Schools and colleges in Cambridgeshire are committed to creating environments in which pupils feel safe, secure and happy so that they can learn and develop most effectively. However, occasionally some pupils may experience bullying.

We in Cambridgeshire define bullying as: ‘behaviour by an individual or group, often repeated over time, that intentionally harms another individual or group physically or emotionally. It involves an imbalance or power, which makes it hard for those being bullied to defend themselves.

**Signs and symptoms of bullying**

If your child is being bullied you may notice a change in their behaviour. The following is a list of physical and emotional/behavioural patterns that **may** indicate your child is affected by bullying:

- Fear of walking to or from school
- Loss of self confidence and self-esteem
- Fear of saying what’s wrong
- Developing unexplained cuts, bruises and other injuries
- Unwillingness to go to school/school phobia
- Failing to achieve potential in school work
- Becoming withdrawn, nervous and losing concentration
- Stammering/nervous ticks
- Regularly having books or clothes destroyed
- Having possessions/money go ‘missing’
- Starting to steal money (to pay the aggressors)
- Becoming easily distressed, disruptive or aggressive
- Developing eating disorders
- Running away
- Developing sleep problems/nightmares

**What to do if you suspect that your child is being bullied**

If your child tells you they are being bullied:

Stay calm, patient and believe them. Reassure them that they are doing the right thing in telling you. Being bullied often leaves children too afraid, ashamed and humiliated to tell anyone what is happening to them.

Listen to them and get the full story e.g. why, where, when, who and make notes of the account. Bullying is about feeling out of control, so it is important you do not rush the conversation or try to take charge. A partnership approach is best.
Discuss the options and agree a way forward. It is best not to be dismissive or tell them to ignore the bullying. Encourage your child to be assertive, without hitting back or retaliating.

Encourage your child to talk to his/her teacher and share their concerns.

Request to see the school’s Anti-bullying policy and check what steps the school will take to address bullying. Cambridgeshire schools and colleges will have identified their own Anti-bullying policies. This is a statutory and legal requirement.

Contact your child’s teacher/form tutor and make an appointment to see them. Give them the information you have gathered and work with them to develop a support plan. Ask for a follow up appointment to check progress.

If the bullying continues contact the head of year or headteacher/principal and make an appointment to see them.

Why Bullying Happens

There are a variety of reasons why children and young people engage in bullying. The following is a list of reasons why some children and young people may engage in bullying behaviour:

- Struggling to cope with a difficult personal situation e.g. bereavement, changes in family circumstances
- Liking the feeling of power and using bullying behaviour to get their own way
- Having a temperament that may be aggressive, quick tempered or jealous
- Having been abused or bullied in some way
- Feeling frustrated, insecure, inadequate, humiliated
- Finding it difficult to socialise and make friends
- Being overly self-orientated and finding it difficult to empathise with the needs of others
- Being unable to resist negative peer pressure
- Being under pressure to succeed at all costs.