

Tips for Parents

Supporting your child's attendance at school

✓ **Develop good routines**

Children NEED routine. These habits are a good foundation that will help children throughout their school life and into the future:

- Get uniforms, school bag and all school things organised the night before
- Go to bed at the SAME time each night
- Get up at the SAME time each morning
- Have breakfast at the SAME time each morning
- Leave for school at the SAME time each day (be on time!)

✓ **Be positive**

Talk about school in a positive way in front of your child. If you have any concerns, talk to the school about the issue rather than create a negative image about school for your child. You will create problems for yourself and your child if you teach them to be negative about school.

✓ **Build your child's problem-solving skills**

If your child has a problem with attendance, help them solve the problem by asking them what they think is the best thing to do, or what other children do when this happens. Discuss ideas together rather than just giving them the answer or criticising the school. You are a role model for your child.

✓ **Be consistent**

You only confuse your child and create anxiety if you constantly change the messages you give them. If you tell your child they have to be at school every day and then let them stay home because it is convenient or give in to their demands, then the child learns that you will cave in under pressure and that you don't mean what you say.

✓ **Be firm**

You are the parent and children need to feel secure in knowing that you always mean what you say. Don't say things if you can't or won't do them. Children have plenty of friends, but they only have one mum/dad. Being a parent is more important, more special and much harder than trying to be their friend.

✓ **Develop incentive programs**

Encourage and reward the behaviour you want to see. Everyone likes to be rewarded for trying hard and doing their best. Children respond to small rewards, praise and little treats. Nothing big or expensive, maybe just some time with you kicking a ball, a bike ride or fish and chips! You could also use a sticker chart to record each time your child gets ready for school on time – at the end of the week you could agree on a reward for their efforts.

✓ **Always follow through**

Children need to understand about consequences. If your child does not do what you agree to, or they break the rules, then they need to know that there will be consequences for their actions e.g. no computer or TV, no pocket money or maybe even ask them how they will "make up" for their behaviour. Follow through with the consequence!

✗ **Don't get into arguments**

Children know how to push your buttons, so instead of ongoing arguments, just say what you need to say and walk away. Tell your child you have made your decision and that it is final. Your child will soon learn that you mean what you say and that arguing will not work. Teenagers, especially, are expert arguers!

✗ **Don't take things personally**

Children will often use 'words as weapons' especially when they are feeling frustrated. Name calling, muttering under their breath or saying "I don't love you anymore!" is very common.