

Learning Every Day Counts



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Success at school goes hand in hand with good attendance!

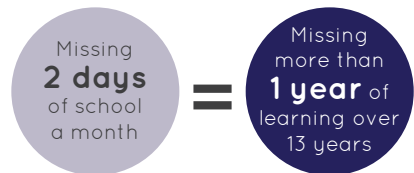
Non-attendance has a range of effects on students, both academically and socially. Good attendance habits start in kindergarten and set your child up for success in school, work and life in general.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Attendance is a parent and student responsibility. All children in NSW must go to school between the ages of 6 and 17.
- Being 10 minutes late per day can lead to 6 days missed per year.
- Missing 2 days of school each month means over 1 entire year of missed learning in the child's school life.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school work or facing some other difficulty at school.
- Studies show the more students and parents are connected with their school, the better the attendance and success of the students.
- There is a strong link between school attendance, school achievement and school completion and engagement in post-school work and/or study.

“Every day counts and there is no ‘safe’ threshold for absences. The effects of non-attendance on achievement are cumulative and can impact both academic achievement and attendance in future years of schooling.”

Hancock et al., 2013; Zubrick, 2014



WHY IS ATTENDANCE SO IMPORTANT?

Non-attendance can negatively impact students, both academically and socially. Absenteeism can lead to patterns of school refusal and social isolation from both peers and the school community. Some research has shown that absenteeism can lead to emotional behaviour difficulties which can be associated with a higher chance of school drop-out and having problems later in life with relationships and employment prospects (*Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2013; Aitsil, 2019*).



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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.

Dealing with teenagers

KEEP COMMUNICATING AND LISTENING

Listen to your teenager to identify what is the cause of their anxiety? It's important to let them talk without judgement. Understanding them will allow you to more accurately address their needs.

IDENTIFY AND RESPOND EARLY

It's important to talk to your teenager about what's happening. Support them to communicate with the school about what is happening.

TALK TO THE SCHOOL

Contact the school as soon as you become concerned to arrange a meeting to discuss how to best support your teenager.

KEEP CALM

Be consistent with expectations and routines.

SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES AROUND TECHNOLOGY

- Set limits on screen time; take the computer and other technology out of the bedroom.
- Keep technology in a common area so your child/teenager can't connect during the night or in the early hours of the morning.
- Lead by example.

BE POSITIVE ABOUT SCHOOL

Encourage and highlight the positives of attending school. This isn't to dismiss their anxiety or emotional distress, but discussing the positive can help your teenager see the benefits of going to school (e.g. friends, sport, extra-curricular activities).

When is sick too sick for school?



SEND ME TO SCHOOL IF...

- I have a runny nose, minor sore throat, or just a little cough, but no other symptoms.
- I haven't taken any fever reducing medicine for 24 hours, and I haven't had a fever during that time.
- I haven't thrown up or had any diarrhoea for 24 hours.



KEEP ME AT HOME IF...

- I have a temperature higher than 37.5°C, or a severe headache/migraine, even after taking medicine.
- I am vomiting or have diarrhoea.
- My eyes are pink and crusty, or oozing pus.
- I have a rash, redness or itchiness affecting all or most of my body.



CALL THE DOCTOR IF...

- I have temperature higher than 37.5°C for more than two days.
- I've been throwing up or having diarrhoea for more than two days.
- I've had the sniffles for more than a week, and they aren't getting better.
- I still have asthma symptoms after using asthma medication (call 000 if I'm having trouble breathing after using an inhaler).

The Resilient Child

How can I build resilience in my child?

Model from Beyond Blue – 2018



Quality relationships are important for resilience.

Supportive relationships

- Spend quality time with your child
- Support your child to build relationships with other adults
- Help your child develop social skills and friendships with peers
- Help your child to develop empathy

Managing emotions

- Use open-ended questions with your child
- Encourage your child to talk about feelings
- Acknowledge when your child is distressed
- Help your child regulate emotions
- Talk to your child about preparing for events
- Help your child realise that difficult times are a part of life

Autonomy and responsibility

- Build your child's independence
- Talk to your child about problem solving
- Allow your child to make decisions
- Provide opportunities for free play
- Teach your child that being bored is not necessarily bad

Personal challenge

- Teach your child to 'have a go'
- Allow your child to experience everyday adversity
- Encourage your child to do free play
- Encourage your child to build independence
- Talk to your child about self talk
- Help your child deal with difficult situations
- Explore the benefits of community-based organisations

Unpacking your child's emotions...

Stay OPEN

Some helpful tips...

1. Reflect on your O wn emotions	Stop and think about how you're feeling, what you're thinking, and what the impact of that might be on your child. Your stress is a good guide to how your child is probably feeling.
2. P ause to reflect on your child's thoughts and feelings	When your child's behaviour is perplexing or upsetting, pause to consider the potential internal explanations for this behaviour. Ask yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is it possible my child is worried, sad or angry right now?• Even though my child seems angry, is it possible they are actually feeling something else that they are too scared to show?• What underlying need might my child have that they are trying to express through their actions? How can I help them give voice to this need?
3. E ngage with your child	Slow down and talk with your child. Use open-ended questions and convey curiosity in understanding your child's true thoughts and feelings, wherever they may take you. Try the following statements and questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is something on your mind?• I'm wondering if you are feeling upset about something.• I always want to know how you're really doing.
4. Be open to N ew experiences	Our children's thoughts, feelings and preferences are constantly evolving, so it is important to maintain a state of openness to new experiences. Don't assume, based on past experiences, that you always understand your child's thoughts, feelings, fears or motivations etc. Remain OPEN to the always evolving child; once OPEN, always OPEN.

NOTES



Social and Emotional Learning

How can I support my child's wellbeing and social development?

Model from Casel – 2017

Self-Awareness

Recognising your emotions and values as well as your strengths and challenges.

- Identifying emotions
- Accurate self-perception
- Recognising strengths
- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy

Self-Management

Managing your emotions and behaviours to achieve your goals.

- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Self-discipline
- Self-motivation
- Goal setting
- Organisational skills



Social Awareness

Showing understanding and empathy for others.

- Perspective taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others

Responsible Decision-Making

Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behaviour.

- Identifying problems
- Analysing situations
- Solving problems
- Evaluating
- Reflecting
- Ethical responsibility

Relationship Skills

Forming positive relationships, working in teams and dealing effectively with conflict.

- Communication
- Social engagement
- Relationship building
- Teamwork

Additional Support

Who can you approach for help at school?

- Contact your school as soon as you think there is a problem. Schools and parents can work together to help your child/adolescent develop better coping skills and formulate a plan to address the problem.
- School staff that can assist you include: the Class Teacher, Principal, Assistant Principal, Year Co-ordinator or Mentor and School Counsellor.
- If you, your doctor or the school thinks your child or adolescent may benefit from specialist mental health services, a referral can be made. You can find out more information about the mental health services in your local area by calling the NSW Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511.
- Local communities have resources available. Some of these may be able to help with different aspects of what might be contributing to your child/adolescent's difficulty attending school.



Identifying technology overuse

If your child or teenager displays any of the following behaviours, it's time to intervene:

- Stops engaging in other activities (in and/or outside school).
- Becomes isolated from friends and family.
- Stays up late or all night on technology.
- Is on technology for prolonged periods of time.
- Becomes agitated when access is denied.

If you are interested in learning more about any of the concepts discussed in this booklet, please visit: **csodbb.catholic.edu.au/schools/attendance** for more useful links and resources

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