

PARENT CRISIS RESPONSE GUIDE

The First 24 Hours

What to do when your child tells you they're being bullied.

This guide gives you a clear, structured response for the first 24 hours. Your job right now is not to solve everything. It is to respond in a way that keeps your child talking and starts the process properly.

1 Regulate yourself first.

Before you respond, take a breath. Your child is watching your face. If you show shock, anger, or panic, they may shut down — they'll feel they've caused a crisis.

Say: "Thank you for telling me. Give me a moment to take this in."

Do not reach for your phone. Do not message the school or another parent. That can wait. Your child cannot.

2 Listen without investigating.

Let them tell you at their own pace. Do not cross-examine.

SAY

✓ "Can you tell me what's been happening?"

✗ "Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

✓ "How long has this been going on?"

✗ "Just ignore them."

✓ "This is not your fault."

✗ "What did you do to provoke it?"

Write down what they tell you — names, dates, platforms. After the conversation, not during.

3 Preserve evidence.

Screenshot everything. Do not crop or edit. Include timestamps and usernames.

Save, do not forward. Forwarding spreads the harm further.

Do not confront online. This almost always escalates the situation.

4 Contact the school.

Use your school's designated reporting channel: form tutor, safeguarding lead, or Head of Year.
State what you know factually. Avoid characterising it as the school's fault.
Ask what happens next and when you'll receive an update.

Under the R4 Framework, schools acknowledge reports within 24 hours and issue an action plan within the same window.

The school is your partner, not your adversary. The best outcomes happen when parents and schools share information.

5 Follow up at home.

Check in gently. "How was today?" is better than "Did anything happen?"

Watch for changes: sleep disruption, appetite changes, withdrawal, device anxiety.

Reassure: "We're working on this. You're not dealing with it alone."

6 Know when to escalate.

If the school's initial response doesn't resolve the situation within 1–2 weeks:

Stage	Action
1	Follow-up meeting with safeguarding lead. Bring documentation.
2	Meeting with Head of School. Put concerns in writing.
3	Formal complaint through school's complaints procedure.
4	Governing body or regulatory body (e.g. KHDA in the UAE).

ACT IMMEDIATELY if:

- Your child expresses thoughts of self-harm
- There is a physical safety threat
- Sexual content or images have been shared

YOUR 24-HOUR CHECKLIST

Quick Reference

Action	When
■ Regulate yourself. Breathe. Sit down.	Immediately
■ Listen to your child. No cross-examining.	Immediately
■ Reassure: "This is not your fault."	Immediately
■ Write down what they told you.	Within 1 hour
■ Screenshot and save any digital evidence.	Within 1 hour
■ Contact the school via designated channel.	Within 24 hours
■ Provide facts, dates, evidence.	Within 24 hours
■ Check in with your child.	Same day
■ Follow up with school if no acknowledgement.	After 24 hours
■ Continue daily check-ins.	Ongoing

What Not to Do

- ✗ Post about it on social media or parent WhatsApp groups
- ✗ Contact the other child's parents directly
- ✗ Demand the school expel or punish immediately
- ✗ Tell your child to "fight back" or "ignore it"
- ✗ Forward or share screenshots of the bullying content

WANT THE COMPLETE TOOLKIT?

This guide covers the first 24 hours. The full R4 Parent Toolkit includes script sheets, a digital family agreement, escalation flowcharts, an AI risk guide, and age-specific red flag checklists covering ages 3–18.

Ask your safeguarding lead - thebullyeffect.com/for-parents