



Kingstone
HIGH SCHOOL

Building Respectful Communities



Module 1: What is Bullying?



Introduction

People do not always agree with one another. Friends sometimes fall out over misunderstandings, disagreements or differences of opinion. Arguments happen.

While some disagreements are resolved quickly, others can continue for longer or affect people in different ways. Sometimes people use the word bullying to describe any situation where somebody feels upset, excluded or treated unfairly. Sometimes the word is used to describe arguments between friends, disagreements in lessons or conflicts that happen during games and activities. In reality, bullying is different from ordinary conflict.

Throughout this programme, we will follow the experiences of several students and explore a range of situations that can happen in schools and friendship groups. We will examine how bullying can affect individuals, friendships and wider school communities.

We will also explore the role of influence, responsibility, empathy and accountability. By reflecting on these experiences, you will have opportunities to consider your own views, develop your understanding and think about the positive choices that help create safe, respectful and supportive communities for everyone.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- ☐ Explain what bullying is.
- ☐ Understand the difference between bullying and conflict.
- ☐ Recognise the role of repetition and power imbalance.
- ☐ Understand how bullying can affect people.
- ☐ Reflect on the impact behaviour can have on others.
- ☐ Consider how respectful people respond to conflict and disagreement.

Key Vocabulary

Bullying	Repeated behaviour that hurts, harms or intimidates another person.
Conflict	A disagreement or argument between people.
Power Imbalance	A situation where one person or group has more power, influence, or control than another.
Repetition	Something happening more than once over time.
Impact	The effect behaviour has on another person.
Respect	Treating others fairly and with consideration.

What is Bullying?

Many people use the word bullying to describe any situation where somebody feels upset. However, bullying is usually more specific as it often includes three key features:

Repetition

Harm

**Power
Imbalance**

The power imbalance may come from: popularity, age, physical strength, group size, confidence, or social influence.

Not every disagreement contains these features. This is why it is important to understand the difference between bullying and conflict.



Scenario - Meet Ryan

Ryan is a Year 9 student.

He enjoys spending time with his friends and likes making people laugh. Most people would describe Ryan as confident and outgoing.

One lunchtime, Ryan and another student, Ethan, have an argument during a football game.

- Both students become frustrated.
- Both raise their voices.
- Both believe the other person is being unfair.

The disagreement lasts for several minutes before staff intervene.



Later that day, Ryan tells a friend:

"Ethan says I am bullying him."

Ryan feels confused. As far as Ryan is concerned, they simply had an argument.

Think About It

Do you think Ryan and Ethan's disagreement was bullying?

Explain your answer:



Activity - Conflict or Bullying?

Read through the following situations, state whether you think these are incidents of bullying or conflict, and explain your decision.

Situation A

Two friends disagree about a group project.

Both students share their opinions.

The disagreement is resolved the next day.

☐

Bullying

☐

Conflict

Explanation:

Situation B

A student is repeatedly mocked by a group of students every week during breaktime.

The student begins avoiding certain areas of school.

☐

Bullying

☐

Conflict

Explanation:

Situation C

A student is repeatedly excluded from a friendship group. Whenever they try to join in, they are laughed at by those in the group.

☐

Bullying

☐

Conflict

Explanation:



Looking Deeper - Disagreements

Why Do People Sometimes Disagree About Bullying?

Ask a group of students whether something is bullying and you may receive different answers.

For example, one student may say:

"It was only a joke."

Another may say:

"The person was clearly upset."

One student may focus on intention, another may focus on impact. One student may see a single incident, another may know that similar things have happened before.

This can make situations complicated as people do not always have the same information. They do not always experience situations in the same way.

This is one reason why schools investigate concerns carefully.

Before deciding whether something is bullying, it is important to consider: what happened, how often it happened, who was involved, and how people experienced the situation. Understanding a situation fully helps the school to respond fairly.

Think About It

Why might two people experience the same situation differently?



Scenario - A More Difficult Example

Sophie and Mia were close friends.
Recently, they have been arguing more often.
One week they disagree about plans after school.
The following week they stop speaking.
A few days later, they argue again in front of others.
Some people describe the situation as bullying.
Others describe it as a friendship conflict.
Staff discover that both students feel hurt.
Both students believe the other person has behaved unfairly.



Think About It

Do you think this sounds like:

☐

Conflict.

☐

Bullying.

☐

Not enough information.

Explanation:

What additional information would help you confirm the correct answer?

Activity - Spot the Warning Signs



Read the statements below.

Tick the signs that might suggest a situation is becoming bullying.

