

Amber's story

Her name is Amber, she is 11 years old, and she was quite a popular girl at the school until the word got out all the way through the school, that she was American, then people started bullying her and calling her names.

She has lived in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, England for the past four years. She moved from America when her mother met and married an Englishman, a stepfather who no longer lived with them.

All these problems started when a boy went to her Maths class opened the door and shouted "American Bitch, go back to your own country" and then walked off, the school did not do anything about the incident. After that people were starting to brag rumours around school and saying horrible stuff about her. Everybody was coming up to her saying all sort of bad things, for example: if she was pregnant and who was the father, saying that she was a prostitute. She could not bear this situation, and during the school's break, she would lock herself in the toilet and cry. These problems have been happening for the last three years, the school has tried to stop the bullying but with insufficient effect. The teachers thought it would cease itself with time. The school also cannot control what goes on outside the school's gates, on the streets the children go after her how they like. She has been physically attacked many times, even in her front garden she was attacked by two older girls and Amber defended herself, one of the girls carried a metal bar that cut Amber's armpit. After that incident, Amber's mother contacted the police but they did not do anything, the mother tried to ask for help from Social Services, the Council and again the police but with little impact. She felt scared and frustrated for her daughter health and safety.

In England, all the schools are required to have anti-bullying policies but they deal differently from school to school. All these problems with bullying have made Amber react violently; she cannot have a normal life. She started to feel depressed and worthless, she thought of committing suicide, at that moment her mother called for help to a counsellor. Amber has been seeing a group of anti-bullying campaigners; this group helps children who have been bullied at school. Amber has been under big pressure but she has decided on a new approach to bullying, this new approach is not to pay any attention to the bullies and ignore them. Amber is also being taken to and from school by her mother. The school teachers also started taking this case seriously. They cooperate with the council and the police now. It seems that Amber could grow stronger and overcome all the bullying and problems...

Think about how could have been this situation faced from the teachers, Amber's, Amber's family and other involved authorities point of view.

Why do you think have all these problems happened?

How do you think should the school authorities react (in this specific case and generally)?

Can you think of ways how to prevent such behaviour in schools?