



Bullying

Bullying can take many different forms - physical, verbal or psychological - but all of them are wrong and can compromise a child's safety or mental well-being. Bullying may be carried out by a group or by an individual. It may involve hitting, kicking, threats, name-calling. Bullying is similar to harassment and other forms of abuse such as racism, sexism and the abuse of children by adults.

Bullying is certainly not new, but in the past it was often ignored, or dismissed as an undesirable, but inevitable part of life. In the last few years this way of thinking has changed and increasing attention has been paid to the rights and responsibilities of adults and children. Important among these are that:

- Everyone has the right to work and to learn in an atmosphere that is free from fear.
- All of us have a responsibility to ensure that we do not abuse or bully others.

We all have a duty to work together to protect vulnerable individuals from bullying and other forms of abuse.

If your child is being bullied:

- Assure your child that bullying is not his/her fault, and that everyone deserves respect.
- Explain that using fists or insults as protection against bullying is not a good solution—it could make things worse (and get your child in trouble).
- Remind children to ignore teasing by turning their heads or walking away. Humor can sometimes defuse the situation, too.
- Teach assertiveness skills . . . your child should know he or she has the right to stand up to the bully and say "Stop it!" without being aggressive. You could explain it like this: "Say it like you mean it, but not in a mean voice."
- Talk with the child about ways to avoid the bully. Making a plan of action can make the child feel empowered, even if at first it seems unfair to have to.
- Help your child with their self-esteem by valuing their contributions and achievements. If they are socially isolated at school, get them involved in community activities that will allow them to socialize and build confidence.

Characteristics of children who bully:

Children who bully their peers regularly tend to:

- Be impulsive, and dominant;
- Be easily frustrated;
- Lack empathy;
- Have difficulty following rules; and
- View violence in a positive way.

At GVS, we teach all students **FOUR STEPS** to deal with conflict and to help empower them to handle problem situations on their own before approaching an adult.

Step 1. Use I-Statements ("I feel _____ when you _____.")

Step 2. Say "No" or "Stop" in a firm voice.

Step 3. Ignore the person or walk away.

Step 4. Tell an adult

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Last year and the year before, we conducted a survey on bullying. We also educated our students during assemblies and circle times about the definition of bullying and how to handle bullying. We even had our awareness week about bullying and every student and teacher during this week had been having their bully-free school pins on.

Since then, the primary school has taken a stand against bullying and adopted the following policy:

We Can Do Something About Bullying

We do not bully others

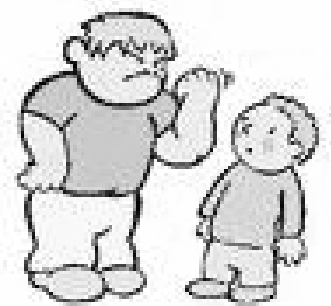
We help students who are bullied

We include students who are left out

When we know somebody is being bullied, we tell an adult at school and at home

What can I do if my child is bullying others?

- Make it clear to your child that you take bullying seriously and that you will not tolerate this behavior.
- Develop clear and consistent rules within your family for your children's behavior. Praise and reinforce your children for following rules and use non-physical, non-hostile consequences for rule violations.
- Spend more time with your child and carefully supervise and monitor his or her activities. Find out who your child's friends are, how and where they spend their free time.
- Build on your child's talents by encouraging him/her to get involved in pro-social activities such as clubs, music lessons, . . . etc.



You might find these sites useful:

www.kidscape.org.uk/parents/howhelp.shtml

<http://www.thebullybook.com/>

www.bullying.co.uk/

http://www.essortment.com/all/childandbull_rqgy.htm

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