

Why School Attendance Matters

You can help your child into good habits from an early age. **When your child attends school on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills.** The more time they spend around other children, whether in the classroom or as part of a school team or club, the more chance they have of making lots of friends and feeling included, boosting social skills, confidence and self esteem.

If a child is absent just one day a week, over the course of their school career they will miss two years of schooling. Helping your child into good habits from an early age can help these carry through to adult and working life.

ROUTINE IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

“Success isn’t based on making dramatic changes, simple steps are the most productive,” says Dr Raj Persaud, Consultant Psychiatrist and Every Lesson Counts supporter. “These can take the form of talking to your child about why they don’t want to go to school, or helping your child to be organised so that mornings are not stressful.” The whole family can play a part. “Older children in the family can help younger children get to school, as well as being strong role models for regular attendance,” says Dr Raj. “Other members of the family, including the extended family of relatives and friends can also have a vital role to play.”



At home, routine is the key to making simple changes for success, says Dr Raj. He gives his simple six-point plan to try with the family:

- ❖ Going to school unprepared can be a major worry for children - **help by checking schoolbags the night before, packing P.E. bags and keeping an eye on homework progress.**
- ❖ Tired children aren't punctual and find it hard to learn, so **ensure your child has a sensible bedtime.**
- ❖ **Help your children get into a regular routine** and set the alarm at the same time every morning.
- ❖ **Make time for breakfast** so there are no shop stops where children can get side-tracked on the way to school.
- ❖ Children can become unsettled if they have to go into school late and without their friends - **getting children to school in time** to meet friends in the yard prevents this.
- ❖ Have a memory board at home for special trips or activities - **the board will help your children remember to tell you and help you remember to prepare them for it.**

School absence, which might at first be relatively infrequent, **can rapidly accumulate.** Try to stay strict on even infrequent absence, and show your child that attending school is a priority to you and is key to their future success.

If your child is having problems

If your child is having problems with attendance, talking to their school is the best place to start. Don't be afraid to get to know your child's teacher and head teacher – communicating problems is the first step to solving them.

