

New anti-bullying reform in Malaysia could make parents liable for their children's behaviour



Parents could be liable for their children's behaviour under a new anti-bullying law in Malaysia. *(ABC News: James Oaten)*

In short:

Malaysia has introduced a new anti-bullying law that could see parents face court action or a fine if their children are convicted of bullying.

A new tribunal has been set up to oversee bullying cases that are too complex for schools to handle.

Malaysia has one of the highest bullying rates in the world.

Malaysia has one of the highest rates of bullying in the world which affected thousands of students last year, according to government figures.

To try and tackle the problem, a new anti-bullying law came into force this week.

A dedicated tribunal has also been launched which is made up of more than 50 specialists who will deal with cases too difficult for schools to handle.

[What to do if your child is being bullied](#)



Children often tell their parents about bullying before teachers.

So what can parents do if their child is being bullied?

While parents and education groups in Malaysia have largely welcomed the reform, they have urged caution over a clause that could hold parents responsible for their children's actions.

A provision in the law states that parents of minors who the tribunal convicts for bullying can now also be held liable for their children's actions and risk additional court procedures and fines.

"We welcome the Act because it places children's well-being at the centre and recognises that bullying has serious emotional, psychological and educational consequences," said Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim of the Parent Action Group for Education in Malaysia.

"However, legal liability should be approached carefully.

"Not all parents have control over their children's actions, particularly in complex social and digital environments."



The move is part of Singapore's new anti-bullying measures introduced by the Ministry of Education.

One of the most high-profile cases in Malaysia

In one of the most high-profile cases in Malaysia, a 13-year-old girl died last year after falling from the third floor of her hostel at a religious boarding school in the eastern Sabah province.

Her death was blamed on bullying and sexual harassment, sparking national outrage.

Five teenage students later appeared in court on bullying charges.

"We hope [the tribunal] can act as a preventative factor because perpetrators know that their actions can be punished more severely," unionist Fouzi Singon said.

Earlier this month Malaysia banned millions of children under the age of 16 from having social media accounts, joining a growing global effort to tighten safety protections.

The government said the measures are aimed at protecting children from harmful content, cyberbullying and platform features designed to encourage excessive use.

A 2023 study by the Dutch-based International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement found that Malaysia had one of the highest rates of bullying among eighth-grade students globally.

An Ipsos poll last year found that some 260 of 400 Malaysian respondents, or 65 per cent, said they experienced bullying at school.

-AFP, June 19, 2026