

Questions & Answers

Q: The principal called to tell me that my fifth grader shoved a child to the ground at school today. As a result, my child is going to be suspended for one day. I know this is the school's policy; however, my son says the other boy said mean things to him first. Should I go to the school to complain?

A: Kids don't always make the right choices. What's important is the lesson they learn after they've made a bad choice. Arguing with the school on your son's behalf can teach him the wrong lesson.

Start by talking with your son about the incident. Does he admit that he pushed the other child? It's important for him to learn to tell the truth about what he's done.

He needs to learn that pushing people is not acceptable—even if they call him names. Help your son think of other ways he might have reacted. He could have ignored the child, for example.

If name-calling continues, your child should tell a teacher. If he had reported the incident, the other child might now be the one in trouble.

Talk about why schools need rules. What if he had been the one who was shoved? Would he want the child who shoved him to face a consequence?

Finally, let your child experience the consequence of his action. The day of his suspension, don't let him watch TV. Have him spend the same time studying that he would have spent in class. At the end of the day, let him know he has served his punishment.

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