



Keeping Kids Bully Free: Tips for Parents

The aim of St Brendan's Behaviour Management System is to create a fun, safe and inclusive community, where students are guided and empowered to navigate their learning journey and celebrate success.

Keeping Kids Bully Free provides tips for parents to help their child resolve bullying problems.

Is your child being bullied?

Any child can become a victim of bullying and it can take place anytime, anywhere. Bullies typically seek an audience of their peers to establish their power over their victim, but rarely displays this behaviour in front of adults who can make them stop. So if adults don't see the bullying, how do they know it is happening?

WARNING SIGNS. If your child displays a number of the following warning signs it MAY indicate that your child is being bullied, or at risk of being bullied.

School Activities

- Drops out of school activities that he / she enjoys
- Erratic attendance
- Sudden change in academic performance
- Loss of interest in school and home work
- Goes to breaks late and returns early to class

Social

- Lonely, withdrawn, isolated
- Poor or no social skills
- No or few friends
- Body language—hunched shoulders, hangs head, won't look people in the eye, backs off from others
- Often picked on physically and / or verbally by others and may not defend themselves
- Has a noticeable difference that sets them apart from others or puts them in a minority
- Prefers the company of adults in free times
- Teases and irritates others and doesn't know when to stop
- Has started to bully others

Physical

- Frequent illness and / or complaints of headaches and other pains etc
- Injuries that don't have obvious explanations
- Change in eating or speech patterns—develops a stutter or loss of appetite
- Appears physically different to others
- Smaller and / or weaker than peers

Emotional / Behavioural

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sudden change in behaviour | <input type="checkbox"/> Quick tempered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passive, timid, shy, withdrawn, cries easily | <input type="checkbox"/> Blames themselves for problems / difficulties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low self confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> Overly concerned about personal safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low or no assertiveness skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Talks about running away |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overly sensitive, worried, clingy, insecure | <input type="checkbox"/> Talks about suicide |

Bullying is when a person hurts verbally or physically another person deliberately and repeatedly.

St Brendan's School has a no tolerance position to bullying!

CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

1st. Contact the classroom teacher first.

2nd. Syndicate leader to be involved if neither party think the issue has not been resolved.

3rd. Principal to be informed of non-negotiable behaviour and involved if issues remain unresolved.

KEEPING KIDS BULLY FREE: TIPS FOR PARENTS

So you think your child is being bullied, what can you do?

Ask your child. Many children won't volunteer this information; they're ashamed, embarrassed, or afraid. Adults need to take the initiative.

If you suspect that your child won't want to talk about being bullied, try approaching the topic indirectly. You might ask a series of questions like these:

- "Do you know of any bullies?"
- "How do you know that person is a bully? What does he or she do?"
- "What do you think about that?"
- "Who does the bully pick on most of the time?"
- "Does the bully ever pick on you?"
- "What does the bully say or do to you? How does that make you feel?"

What can you do when your child is being bullied?

If your child tells you that he or she is being bullied, **believe** your child. Then **ACT**:

1. Ask for specifics and write them down.
2. Reassure your child that you are glad that they told you and that you are going to do something to help them.

DON'T ...

- Promise to keep the bullying secret as this gives the bully permission to keep bullying and reinforces your child's sense of powerlessness.
- Tell your child to "get in there and fight..." Your child could get hurt.
- Blame your child. Bullying is never the victim's fault.

IF THE BULLYING HAPPENS AT SCHOOL

Contact the school as soon as possible adhering to the stated channels of communication. Request a private meeting (no students should be around and ideally no students except for your child should know that you're meeting with the teacher). Bring your written record of what your child has told you about the bullying, and share this information with the teacher. Ask for the teacher's perspective; he or she probably knows things about the bullying you don't. Stay calm and be respectful; your child's teacher wants to help.

