. We are all capable of bullying others at times (be honest!)
- ❖ Your son or daughter is not a monster! When you talk, stay calm and remind them that you love them – it is the **behaviour** that you do not like or approve of.
- ❖ Listen to what they have to say. Try to establish if it is bullying that is going on. Be clear that you consider bullying to be wrong whatever the circumstances.
- ❖ Talk to them about how the other person might feel – they may see what they are doing as 'a bit of fun' and not realise how much they are hurting, frightening or upsetting the other person.
- ❖ If an accusation of bullying has come from the school (or from the parent of a pupil at the school) arrange to talk to your son or daughter's form tutor or someone they trust at the school, in order to sort out the facts of the matter. It is important that your son or daughter accompanies you.
- ❖ Stay calm and listen to what the form tutor has to say. Make a plan to support your son or daughter in changing their behaviour which both you and the school will contribute to.
- ❖ You will need to consider the reasons why your son or daughter is using bullying behaviours. This may involve taking a close look at your own behaviour, that of other members of the family, and your child's friends and pastimes. Ask yourself:

1. Are you a good role-model in treating others with respect – including your children?
  2. Are any other family members using threatening aggressive or bullying behaviours towards your son or daughter?
  3. Is your son or daughter learning bullying type behaviours from friends or groups they are involved with?
- ❖ Talk to your son or daughter about why they are choosing to use bullying behaviours – they may not be able to explain, but the conversation might give you an insight into their behaviour and some ideas for how to change it. Perhaps they are being bullied themselves, or have a problem which is making them feel bad about themselves which you can help with.
  - ❖ Be clear that you will not tolerate aggressive and bullying behaviours, and that punishments will follow if they continue to do so, as well as how they will be rewarded when they behave differently.
  - ❖ Help your son or daughter to develop confidence and build their self-esteem by making it clear that you love and value them (remember it is the behaviour, not them, that you dislike). Spend one-to-one time with them doing something that they enjoy and encourage them to make friends and to take up hobbies which they enjoy – happy people don't need to bully others!

## DEALING WITH BULLING SITUATIONS – STRATEGIES FOR TEENAGERS

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- ❖ When the bullying starts, try to stay calm – people who bully often like the fact that they can ‘wind you up’, especially in front of an audience. What they often enjoy is the feeling of power they get when you react as they want you to, so try to deny them this satisfaction.
- ❖ Breathe deeply and remind yourself that...
  1. There is nothing about you that deserves this. Nobody has the right to treat you like this.
  2. The person bullying you has said this to many other people – what they say tells people more about them than you.
- ❖ Walk away and try to ignore the bullying – they may lose interest if you don’t react.
- ❖ Try looking the person bullying you in the eye, and saying something like ‘I don’t know why you are doing this, but I would like it to stop. Please leave me alone now’. (This is hard to do, so don’t feel bad if you don’t feel that you can – many adults can’t do it!)

## FOIL THEM WITH FOGGING!

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- ❖ Many people find the technique of ‘fogging’ useful. Why not give it a go?
- ❖ It involves imagining a great fog around you which swallows up insults so they cannot get under your skin.
- ❖ Use a normal, bored sounding voice and say something neutral that gives the clear message:
  1. ‘I’m really not bothered by anything you say or do’.
  2. ‘Yes that’s true, I am Asian / I do have ginger hair’.
  3. ‘If you say so’.
  4. ‘Yeah, whatever’.
- ❖ Make sure your body language, tone of voice and the words you use all give the same message.
- ❖ Stick with whatever you decide to do for an agreed amount of time. It probably won’t work the first time but, if you can keep it up, it may well have an effect.

## WHY DO PEOPLE BULLY OTHERS?

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- ❖ They are being bullied or have been bullied themselves and ant to take out their anger and frustration on someone else.
- ❖ The person that they pick on winds them up or unsettles them in some way (sometimes on purpose, but usually they are just being themselves and the person doing the bullying is behaving reasonably).
- ❖ They have seen people that they respect (e.g. Parents, cares, brothers, sisters, cousins, grandparents) use bullying behaviour as a way of getting what they want.
- ❖ They have never been told that this behaviour is wrong by the people bringing them up.
- ❖ They feel pressured into acting that way by other young people (they are bullied into bullying by friends of their crew).
- ❖ They are labelled as a ‘bully’ and feel that nobody expects anything different from them.
- ❖ They want to be ‘in’ with the cool gang.
- ❖ It feels like fun – they don’t realise how much it hurts.
- ❖ They dislike or are jealous of someone.

- ❖ They are having problems in their life that are making them feel bad.

You may know people who bully for all these reasons. The thing to remember about bullying is that it might make the person doing it feel more powerful and in control, but it's not real power (people will only follow that person's lead because they are scared of them, not because they have any real respect for them), and there are better ways of achieving real power and respect.

### **REMEMBER:**

**People who are happy with themselves do not need to bully other people!**

## How To KEEP SAFE FROM CYBER-BULLYING

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***Cyberbullying seems to be flourishing as young people continue to embrace social networking technology. It appears to be easier for people to type something hateful to a someone rather than say it to their face.***

**Always** ask before you send a picture or information that could be shared with other people. Remember that you don't know what will happen to any pictures or information you let people have. What you think of as a joke might be really upsetting for the other person when the whole world sees it!

***Some users mistakenly believe that their online activity is anonymous and they are under the illusion that there will be no punishment from authorities in cyberspace. The truth is that every illegal or offensive action a user makes online is traceable to their exact location via their unique IP address.***

**Think** before you send a message about yourself or any other people involved. It doesn't take long for it to be shared with every single person you know (from your best friend to your grandmother to your worst enemy!).

**Never** give out personal information when it can be shared with others. You may trust your new friends, but you don't know their friends.

Treat your password like your toothbrush – **don't let anyone else have it or use it!**

If you receive nasty messages, texts, comments etc., block the person sending them and **always report it** to an adult (a parent, someone at school, or your service provider).

Don't reply to a bullying message but do keep it – whether it is a picture, message or online communication.

For more information see [www.kidscape.org.uk/cyberbullying/](http://www.kidscape.org.uk/cyberbullying/) or contact childline: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) (Tel: 0800 1111)