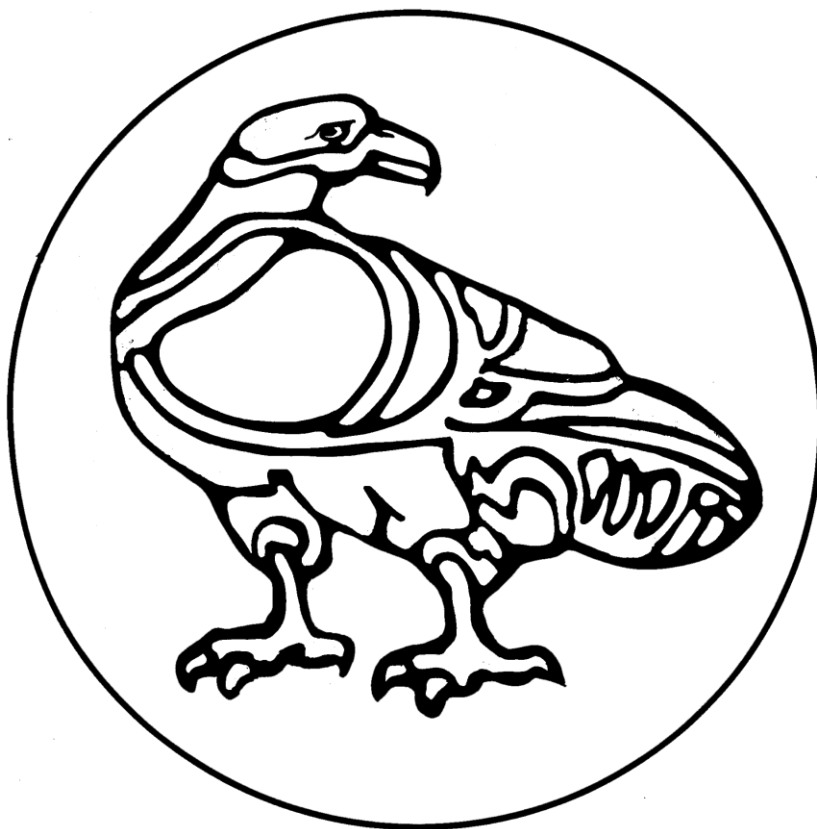


# **Thurso High School**



**Guide for pupils - Bullying**

## Why am I being bullied?

While there are many reasons why bullies may be targeting you, bullies tend to pick on people who are “different” or do not fit in with the mainstream. While your individualism is something that you will celebrate later in life, it can seem like a curse when you’re young and trying to fit in. Perhaps you dress or act differently, or maybe your race, religion, or sexual orientation sets you apart. It may simply be that you’re new to the school or neighbourhood and haven’t made friends yet.

Other reasons why kids bully:

- To make themselves popular or to gain attention.
- Because they are jealous of you.
- To look tough or feel powerful.
- Because they are being bullied themselves.
- To escape their own problems.

Whatever the reasons for you being targeted, it’s important to remember that you’re not alone. Many of us have been bullied at some point in our lives. In fact, about 25 percent of kids experience bullying, and as many as one third of teenagers suffer from cyberbullying at some point. But you don’t have to put up with it. There are plenty of people who can help you overcome the problem, retain your dignity, and preserve your sense of self.

## How to deal with a bully

There is no simple solution to bullying or cyberbullying, and no foolproof way to handle a bully. But since bullying is rarely limited to one or two incidents—it’s far more likely to be a sustained attack over a period of time—like the bully, you may have to be relentless in reporting each and every bullying incident until it stops. Remember: there is no reason for you to ever put up with any kind of bullying.

**Don’t blame yourself.** It is not your fault. No matter what a bully says or does, you should not be ashamed of who you are or what you feel. The bully is the person with the problem, not you.

**Try to view bullying from a different perspective.** The bully is an unhappy, frustrated person who wants to have control over your feelings so that you feel as badly as they do. Don’t give them the satisfaction.

**Don’t beat yourself up.** Don’t make a bullying incident worse by dwelling on it or reading cyberbullying messages over and over. Instead, delete any messages and focus on the positive experiences in your life. There are many wonderful things about you so be proud of who you are.

