

# THE STRAITS TIMES

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Why It Matters

## All must act to tackle bullying



ST journalist Calvin Yang. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

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A video clip showing a boy from Shuqun Secondary School hitting two classmates on their heads repeatedly was posted on social media last week.

Both victims kept their heads low and did not retaliate. Surprisingly, the other students in the clip appeared unconcerned while the bullying went on. Some remained in their seats; others laughed.

The school's principal has since advised the class how, as bystanders, they should step up to stop aggressive behaviour. However, the incident has raised the question of whether more can be done to encourage children to speak up when their peers are being picked on. Most children are afraid of speaking up, fearing they would be picked on next. They have to be assured they will not suffer any consequences for intervening.

Bullying is not a new phenomenon here. To tackle it, parents, amid their busy work schedules, have to be more involved in their children's school lives.

Teachers, too, should be on the lookout for students who show signs of being bullied, for example, when there is deterioration in a child's school work or if the child becomes withdrawn. They can alert the parents when they notice something amiss in the child's behaviour.

The mother of one of the bullied boys said the two victims had initially sought help from their parents when they were first picked on by the same student, months ago. Once, after her son reached a teacher, the bully was spoken to, but it backfired.

Instead of stopping, the bully threatened her son and, fearing the consequences, he stopped telling his teachers. The bullying continued for another five months.

So schools must review the measures taken to handle such cases, and ensure that follow-ups with the students are done on a regular basis.

From the many comments on social media, it appears that some children are still living their nightmares every day. Perhaps this episode is a reminder that while we may not be able to eradicate bullying altogether, each person in a child's life - peer, parent and educator - can help to make schools safer learning environments.