

Questions & Answers

Q: My third grader has suddenly decided he doesn't want to go to school. At first, I couldn't figure out why. Then he told me that he has no friends at school. Should I be worried? What can I do?

A: All children spend some time feeling left out. Like your son, these children often don't want to go to school.

However, you are right to be concerned. The skills children need to get along with others in school are the same skills they'll need to get along in life. Kids who have no friends may turn to negative or dangerous behaviors as a way of fitting in. Their grades may begin to drop, too.

What should you do?

- Take your son's comments seriously. Many kids don't want to tell their parents what's going on in school. They are embarrassed to let Mom and Dad know that they don't have anyone to play with.
- Assure your son that you will work with him to solve the problem. Be as gentle as you can. Kids who are being rejected at school often feel it's their fault.
- Talk with the teacher. There may be recent changes in the class. Perhaps a new student has become best friends with your son's former pal. Perhaps there is an outbreak of verbal taunting in school. Enlist the teacher's help to solve the problem.
- Find ways for your son to meet other children. Sign him up for an after-school activity, such as scouts. As he feels better about himself, he will find it easier to relate to other children.

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