

Ben's Story

 BullyingUK
www.bullying.co.uk

 Kidscape
www.kidscape.org.uk

 Beatbullying
www.beatbullying.org



Hi! I'm Ben. As you can see from my smile, I like having fun. I love cracking jokes and making people laugh - like the time I really "acted up" my part as a shopkeeper in the junior school play.

Like most boys my age, I enjoy sport and playing computer games. I also have a real passion for nature and have always loved watching wildlife films. I have a great family - mum, dad, and big sister. We've always been very close and enjoyed spending time together. I really love them and they know it. I know they love me too.

Most of all I like playing with my friends - boys and girls, some older than me, some younger. We like to play out and about, riding bikes, playing in the woods, building dams in the stream, running in and out of each other's houses, or sometimes just talking to people around where we live.

Last year I was in Year 6, proud to be one of the older children in my school, looking out for the younger ones. I was looking forward to going to secondary school, but at the same time a bit scared of such a big change. It felt good putting on my new uniform and getting my bag ready with my new calculator, dictionary and sports kit.

When I started Year 7 in September I hardly knew anyone in my tutor group. Only one boy had been in my class at junior school. But I soon had some great new friends from other parts of town. One of them was having a hard time, being picked on and bullied, but I told him it would get better - and it did.

But then they started picking on me. At first it was just a bit of fun, messing about on the bus journey home. Then one of the boys took my school tie and wouldn't give it back. It turned up again a few days later, after my mum had bought me a new one. On another day a group of boys tried to stop me getting off the bus at my stop and I had to leave my blazer and phone behind.

After that it got worse. They started punching and kicking me. Mum asked about my bruises, but I said it was nothing - just messing about on the playground. But the worst thing was the name calling, every day, all the way home. I tried to ignore them but they kept on and on. I got angry when they wouldn't stop, and that made it worse. They started calling me 'Billy-no-mates', and it seemed like they were right. None of my friends stuck up for me; they just looked at the floor or out of the window. Some even joined in - so the bullies wouldn't pick on them.

I decided it must be my fault. I must be a horrible person. I couldn't see why. I just wanted to be 'me', to enjoy the things I enjoyed - like wildlife and music and getting my hair - but they wound me up and made me angry. And then I hated myself for getting angry, for not being able to deal with it.

In the end I couldn't take it any more. I came home from school and took my life. It was just before Christmas and only three weeks until my 12th birthday. I'm not sure the bullies realize what they did. They think it was 'just a bit of name-calling'. But it destroyed me. It destroyed my family. My mum and dad still cry every day.

Don't be a bully. Words hurt more than you can know. "Sticks and stones may break my bones" but words destroy a person inside. If you see someone being bullied, please don't stand by or look away and do nothing. Be a friend. Tell someone. Stick up for each other. The world would be so boring if everyone was the same. So don't pick on someone because they look different or do things differently from you. Enjoy the differences!

I'm Ben. I love wildlife. I love jokes. I love my family. They'll never forget me. Will you? For their sake, and for the sake of a better world, be a friend -
* please don't be a bully. Ben

