

Friendships, bullying and belonging

Relationship difficulties can have a powerful effect on a child's willingness and ability to attend.

Your role

Keep school informed, report absence using the school's process, share relevant barriers early and work with the school on agreed actions. Legal rules differ across the UK, so use the official guidance for your nation.

Listen first

- Ask open questions and let your child describe what happened in their own words.
- Avoid promising a particular outcome before you understand the facts.
- Ask where and when they feel safest and least safe.

Keep a factual record

- Dates, places, people involved, what was said/done, witnesses, screenshots or messages where relevant.
- Record how the issue is affecting attendance, sleep, mood or learning.

Work with school

- Share the concern with the appropriate staff member and ask what will happen next.
- Ask how safety, peer relationships and belonging will be monitored.
- Agree when you will receive an update and what escalation route applies if the issue continues.

If bullying is suspected

- Use the school's anti-bullying policy and the Anti-Bullying Alliance parent resources for further guidance.

Use this leaflet as a conversation starter. It is general information, not legal, medical or safeguarding advice. If you are worried about immediate safety, use the appropriate local emergency or safeguarding route.