

Template for School Child Protection Policy – 18 May 2025

Bullying, a Summary



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Disclaimer: The summary is not a substitute for clinical advice.

Sources:

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Government of India
National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
World Health Organization (WHO)

1. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is any form of aggressive behaviour that is intentional, repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power. It can be verbal, physical, social, or cyber in nature, causing emotional or physical harm to the targeted individual. Bullying is a violation of a child's right to dignity, safety, and well-being.

Source: [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

***Note:** Bullying can occur in various settings, including schools, homes, workplaces, and online spaces. The impact of bullying extends beyond the victim, affecting bystanders, families, and even the aggressors themselves.

2. Bullying: A Growing Concern

Bullying is a widespread problem that affects students across all age groups and socio-economic backgrounds. Studies show that nearly one in three students globally has been a victim of bullying. While physical bullying is more common among younger students, cyberbullying is increasing, particularly among adolescents. Contrary to belief, bullying is not "just a part of growing up"—it has serious consequences, including mental health issues, academic decline, and long-term emotional distress.

Many bullies are individuals who have been exposed to aggression at home, lack emotional regulation skills, or struggle with underlying mental health issues. Schools must adopt proactive approaches to prevent, identify, and address bullying, ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

Bullying also disproportionately affects marginalized groups, including children with disabilities, LGBTQ+ youth, and students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Addressing these systemic factors is crucial to creating a fair and inclusive environment.

3. The Role of Schools in Preventing Bullying

Schools play a vital role in breaking the cycle of bullying by fostering a culture of respect, inclusion, and awareness. A strong anti-bullying policy should focus on early intervention, support systems, and appropriate disciplinary measures.

Teachers and school staff need to be trained to recognize the signs of bullying, respond effectively, and support victims. Schools should also empower students to speak up against bullying and create student-led peer support programs to foster empathy and inclusivity.

Research suggests that school environments that promote kindness, inclusivity, and social-emotional learning (SEL) see significantly lower instances of bullying. Schools should also work closely with parents and community organizations to implement a holistic approach to bullying prevention.

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4. Difference Between Bullying, Pranks, Friendly Banter, and Teasing

Understanding the difference between bullying and other social interactions helps in addressing harmful behaviours effectively.

	Definition	Key Features
Bullying	Repeated, intentional aggression with a power imbalance	Causes distress, fear, or harm. Ongoing behaviour.
Pranks	Practical jokes meant for fun, but can sometimes be hurtful	If done repeatedly or without consent, it may become bullying
Friendly banter	Light-hearted joking between friends	Mutual enjoyment. No power imbalance
Teasing	Playful or mild criticism that is often reciprocal	If persistent and one-sided, it can turn into bullying

5. Types and Signs of Bullying

Bullying can take various forms, each with distinct indicators. Recognizing these signs can help prevent escalation and provide timely intervention.

Types of Bullying	Definition	Possible Indicators
Physical bullying	Involves hitting, kicking, pushing, tripping, spitting, or damaging belongings	Unexplained injuries, torn clothing, damaged belongings, avoidance of school or specific areas, fear of taking the school bus or attending events.
Verbal bullying	Use of name-calling, insults, threats, teasing, or inappropriate comments. Often targets race, gender, or disability.	Sudden loss of confidence, withdrawal from social interactions, frequent complaints of headaches or stomach aches, changes in speech patterns, hesitation in talking.
Social/Relational Bullying	Intentional exclusion, spreading rumours, public humiliation, or manipulating friendships	Sudden isolation from friends, avoidance of social situations, emotional distress, anxiety, or depression, declining academic performance.
Cyberbullying	Harassment, threats, or humiliation via digital platforms	Anxiety when receiving message, e.g., social media, text messages, emails, sudden disinterest in devices or excessive use, avoidance of online activities, emotional distress after using digital platforms

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Cyberbullying can be especially damaging due to its persistent nature, potential for wide audience reach, and difficulty in escaping online harassment. India has one of the highest rates of cyberbullying globally. Factors contributing to the rise include:

- Increased digital presence post-pandemic
- Poor cyber hygiene
- Lack of digital etiquette
- Perceived anonymity

6. People Involved in Bullying

Bullying involves three main roles: *the bully, the bullied, and the bystander*.

- The Bully (Aggressor):** A child who repeatedly engages in aggressive behaviour. Studies suggest that bullies often struggle with low self-esteem and seek dominance.
- The Bullied (Victim):** Any child can be a victim, but those with low self-esteem, lack of assertiveness, or differences in race, culture, or ability are more vulnerable.
- The Bystanders (Observers):** Bystanders play a crucial role in either perpetuating or stopping bullying. They can be:
 - *Instigators:* The ones who initiate the bullying
 - *Followers:* The ones who participate actively but do not start it
 - *Supporters:* The ones who encourage bullying through laughter and gestures
 - *Defenders:* The ones who intervene or report bullying
 - *Outsiders:* The ones who avoid involvement but give silent approval

Encouraging students to take an active stance against bullying can significantly reduce its prevalence.

7. What to Do When a Child Reports Bullying?

A teacher or school staff member's response to a child's report of bullying significantly impacts their willingness to seek help in the future. If a child confides in an adult about bullying, they must be met with belief, empathy, and immediate action.

Best Practices for Responding to Reports of Bullying include:

- Listen actively and remain calm. Avoid interrupting or dismissing the child's experience.
- Acknowledge their feelings. Saying, "That sounds very difficult. I'm here to help," validates their emotions.
- Reassure them that they are not alone and that bullying is not their fault.
- Gather details about what happened, when, where, and who was involved.
- Ensure confidentiality, but also explain that the school will take necessary action to stop the bullying.
- Follow up regularly to check on the child's well-being and ensure the bullying has stopped.
- Engage parents and mental health professionals if needed to provide ongoing support.

8. Mental Health Support for Bullies

Many bullies exhibit aggressive behaviour due to unresolved emotional pain, low self-esteem, or past trauma. Instead of only punitive measures, schools and parents should implement compassionate interventions such as:

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- ✓ Counselling and emotional regulation training to help bullies address their anger and aggression.
- ✓ Restorative justice practices where bullies take responsibility for their actions and make amends by encouraging self-reflection and behaviour modification
- ✓ Parental guidance programs to equip families with skills to foster empathy and healthy communication.

9. Prevention Strategies for Schools

Schools should implement structured programs to address bullying and create an inclusive learning environment.

a) Prevention Measures:

- ✓ School-Wide Awareness Campaigns: Educate students, parents, and staff about bullying, its effects, and reporting mechanisms.
- ✓ Classroom Discussions & Activities: Conduct workshops on empathy, kindness, and digital safety.
- ✓ Anonymous Reporting Mechanisms: Establish a safe, confidential way for students to report bullying incidents.
- ✓ Peer Mentorship Programs: Train students to be anti-bullying ambassadors and support fellow students.
- ✓ Strict Consequences & Remedial Actions: Implement zero-tolerance policies with appropriate interventions for bullies.
- ✓ Integrate Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs
- ✓ Form an anti-bullying committee
- ✓ Identify and monitor bullying-prone areas
- ✓ Refer cases to school counsellors

b) Teacher/Parent-Level Interventions:

- ✓ Caregivers and educators should respond appropriately to bullying incidents
- ✓ Encourage empathy and positive behaviour reinforcement
- ✓ Avoid punitive measures that may worsen aggression
- ✓ Promote open communication about bullying and online safety

Bullying prevention is a collective effort involving schools, students, parents, and the community. By fostering a culture of respect, empathy, and accountability, schools can create safe learning spaces where every child feels valued, protected, and empowered.

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