You want the teacher to:

- Provide you with a copy of the school's Behaviour Management Programme and anti-bullying procedures
- Put a stop to the bullying
- Apply consequences for the bullying consistent with St Brendan's School Behaviour Management Programme's values and beliefs
- Help the bully change his or her behaviour
- Help your child develop bully resistance and assertiveness skills
- Monitor your child's safety in the future
- Keep you informed of actions taken and progress made

IMPORTANT: It takes time to resolve bullying problems. The teacher will need to talk with your child, the bully, witnesses and then decide what's best to do for everyone involved. Try to be patient.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD WHEN THEY ARE A VICTIM OF BULLYING

Make a real effort to spend more positive time with your child than you already do. Encourage your child to talk about his or her feelings. Praise your child as often as possible and give them opportunities to do well.

Help your child develop bully resistance skills by role playing with your child what to say and do when confronted by a bully, such as:

Standing up straight, looking the bully in the eye, and saying in a firm, confident voice, "Leave me alone!" or "Stop that! I don't like that!"

Staying calm and walking away, ideally towards a crowded place or a group of friends.

Running away if they feel they're in real danger.

Telling an adult.

Consider enrolling your child in a class on assertiveness skills, friendship skills, or self defense. Check with your child's teacher or community resources – your local public library, YMCA or YWCA, community education, etc.

Arrange for your child to join social groups, clubs, or organisations that meet his or her interests if your child seems to lack friends. This will boost your child's self-confidence and develop his or her social skills. Confident children with social skills are much less likely to be bullied.

Consider seeking counselling support for your child.

Watch how your child interacts with others. Consider whether your child might be doing something that encourages bullies to pick on him or her. Is there a behaviour your child needs to change? Does your child dress or act in ways that might make them a likely target for teasing?

Label everything that belongs to your child with his or her name. Things are less likely to be "lost" or stolen if they're labelled. Use sew-in labels or permanent marker.

Make sure your child knows that his or her safety is always more important than possessions (books, school supplies, toys, money, etc.) If your child is threatened by a bully, your child should give up what the bully wants, and tell an adult (you or the teacher) right away.

Encourage your child to express his or her feelings around you. Give your child permission to blow off steam, argue, and state opinions and beliefs that are different from yours. If you allow your child to stand up to you now and then, it's more likely that he or she will be able to stand up to a bully.

Check with your child often about how things are going. Once your child says that things are better or okay at school, the bullying has slowed down or stopped you don't have to keep asking every day. Ask once every few days, or once a week. Meanwhile, watch for any changes in behaviour that might indicate the bullying has started again.

Remember that you are your child's most important teachers. Discipline at home should be fair, consistent, age-appropriate, and respectful. Parents who can't control their temper are teaching their children that it's okay to yell, scream, and use physical violence to get their way.

What if it is your child who is bullying others?

Like their victims, bullies need help. Bullying among primary school-age children is recognised as an antecedent to more violent behaviour in later years. If children don't learn to change their behaviours, bullying becomes a habit that carries forward into their teens and their lives as adults.

No parent wishes to learn that their child is bullying others. Fortunately most children can change their behaviour with guidance and help from caring adults.

If your child displays a number of the warning signs below it MAY indicate that your child is bullying others, or has the potential to.

WARNING SIGNS

School Activities

- Tests authority by committing minor infractions, then waits to see what will be done about it.
- Disregards or breaks school rules.
- Is generally defiant or oppositional towards adults.
- Seeks / craves attention and is satisfied with either positive or negative attention.
- Attracts more than the usual amount of negative attention from others and is disciplined more often than other children.

Social

- Seeks to dominate and / or manipulate peers.
- May be popular with other children who envy their power.
- Overly concerned about others' disrespecting them, equates respect with fear.
- Displays little compassion for others.
- Defends own negative actions by saying others "deserved it," or "provoked them."
- Good at hiding negative behaviours in front of adults.
- Accepts no responsibility for his / her negative behaviours.
- Blames others for their part in a conflict.
- Lies in attempts to stay out of trouble.
- Expects to be misunderstood or disrespected and attacks before they are attacked.
- Interprets innocent acts as purposeful and hostile and uses these as excuses to strike out at others verbally and / or physically.
- Has difficulty fitting into groups.
- Has a close network of a few friends who follow along with whatever he or she wants to do.
- Is street smart.

Physical

- Is physically larger and / or stronger than their peers.

