

Remember, you have done nothing wrong by asking for help and it is your right to be left in peace.

REACH FOR HELP

There are a number of organisations that may be able to give you extra support.

- **Ministry of Education** provides guidance on school disciplinary matters:
www.education.govt.nz/
- **Strengthening Families** can help in meetings about your child with the school:
www.strengtheningfamilies.govt.nz
- **YouthLaw** provides free legal advice for young people under the age of 25.
www.youthlaw.co.nz
- **Youthline** provides free telephone counselling for young people:
[0800 37 66 33](tel:0800376633) or [free text 234](tel:0800376633)
- **Kidsline** provides telephone support for nine to 13 year olds:
[0800 54 37 54](tel:0800543754)



YouthLaw

Free legal help throughout Aotearoa

YouthLaw provides free legal help for young people under the age of 25. We have special expertise in the area of education law, and can give advice on school disciplinary processes. If you know a young person who needs assistance, please get in touch with us.

Visit our website:
www.youthlaw.co.nz

Contact YouthLaw
for further free help or advice:

Free phone: **0800 UTHLAW**
(0800 884 529)

Email: info@youthlaw.co.nz



BULLYING AT SCHOOL

Victims of bullying, school's role, complaints process, and police involvement.

A guide for parents and supporters of young people



WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is when someone says or does things to have power over another person, making that person feel afraid or uncomfortable.

It includes name calling and put downs, practical jokes, saying and writing nasty things, excluding or ignoring others, threats, damaging property, physical abuse and forcing others to do things they don't want to do.

SCHOOL'S ROLE

The National Administrative Guidelines (NAG 5) oblige a school to provide and maintain a safe physical and emotional environment for students.

This allows **every student to learn and grow in a positive environment, free from fear or stress.** As part of this duty, the school must put in place effective policies for dealing with bullying occurring on school premises.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE SCHOOL

Wellington Community Law Centre's Report on Schools and the Right to Discipline gives five guidelines on the way in which schools should react to reported incidents of bullying.

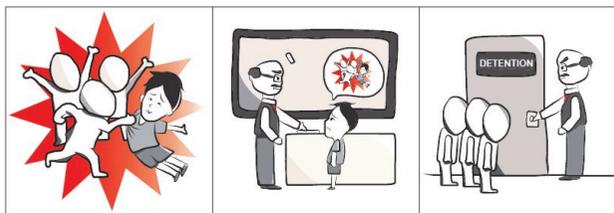
Generally, parents and students should:

- Be listened and responded to sensitively without being dismissed out of hand;
- Be told all forms of violence are against school policy and be reminded what the policy is;
- Be told that the report will be investigated and that the incident will be responded to appropriately;
- Be provided with protection from negative consequences of their reporting; and
- Expect that the school will intervene and support victims and respond to bullies.

COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Contact your school as soon as possible if the bully is a classmate. Good schools will often have a complaints policy which will tell you how complaints can be made and how they will be investigated.

If your school does not have a complaints policy, you should first tell your teacher. Usually a teacher will talk to you and the bully to find out what happened. **A teacher might give the bully a detention, or in serious cases, refer the matter to the Principal who has the power to stand-down or suspend a student.**



If the bully is suspended, once he/she is allowed back at school, the teachers will probably keep a close eye on them to make sure they don't start bullying again.

If you feel uncomfortable talking to a teacher straight away, it might help to talk to your School Guidance Counsellor. **A counsellor is someone you can talk with about what has happened, and help you understand and deal with your feelings.**

Although the counsellor cannot punish the bully, he or she can pass the matter on to people who can. If you are not happy with the way the school deals with your complaint you can complain to the Education Review Office, the Ministry of Education, or the Commissioner for Children.

POLICE INVOLVEMENT

The Police rarely get involved in cases of bullying, as the most common examples of bullying – name-calling, exclusions and so forth – are not considered to be criminal offences. **However, it will be a criminal offence to physically abuse or assault another person.** Where this has happened, and the school fails to act, you might want to refer the matter to your local Youth Aid Officer.

If the police do get involved, key information will need to be provided about the incident such as:

- A description of the bully;
- Whether anyone else saw what happened;
- A precise account of the incident; and
- Anything else that may be relevant.

Once the Police Officer has finished investigating the matter, they will inform you of their decision of whether or not to charge the bully.

IF YOU ARE BULLIED

If you are bullied—it's **not your fault.** You should talk to someone you trust and feel comfortable with. This person might be a parent, teacher, school counsellor, family member or principal. **Youthline** can give you advice and support: Call [0800 37 66 33](tel:0800376633) or [Free Text 234](tel:0800376633)

Everyone reacts to bullying in different ways. You may feel sad, angry, anxious, worried or scared. You may have difficulty sleeping, or may not feel like eating or hanging out with friends. You may even feel that you do not want to go to school anymore.

Whatever the case, if you feel that something is wrong, you should talk to someone you trust and feel comfortable with.