

## Debate Speech Example

**Topic: It is best to deal with bullying by expelling the bully from school**

### **AFFIRMATIVE CAPTAIN**

Ladies and gentlemen, bullying is a major problem in Hong Kong schools. A study of primary school students published in December 2007 found that six out of ten students had been bullied. But what is bullying? Bullying is an unequal attack on another student. A bigger student hits and kicks a smaller student. One student calls another names, trying to create emotional damage. Some students decide that they will not talk to another student. Or an aggressive student uses threats to get money from others. We will argue that these acts are so bad that the only effective way to deal with them is to expel the bully from the school permanently.

We can all agree that these things are bad. But what is to be done? Our team believes that schools must take strong action whenever these things happen. It is not the students but the school that is responsible. Bullying is like cancer. If it is not stopped, it will spread among students. If the response is weak, then students will believe that teachers are not serious, and that bullying is not really so important to adults. If the bully is expelled, all will see that the issue is important. This kind of behaviour is very hard to change, so strong action is necessary.

Sometimes, students who are bullied even commit suicide. We must not let this happen. We must deal with bullying by expelling the bully. Thank you.

### **OPPOSITION CAPTAIN**

Our team accepts that the problem of bullying is important. Anyone who has been through the experience knows how damaging bullying can be. We also accept that the issue is a major one in schools. The same study my opponent mentioned, by Wong, Lok, Lo and Ma, shows that 24% of students had bullied another student.

I have a question, however. Are we really going to expel 24% of all primary students? Further, the definition of bullying is broad. Shall we expel somebody every time he / she says that another is stupid or ugly? These are children we're talking about. And when there is a fight among school children, the fight will always be in some way unequal. Will we expel a student every time there is a fight?

So the solution my opponents propose will be difficult to apply. And there is another question. Will it work? Studies have shown that bullies often come from difficult homes, where there is very little support from parents. My opponents, then, want to solve a problem that comes from difficult homes by sending the students back to the same difficult homes. This does not make sense. The solution will not work.

### **AFFIRMATIVE 1ST SPEAKER**

My opponent brings up some very real problems of definition. It is true that we cannot expel 24% of the students in school, and it is also true that our understanding of bullying cannot be too wide or we will encounter problems.

When there is a fight in school, the teacher is often not very sure what the background is. Many of us remember conversations with teachers that go, "He started it. No, he started it." One student may well accuse another of bullying so as not to be responsible for the fight. In dealing with any crime, there needs to be standards of proof. We suggest that teachers only expel students when they see the inequality of the fight themselves, or when all witnesses agree that the fight is so unequal as to be bullying.

As for verbal insults, obviously one single insult in anger is not bullying. In order to be bullying, there must be a stream of verbal abuse over days. Teachers will have to rely on students to report this.

Once these standards of proof are reached, however, the school must take strong action. It is still true that teachers must show that they take the issue seriously, and that is why bullies should be expelled.

#### **OPPOSITION 1ST SPEAKER**

My opponent underestimates the difficulty in proving bullying, and the impact this problem will have on their whole proposal.

I would like to turn to another issue now. That is the emphasis in the resolution on punishment. The whole resolution seems to suggest an old-fashioned, emotional view that says, "The crime is a bad thing, so we must hurt the criminal."

The emotion involved is understandable. We all hate bullying. We must be practical, however. As the proverb says, "Prevention is better than cure." Experts in education have suggested many activities that will prevent bullying before it begins. For example, young primary students can take part in roleplays, learning how to deal with social problems before they turn to violence. Studies have shown that such activities can promote a "peaceful, loving and respectful classroom environment". The resolution states that "bullying is best dealt with by expelling the bully". We say that this is not at all the best solution to the problem. It would be better to create an environment that does not support bullying.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE 2ND SPEAKER**

My opponent accepts the popular idea that problems will just go away if we are "positive" and "loving" enough. The real world is not like that. Bad intentions exist. Not everybody is doing their best to create a "peaceful, loving and respectful classroom environment". One student with bad intentions can make all the role-plays in the world useless.

The real question is, what do we do then? What do we do when in spite of all our love and good intentions, one student acts like a wolf among sheep? My opponent would have us believe that if we just give the bully a hug, everything will be fine.

If the only result of bullying is extra attention from the teacher, the bully will be encouraged to continue. Bullies only understand punishment, and the punishment involved must be strong enough to discourage the behavior. Teachers have limited resources. They aren't allowed to hit students. We don't have prisons in our schools. So what we can do is separate the bully from the environment. Without the bully in it, it will certainly be more "peaceful, loving and respectful".

We say that "bullying is best dealt with by expelling the bully". Thank you.

#### **OPPOSITION 2ND SPEAKER**

Our opponents put words in our mouths. Nobody says that we should hug bullies but we also do not need to inflict suffering on the bully.

Bullying may still occur even with the best programme to prevent it. Generally speaking, in Hong Kong, authorities have tried to deal with bullying through a range of punishments. The approach they have used is more flexible than our resolution, but it has still failed. Dennis Wong of the City University of Hong Kong writes flatly, 'harsh punishment is not effective for stopping bullying.' He suggests, very reasonably, that part of the problem with bullies is that they lack social skills, and the need to bully is much less when social skills are better. This is not 'hugging the bully.' It is finding practical solutions for the problem. He recognises that public punishment for bullies is sometimes necessary, but suggests this can be done without treating the bully like a mad dog. Bullies should become part of the class once again.

That is, you don't solve bullying by bullying bullies. Thank you.