

# INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - No. 1 parenting educator



## When things go wrong at school

***“If your child is having trouble with other kids or a teacher, how you approach the problem can make all the difference. Taking a long-term, reflective view is often the best approach.”***

Every parent wants the best for their children, especially at school. Schools are generally safe places, staffed by teachers who have the best interests of their students at heart.

But things can go wrong. Most kids experience learning difficulties at times. Conflict and peer rejection are a normal part of school life.

There will always be some turbulence during key transition ages, such as the start of adolescence. At these times young people often experience relationship difficulties and a dip in learning and sometimes call on their parents for help.

Your approach makes a huge difference to their resilience and future relationships with teachers and peers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there's been a significant increase in aggressive incidents at schools involving parents reacting to their children's grievances.

Here's how to react effectively.

1. **Stay calm and rational.** It's natural as a parent to protect or defend your children, particularly when you think that they've been treated unfairly. But acting when you are full of emotion is not smart. Take your time to think about how you can help your child.
2. **Get all the facts.** Kids are faulty observers and often only see one side of a story. They sometimes can't see that they may have contributed to a dispute or said something that may have upset a teacher. It's the parent's job to help kids process what happened so that they understand their role in a situation. Ask good questions to help the full story emerge.
3. **Assess whether to go to school or not.** Kids, like adults, benefit from telling their story to a trusted source. Problems can often be dealt with by talking through an issue, and giving kids some coping tips.

If your child has a problem that they can't solve themselves or you think adult intervention may be needed consider meeting with your child's teacher or year level coordinator.

4. **Go through the right channels.** Approach the school calmly, going through the school office, or directly to your child's teacher if that is the correct protocol.
5. **Look for solutions rather than blame.** Parent-teacher meetings get nowhere when one party blames the other. State the problem as you see it and view your child's teacher as an ally, not a foe. Keep the discussion focused on what's best for your child. Listen to your teacher's viewpoint and value their perspective.
6. **Stay in touch.** Be realistic and remember that some problems can't be solved to your satisfaction and won't be resolved straight away. Be prepared to work with your child's teacher for the long-term.

Parenting is easy when things are going well, but testing when children experience difficulty. Taking a long-term, reflective view is often the best approach when your child experiences difficulty at school.

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