- ☐ The behaviour happens repeatedly.
- ☐ One person feels unable to stop it.
- ☐ Both people have equal influence.
- ☐ A group targets one person.
- ☐ Somebody begins avoiding people or places.
- ☐ The behaviour continues after concerns are raised.

Circle the sign that you think is the most important.

Scenario - Ryan's Story Continues



A few days later, Ryan discusses the football incident with a member of staff. The staff member asks him several questions.

- Has this happened before?
- Do you normally get on with Ethan?
- Did either of you feel unable to walk away?
- Has either student been targeted repeatedly?

Ryan begins noticing something. The staff member is not trying to decide who is right and who is wrong. Instead, they are trying to understand the situation.

For the first time, Ryan realises that understanding behaviour is often more complicated than it first appears. He also realises that people sometimes jump to conclusions before they know all the facts.

Think About It

Why were the questions asked by the staff member important?

How could these questions help somebody understand a situation more accurately?

Activity - Questions That Help



Imagine a student reports a possible bullying incident.
Which questions would help you understand the situation?

- ☐ What happened?
- ☐ How often has this happened?
- ☐ Who was involved?
- ☐ How did this affect you?
- ☐ How do you think the other person experienced the situation?
- ☐ What would you like to happen next?

Looking Deeper - Another Perspective



While Ryan is thinking about the football incident, Ethan is also reflecting on what happened. Ethan describes feeling embarrassed when the argument took place in front of other students. He worries that people may only have seen part of what happened.

Some students have started talking about the incident. A few have taken sides, whilst others have made assumptions about who was responsible. Ethan feels frustrated because he believes there is more to the story than people realise.

Since the argument, Ethan has avoided playing football at lunchtime. He worries another disagreement might happen.

Although the incident only lasted a few minutes, its impact has lasted much longer. This reminds us that people's experiences are often influenced not only by what happened, but by how the situation made them feel afterwards. Although Ryan and Ethan disagree about what happened, both students have been affected by the incident.

This reminds us that people can experience the same situation in very different ways. Sometimes people focus only on their own perspective.

However, understanding behaviour often requires us to consider how situations affect everybody involved.

Think About It

Why is it important to listen to different perspectives before making a judgement?

Ryan's Perspective

How do you think Ryan would describe this incident?



Ethan's Perspective

How do you think Ethan would describe this incident?





Scenario - Ryan's Reflection

Ryan has started thinking differently about the football incident.

At first, he believed the answer was simple. Now he realises that understanding behaviour often requires more information.

He has learned that before deciding whether something is bullying, it is important to think about:

Repetition

Power
Imbalance

Impact

Perspective

Evidence

Ryan also realises that listening to different viewpoints can help people understand situations more accurately.

Think About It

What do you think Ryan has learned?

Why is it important not to jump to conclusions?

Key Learning Point

Bullying is About More Than One Moment

People sometimes focus on a single event when deciding whether something is bullying. However, understanding bullying often requires looking at the bigger picture. This includes considering questions such as:

Has this happened before?

Who holds power in the situation?

What impact has the behaviour had?

How does each person view what happened?

Is there a pattern of behaviour over time?

The answers to these questions help us understand what is really happening. This is why schools gather information from different people before making decisions.

Looking at the bigger picture helps people respond fairly and consistently.

Understanding bullying is not about jumping to conclusions; it is about understanding the full story.

Personal Reflection

Think about a time when you disagreed with somebody (you do not need to write names), what happened?

Personal Reflection

How was the situation resolved?

What helped improve the situation?

What does this tell you about the difference between conflict and bullying?

Extended Reflection

Advice to a New Student

A new student asks: "What is the difference between conflict and bullying?"

Write a response explaining the difference between conflict and bullying, why this matters, and the three key features in bullying.

Draw upon what you have learned in this module.

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Module Reflection

One thing I learned about bullying is:

One thing I learned about conflict is:

One thing I learned about power imbalance is:

One thing I learned about impact is:

One thing I will remember from this module is:

Key Messages to Remember

- Not every disagreement is bullying.
- Bullying often involves repetition, harm and power imbalance.
 - Understanding situations requires careful thinking.
 - Impact matters.
- Respectful people seek understanding before making judgements.
 - Recognising bullying is the first step towards preventing it.

Staff Review



- ☐ Student can explain the difference between bullying and conflict.
- ☐ Student understands repetition and power imbalance.
- ☐ Student can identify signs of bullying.
- ☐ Student can reflect on the impact of behaviour.
- ☐ Student has engaged with the activities.
- ☐ Student is ready to progress to Module 2.