

BRIDGE ROAD SCHOOL

BULLETIN

Bridge Road School focus of the week

'Appropriate Language'

WHEN WORDS
ARE BOTH
true &
kind
THEY CAN
CHANGE THE WORLD
///BUDDHA///

It can be quite a shock when your child starts to use inappropriate language. You might be wondering where your child learned that kind of language and whether they really understand what they are saying. How you react to your child's swearing now will influence their future swearing behaviour.

Swearing: why do school-age children do it? Young children often swear because they're exploring language. They might be testing a new word, perhaps to understand its meaning. When school-age children swear, it's usually to vent some negative feelings. It's a response to something painful, upsetting or frustrating. Children might also swear to fit in socially. They might be trying to be part of the group, or to stand out by being funny or adding shock value to their talk. Children might also be imitating others when they swear. Some children swear because it gets a strong reaction from their parents.

What to do about swearing: immediate action: Speaking to your child about their choice of words, rather than ignoring the behaviour. Your child might or might not fully understand a swear word's meaning. But school age children do understand that words can hurt or offend others. Remember quite often your reaction can influence whether your child swears again. Stay calm and explain clearly that the word your child used is not acceptable. This will go a long way towards preventing future swearing.

Should you explain what the word means? Children can get some good from a simple explanation. If you think your child might have some understanding of the meaning of the word, you can ask them what they think the word means. Then use general terms to explain why it's not appropriate. For example, you could say, 'That is a word for private body parts. We don't use it like that in our family'.

What to do about swearing: the longer term: It's a good idea for adults to discuss and agree on acceptable language. For example, in some families, expressions such as 'Oh my god' are OK, but other words are not. Discuss your family rules about acceptable language with your child. For example, you could say, 'Please speak politely or don't speak at all', or 'There are some words we don't use in our home'. You might also explain to your child that some words that are acceptable at home might not be acceptable at school (or other settings such as church or other children's homes). Different places have different rules.

If you find it difficult to stop swearing yourself, try to find alternative words to use or another way to deal with the situation. Adults often swear when they're frustrated or angry. Instead of swearing, try to say something like, 'I feel really frustrated or angry'. This way you're modelling better ways of expressing feelings. If your child has heard you swearing, it can also help to explain why you were swearing.

Praise your child when you notice them dealing more appropriately with anger or frustration. For example, if your child tells you that a playmate was using swear words to tease him, praise your child for walking away from the situation and not using those words themselves.

Your child will hear words out in public that you've said are unacceptable. It's good to be prepared for this situation. If your child asks you why somebody is using a bad word, you could talk about how people in different families have different rules.