Emotional / Behavioural

- Enjoys feeling powerful and in control.
- Is impulsive.
- Loves to win at everything and hates to lose—poor winner or loser.
- Seems to derive pleasure from other's fear, discomfort or pain.
- Unable or unwilling to walk in someone else's shoes.
- Gets excited when conflict arises between others.
- Stays cool during conflict they are directly involved in.
- Exhibits little or no emotion when talking about his / her part in a conflict.
- Has a strong self-esteem.

So you think your child might be bullying others, what can you do?

Ask your child. Be aware that your child might deny or minimize his or her behaviour; this is normal. Don't blame; don't ask "why" something happened or "why" your child acted in a certain way, because this may lead to lies and excuses.

So your child has been bullying others, what can you do to help your child?

1. Ask for specifics and write them down.
2. Stay calm and make it clear that bullying is NOT okay with you.
3. Reassure your child that you still love him or her.
4. Seek more information to get all the facts.

If it is apparent that they have been bullying others reassure your child that you love them, that it's the bullying *behaviour* you don't like. Tell your child that you'll work together to help change the behaviour – and you won't give up on him or her.

IF THE BULLYING HAS HAPPENED AT SCHOOL

1. Talk with your child's teacher(s) and other adults at the school—in private, when no other students are around
2. Bring your written record of what your child has told you about the bullying, and share this information with the teacher
3. Get the facts on your child's behaviour
4. Stay calm and be respectful; your child's teacher wants to help

You want the teacher to:

- Put a stop to the bullying
- Work with you to help your child to change their behaviour (through an Individualised Behaviour Education Programme) IEP
- Monitor your child's behaviour and progress
- Keep you informed of actions taken and progress made

Let the teacher know about your efforts at home

BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN YOUR CHILD

Have regular home meetings with your child. Show interest in what he or she is doing and find out how they spend their time when he or she isn't with the family?

Make a real effort to spend more positive time with your child than you already do. Encourage your child to talk about his or her feelings. Praise your child as often as possible and give them opportunities to do well.

Monitor the television shows your child watches, and reduce the amount of TV violence he or she is exposed to. Experts have found that TV violence has a negative effect on children. Also limit the amount of violence your child encounters in video and computer games.

Supervise your child's whereabouts and activities even more closely than you already do. Set reasonable rules and limits for activities and curfews. Make it a point to always know where your child is and who he or she is with.

Help your child practice and learn positive ways to handle anger, frustration, and disappointment by role-playing new behaviours with your child, such as:

- How to behave when they have just lost or won a game
- How to behave when they are feeling upset or jealous
- How to be a leader in a group without using fear to rule
- How to discuss / talk about concerns they may have

Consider enrolling your child in a class on conflict resolution, stress management, anger management, friendship skills, or self-defence. Check with your child's teacher or community resources-your local public library, YMCA or YWCA, community education, etc.

Consider seeking counselling support for your child.

Apply reasonable, age appropriate, developmentally appropriate consequences for bullying behaviour (withdrawing privileges, giving time-outs, assigning extra chores around the house). Avoid corporal punishment, which sends your child the message that "might is right."

Talk with your child about how bullying affects the victim.

This resource relied heavily on **"The Bully Free Classroom: Over 100 Tips and Strategies for Teachers K—8"** by Allan L. Beane, PhD, Published by Free Spirit Publishing Inc, Minneapolis, USA, 1999

Other recommended support resources available:

Books available:

"The Anti-Bullying Handbook" by Keith Sullivan

"Bullying in Schools" By Ken Rigby

"Bully Busting," by Evelyn M. Field

Websites:

www.kenrigby.net

www.lfcc.on.ca/bully.htm

www.nobully.org.nz/guidelines.htm

www.police.govt.nz/service/yes/nobully/whats_bullying.htm

www.teamup.co.nz/Child/KeepingKidsSafe/Bullying/WhatsBullying.aspx

www.thelowdown.co.nz

www.nzfamilies.org.nz/parenting/bullying.php

Agencies:

Police Helpline *ph* 0800 NO BULLY, 0800 662 855

The Kids Help Foundation Trust *ph* 0800 WHATS UP, 0800 942 8787

Netsafe, information on cyber and text bullying *ph* 0508 638 723

Youthline *ph* 0800 276 633

Kidline *ph* 0800 543 754