



# Changing Bullying Behaviours

When a young person engages in bullying behaviour we can help them to learn more positive ways of relating to people.

## Helping them change

Most people who bully are not ‘bad people’—but they do need to learn how to relate positively to others.

Bullying others and being allowed to continue is associated with risks at school, in close personal relationships and at work. It also increases the likelihood of criminal convictions.

When young people bully we need to take it seriously and to have parents and teachers work together to help them change their behaviour. It is not about blaming anyone—it is about helping the young person to develop more positive behaviours.

## The behaviour change process

The process that we find effective is:

- Meet with your child’s teacher to discuss the issue.
- Select one negative behaviour to replace and one alternative positive behaviour to encourage and reward. It is best to start with a behaviour that feels easier to change first.
- Rate the behaviour out of ten—ten if it occurs all the time, zero if it never occurs.
- Devise a strategy for rewarding the positive behaviour, and a strategy for being more proactively vigilant about the negative behaviour.

- Agree to stay in contact with the school as issues arise.
- Realise the behaviour may temporarily worsen before it improves. Remain kind, calm and resolute.
- Agree to formally meet in about 5 to 6 weeks to review progress.
- If progress has been achieved, celebrate and select the next behaviour to alter if necessary.
- If the problem behaviour has not shifted, you may need to re-think strategies or get professional support.

Once one behaviour has changed, other seemingly harder to shift behaviours also change.

The reason for this is that much of our behaviour is patterned into habits. Changing one element of a habit can start to change entire sequences of behaviour. Therefore you may need to repeat this process several times.

