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Free of Bullying – tips for parents

Dear Parents

The tips presented here form part of the 'Free of Bullying' programme established by the Mary Foundation and Save the Children Denmark. Free of Bullying is based on four fundamental human values: tolerance, respect, kindness and courage. This anti-bullying programme consists of a suitcase containing various tools and methods to support efforts to prevent bullying among 3-8 year olds at kindergartens and primary schools.

Essential collaboration between three key groups

Free of Bullying targets three different groups: children, parents and educational professionals. In order to prevent bullying, these three groups need to work together to create healthy children's communities based on an inclusive culture.

Children: Free of Bullying transforms abstract conversations about teasing and bullying into real examples, and provides children with the tools to deal with and stand up to bullying – both for themselves and for others. The programme actively engages passive spectators and gives them the tools to act.

Parents: Parents play an important role in Free of Bullying. As parents, you have a joint responsibility to prevent bullying by supporting the children's well-being and fostering a community spirit within the group.

Educational professionals: Free of Bullying inspires teachers and teaching assistants to implement an anti-bullying culture at their educational establishments, and to embark on activities that nurture a spirit of togetherness among the children.

The preventative work starts at the kindergarten level and continues at primary schools and after-school facilities, where you, the parents, play an important role as culture bearers.

Below are five tips on how you can help prevent bullying within your child's/children's social circle(s).

Tips for parents on counteracting bullying

1. Encourage your child to have play dates at kindergarten or school, and in their spare time, with many different children in the group.

It is good for your child to experience playing with different children. At the same time, this ensures that all the children in the group are given the opportunity to play – thus enabling them to feel part of the group.

2. Do not make negative comments about other children, their parents, or their teachers or carers.

Negative comments about other children and adults quickly lead to antipathy towards them. Instead support your child in being positive and open towards everyone. For instance, do you know all the names of your child's schoolmates? Do you say "Hi" to the other children and adults when you drop off and pick up your child?

3. Implement an inclusive birthday policy.

Birthdays mean a lot to children, both to the one being celebrated and to those invited. Being left off the guest list is very hurtful for a child, as is having a poorly attended party. Discuss an inclusive birthday policy at the next parent-teacher meeting.

4. Encourage your child to stand up for him- or herself and to defend those unable to defend themselves.

Children who feel left out of the group need an offer of support and an invitation from a friend. Children who are able to stand up for themselves, and who are good at helping, comforting and defending others, 'grow' inside and out.

5. Be open and positive when other parents talk about their child's problems.

It can make you feel vulnerable to talk about how your child is feeling upset or is experiencing problems and lacking friends and play dates. It helps if the other parents are open and willing to listen.