

Tips on empowering pupils who are bystanders to bullying



A bystander is a pupil who witnesses a bullying situation but doesn't get involved. They are usually seen to be a passive observer who watches something happening from the sidelines but doesn't intervene or get help, even if someone needs it.

Even though a bystander may not actively participate, they can still encourage the person who bullies as this person may feel driven on by the audience. Research is looking to see how to empower bystanders in schools and online to help stop and address bullying in a safe way.

Peer interventions have been shown to be largely successful in stopping bullying. Here are some strategies - recommended in SEAL resources - that can help children to change the role they have as a potential witness to bullying:

- ✓ instead of watching, walk away and get help – this helps to take away the audience from the child who is bullying
- ✓ tell the person being bullied that you don't like the bullying and ask them if you can do anything, like tell someone or go with them to tell someone
- ✓ tell the child doing the bullying that you don't like it and to stop doing it - but only if this feels safe to do
- ✓ if it feels safe to do so, gently take the child who is being bullied by the arm and say something like, "Come on, we need you for our game"
- ✓ put out your hand to sign "stop" and act and speak assertively with other children who are witnessing the bullying
- ✓ make the time to be kind to the child being bullied when you next see them.

Teachers can ask children to come up with other ideas for how they might stand by someone who is being bullied rather than watching on the sidelines. Circle time could also be an opportunity to explore supportive "standing by" behaviours. We recommend using [this resource](#) for activities and lesson plans on how to teach children about the role of bystanders.