

What can be done to prevent bullying in schools

As with every annual Ban Bullying week bullying charities sees a significant increase in calls due to media coverage. Raising awareness is always good and this year is no exception.

Common themes and trends emerge as times change. This year Bullying Helplines have seen an increase in death threats across a number of UK schools, suicide attempts amongst teenagers and an increase in on-line abuse through various social media forums.

Typically, parents call a helpline because they feel their child's school has been unhelpful, accepts no responsibility or simply does not believe them. Of course this does not apply to all schools but when a parent finds themselves in this position they need someone to listen to, bring some common sense to the table and advise them what to do. Despite the fact that most UK schools have an Anti-Bullying policy or mission statement – procedural guidelines are often non-existent.



Government, including The Department for Education, Ofsted and Ministers, should be working to bring about change. In the workplace we have dispute resolution procedures (The ACAS Code of Practice for example) but schools are left to their own devices. It is the current view of The Department of Education that Schools should put their own procedures in place. This is not good enough. Ofsted say they do not have the power to address bullying in schools,

A routine Ofsted inspection could involve a review of bullying statistics in every UK school. Ofsted could be asking how many bullying complaints have been raised and what outcomes and remedial action is taken. We need clearly communicated guidelines for both parents and schools. Every school should have a Safeguarding Officer who is held accountable for overseeing due process. This will free up the teachers who are currently having to deal with distressed parents. Parents will know how to set out their concerns in a constructive and professional manner and, importantly, will have some confidence knowing that they are being listened to.

If you or someone you know is affected by bullying at school or in the work place there are a number of good charities and organisations online that can help.