**Learn to manage stress.** Finding healthy ways to relieve the stress generated by bullying can make you more resilient so you won’t feel overwhelmed by negative experiences. Exercise, meditation, positive self-talk, muscle relaxation, and breathing exercises are all good ways to cope with the stress of bullying.

**Spend time doing things you enjoy.** The more time you spend with activities that bring you pleasure—sports, hobbies, hanging out with friends who don’t participate in bullying, for example—the less significance bullying or cyberbullying will have on your life.

### **Report bullying**

You can report bullying (whether that is that you are being bullied personally, or you have witnessed another person being bullied) in two ways.

1. In person: report any bullying incidents to an adult you trust. This may be any member of staff in the school, a parent or relative. Reporting that you are being bullied or that you have seen someone else being bullied is an important step in helping us to deal with bullying behaviour. Any reports to a member of staff in the school will then be passed on to the your PTPS (Pupil Support Teacher) and Year Head.
2. By Email: Report any incidents to the email address of [report.bullying@thursohigh.org.uk](mailto:report.bullying@thursohigh.org.uk) giving as much information as possible. The emails will be monitored daily and pupils will be requested by PTPS or Year head to get a full record of the incident.

When you are being bullied, having trusted people, you can turn to for encouragement and support will ease your stress and boost your self-esteem and **resilience**. Talk to a parent, teacher, counsellor, or other trusted adult—it doesn't mean that you're weak or there's something wrong with you. And reach out to connect with real friends (those who don't participate in any kind of bullying).

If you're new to a school or neighbourhood, or don't feel that you have anyone to turn to, there are lots of ways to **make new friends**. It may not always seem like it, but there are plenty of people who will love and appreciate you for who you are.

**Unplug from technology.** Taking a break from your smartphone, computer, tablet, and video games can open you up to meeting new people.

**Find others who share your same values and interests.** You may be able to make friends at a youth group, book club, or religious organization. Learn a new sport, join a team, or take up a new hobby such as chess, art, or music. Or **volunteer your time**—helping others is a great way to feel better about yourself and expand your social network.

**Share your feelings about bullying.** Talk to a parent, counsellor, coach, religious leader, or trusted friend. Expressing what you're going through can make a huge difference in the way you feel, even if it doesn't change the situation.

**Boost your confidence.** Exercise is a great way to boost your self-esteem and reduce stress. Go for a run or take a kickboxing class to work off your anger in a healthy way.

### **Tips for dealing with cyberbullying**

Dealing with cyberbullying is rarely easy, but there are steps you can take to cope with the problem. To start, it may be a good time to reassess your technology use. Spending **less time on social media** or checking texts and emails, for example, and more time interacting with real people, can help you distance yourself from online bullies. It can also help to reduce anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness.

As well as seeking support, managing stress, and spending time with people and activities that bring you pleasure, the following tips can help:

**Don't respond to any messages or posts** written about you, no matter how hurtful or untrue. Responding will only make the situation worse and provoking a reaction from you is exactly what the cyberbullies want, so don't give them the satisfaction.

**Don't seek revenge** on a cyberbully by becoming a cyberbully yourself. Again, it will only make the problem worse and could result in serious legal consequences for you. If you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it online.

**Save the evidence of the cyberbullying**, keep abusive text messages or a screenshot of a webpage, for example, and then report them to a trusted adult. If you don't report incidents, the cyberbully will often become more aggressive.

**Report threats of harm** and inappropriate sexual messages to the police. In many cases, the cyberbullies' actions can be prosecuted by law.

**Prevent communication from the cyberbully**, by blocking their email address, cell phone number, and deleting them from social media contacts. Report their activities to their Internet service provider (ISP) or to any social media or other websites they use to target you. The cyberbullies' actions may constitute a violation of the website's terms of service or, depending on the laws in your area, may even warrant criminal charges.

### **Places online you can go for additional advice**

Anti-Bullying Pro [www.antibullyingpro.com](http://www.antibullyingpro.com)

Childline [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

The Mix [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

Report harmful content (for 13+ concerned about online bullying and online harms)

[www.reportharmfulcontent.com](http://www.reportharmfulcontent.com)

Childnet International (online bullying and online harms)  
[www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)

YoungMinds (Mental health support)

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Papyrus UK (Suicide prevention support) [www.papyrus-uk.org.uk](http://www.papyrus-uk.org.uk)