

## Signs of bullying

Each student who has been bullied or is bullying others will respond and act differently.

A student's behaviour and moods can change for a variety of reasons.

**Teachers and parents/carers need to be alert to the possibility that the change in behaviour and moods is related to bullying.**

Below is a list of behaviours that are sometimes a sign that your child is involved in bullying. These behaviours can be related to causes other than bullying, of course, but they do suggest a need for sensitive questioning and reassurance of support by parents. Talk with your child about school generally to find out more information if you are concerned.

## Behaviours in children in primary (Years 1–6)

### Being bullied

- Increased quietness
- Withdrawal from family interaction
- Visible sadness
- Withdrawal from friends and from activities once enjoyed
- An increase in days off school (complaints of headaches and stomach-aches)
- Poor school performance (drop in grades)
- Loss of appetite
- Sleep disturbance (including bed wetting)
- Only uses bathroom at home (school bathrooms are places where lots of bullying takes place away from the view of teachers)
- Torn clothes or unexplained cuts and bruises
- Requests for extra money for lunch or additional allowance
- Letters from school enquiring about homework that is reported lost, or reporting behavioural problems such as fights with other students

### Bullying others

- Changes in friendship groups (particularly the loss of a friendship group)
- Expressing a dislike of school and teachers
- A desire to 'show off'
- Acquisition of items or goods that could not have been bought without parental knowledge
- Unexplained outbursts of anger
- Becoming easily frustrated
- An unwillingness to do homework
- Hitting or trying to dominate younger brothers or sisters

## Behaviours in young people (Years 7–12)

### Being bullied

- Unspecified headaches, stomach-aches (frequent requests to stay at home)
- Outbursts of anger
- Unexplained cuts and bruises, torn and mud-splattered clothing
- Hitting out, flinching
- Tiredness (often linked to sleep disturbance)
- Loss of appetite
- Unexplained crying
- Unwillingness to walk or travel to school alone
- Avoidance of students once classed as 'friends'
- Staying at home on evenings and at weekends
- Stealing money
- Staying late at school (to avoid encounters with students outside of school)
- Becoming introverted, sullen and self-effacing
- Expressing self-doubt
- Greater uneasiness with expressing physical affection
- Becoming easily distracted, forgetful (an indication that they are preoccupied with something else)

### Bullying others

- Changes in friendship groups (particularly the loss of a friendship group)
- An unexplained but overall decline in grades
- Expressions of disaffection with school
- Desire to 'show off', especially in front of others
- Ownership of items or goods that could not have been bought without parental knowledge
- Expressed anger or irritation with fellow students (including making disparaging comments about them or threatening to hit them)
- Frustration with homework
- Domination or subjugation of siblings

Source: Rivers, I., Duncan, N., & Besag, V. E. (2009). *Bullying: a handbook for educators and parents*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.