

What to look out for

A child's behaviours and moods can change for lots of reasons. **You need to be alert to the possibility that the change in behaviours and moods is related to bullying.**

Children or young people being bullied may:

- Be frightened of walking to and from school, want to change their usual route, or beg to be driven to school.
- Be unwilling to even go to school, feel ill in the mornings (headaches, stomach aches).
- Begin doing poorly in schoolwork.
- Come home regularly with clothes or belongings damaged or missing.
- Have unexplained bruising, cuts and/or scratches.
- Come home really hungry (someone has taken their lunch or lunch money).
- Become withdrawn (not talking), distressed, anxious or unhappy.
- Have feelings of helplessness or low self-esteem.
- Spend more time alone, have a sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations.
- Have changes in behaviour, becoming aggressive and/or unreasonable at home, or bullying siblings or other friends.
- Stop eating.
- Have trouble sleeping or frequent nightmares, especially on Sundays or at the end of the school holidays.
- Ask for money or start stealing, or have pocket money go missing (to pay the bully).
- Refuse to say what's wrong (too frightened of the bully).

They may give unusual excuses for any of the above.

Talk with your child about school if you are concerned and ask general questions about how things are going.

The signs of possible bullying online can be the same, but include other behaviours with phones and computers, for example:

- Anxious about using their computer or mobile phone.
- Seem nervous when a text message or email appears.
- Are visibly upset after using the computer or mobile phone, or suddenly avoiding it.
- Close the screen, or hide the mobile phone when others enter the room.
- Spend unusually long hours online in an extra tense, brooding mood.
- Receive suspicious phone calls, emails or packages.

But there could be other reasons for these signs, so try not to jump to conclusions. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is there anything else bothering my child?
- Are there other issues at home or outside school that may be influencing my child's behaviour? For example, major changes like a separation, bereavement, or new baby; or issues with friends outside school?

If there have not been any other changes and you suspect

bullying may be the cause of the distress and anxiety, it is important to try and act as early as you can. Please read ***How should I talk to my child about bullying?*** for guidance on doing this.