

Bullying

Bullying is persistent, unkind behaviour. Online bullying has some different features from face-to-face bullying:

- It can occur at any time of day or night, leaving no escape from it, even at home.
- It may involve more than one bully and be viewed by a large audience (adding to the victim's humiliation but also impacting the bully, by damaging their online reputation).
- It may leave a permanent record of the bullying; (it can be difficult to remove posts or images that have been widely shared).
- It is less obvious and more difficult for teachers or parents to be aware of.
- The anonymity of the online world can encourage bullying behaviour.

'Power Imbalance'

Bullies often exploit a power imbalance and online this may relate to age, gaming ability or access to embarrassing images or information.

Be careful with what is shared online.

What do I need to know?

Most young children will not be using social media platforms, text or email. They may, however, be exposed to bullying through online gaming. Be aware that your child could be either the bully or the bullied – either can be upsetting. If subject to bullying, encourage them to save any messages as evidence. In both cases, take the time to explore the whole situation calmly with them, listen to what they say and decide how best to move forward, consulting their school where appropriate – a rash reaction could inflame an already difficult relationship for your child.

What to talk about with your child

- ✦ **Talk** about appropriate behaviour online. Explain that bullying can involve both unkind and excluding behaviour online. They should be kind and inclusive themselves and report any bullying behaviour to you as soon as it happens.
- ✦ **Encourage** them only to play age-appropriate games with real life friends and help them secure their privacy settings. Avoid using headsets and microphones.
- ✦ **Remind** them that bullying behaviour not only hurts others but reflects badly on the bully and can damage their reputation.
- ✦ **Discuss** the type of sharing or behaviour that might encourage bullying – perhaps by making others jealous, upset or excluded themselves.
- ✦ **Ask** them from time to time, in a quiet moment, whether anything is worrying them and remind them that you are always there to help.