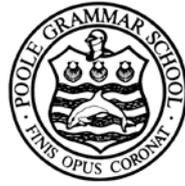


Poole Grammar School



Harassment & Bullying



Guidance for parents

Why do people bully others?

Students sometimes bully others because:

- they want to appear 'cool' and go along with the crowd
- it seems like fun – they are thoughtless and don't realise the potential hurt
- they dislike or are jealous of someone
- it makes them feel powerful or respected
- it gets them what they want
- they are / have been bullied themselves and are taking out their hurt and anger on someone who won't fight back
- they are having problems in their own life that are making them feel bad.

It would be very unusual for people who are totally happy with themselves and their lot to feel the need to bully other people.

Why doesn't Poole Grammar School simply exclude bullies?

To worried parents, it may seem surprising that Poole Grammar School wants to work with bullies rather than just getting rid of them. However, if we excluded every student guilty of any bullying behaviour, there might not be many left! Evidence would suggest that people are not *born* 'bullies' or 'victims' – they may take on these roles in different contexts in their life. More importantly, bullying behaviour can, despite the difficulties to be overcome, be changed through a combination of approaches that may include sanctions as well as mediation and work to develop the empathy of the bully.

What can I do if my son is being bullied?

Firstly, try to stay calm because getting angry and threatening to visit the school or the parent of another student will probably terrify him. Let him know that he has done the right thing in telling you and try to find out the facts. Help him to reflect on what he would like to happen and how you can support him. Bullying destroys our confidence and your son will be feeling very vulnerable.

Going through the student guidance booklet with your son is a way of getting him to open up and consider all the options. The school desperately wants to know about all incidents of bullying or bullying-type behaviour and if he has not already told someone at school (tutor, Year Head, Deputy Head etc), please encourage him to do so without delay (or you may contact us direct yourself). We always aim to deal with these incidents in a tactful, supportive and confidential way.

Why don't bystanders always report bullying behaviour?

Almost always bullying involves bystanders and witnesses. So why don't they stop it or tell someone? Students say that they don't tell, even when they feel angry or upset about what they have observed, because they worry that they will become targets themselves and because it is hard to resist the peer pressure (even when it is unspoken). Yet, our experience shows that the more people tell about any bullying behaviour they see going on, the less it happens.

What can I do if I find out that my son is bullying other people?

Stay calm! Don't immediately dismiss the possibility or rush into punishing him severely. Reason will tell you that we are all capable of bullying others at times. Your son has not immediately become a monster; it is his *behaviour* that you do not like or approve of. Try to get him to think about how the other person might feel – he might genuinely consider what he has been doing to be a joke or he might hide behind that excuse.

Above all, we hope that you will want to work with the school in supporting your son. If your son is a victim of bullying, it is essential that the lines of communication between school, your son and you are fully working. If he is guilty of bullying others, we will need your help in seeking to change his behaviour. We cannot claim that we are always successful in dealing with bullying, but we do not give up.