



Attendance: Getting Back to School

A guide for parents and whānau

Summary

It is important for your child to attend school regularly. The Education Review Office (ERO) looked at what helps children go to school, and what makes it harder.

This guide will help you to see why attendance matters, and how you can help your child to get the most out of school.

What is attendance?

Attendance is when children are at school and in the class they are supposed to be in.

It all adds up. Children who miss a week each term will have missed out on a year of schooling by the time they are 16.

Why is attendance important?

ERO looked at research from Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas, to find out about the difference that attendance makes for children. Even missing just two days a term is linked to not doing as well. We found lots of evidence that regular attendance has a big impact: the more often children attend school, the better they do at school, the happier they are, and the better they are set up for life.

Why do children miss school?

We know that children's and parents' attitudes, and how children experience school, impacts on attendance. We have identified the **most important** things.

For **parents** the most important attitudes are:

- how comfortable they are with their child missing school
- how likely they are to keep their child home:
 - if their child is being bullied
 - if their child is unable to participate in school activities
 - for a family or special event
 - for mental health reasons.

For **your child** the most important attitudes are:

- if they think going to school every day is important
- if they see school as helpful for their future.

What happens in **school** matters as well. For your child the most important things are:

- how hard they find their schoolwork
- if they can participate in activities
- if they like or don't like the people in their class
- if they like or don't like their teacher(s)
- if they like or are interested in what they are being taught.

What can you do to support attendance?

We found that what you do can have a big impact on your child's attendance. Parents who are comfortable with their child missing a week or more of school per term are more than twice as likely to have a child who doesn't regularly attend school. It is never too early to start. When children miss some school early on, it can lead to missing more later on too. When your child is at primary school, your input is even more important. You can help set up good habits that will last for the whole time they are at school.

Below are some things that you can do which help.

- It is your responsibility to get your child to school – if transport is hard for you, talk to your school. There may be support available in your area.
- Talk to your child about how school is important for their future, and how it is important to go every day. Be positive about school!
- Make sure your child knows that you care if they are going to school.
- Only take your child out of school when there is a really good reason, like if they are sick.
- Have a consistent morning routine, not too rushed.
- Help your child to be prepared for school, like making sure they have done their homework the night before.

Questions you can ask your child

It is good for your child when school is a great place for them to be, and they are engaged with what they are learning. Check in with them often and listen to what they say.

- Ask them about what they have been learning.
- Ask them to tell you about a conversation they had with a classmate or friend.
- Ask them what was challenging or fun about their day.
- Ask them what they are most looking forward to tomorrow.

If your child doesn't want to go to school, there can be a lot of different reasons for this. It is important to be supportive, even if it is a bit difficult. You can help by understanding why they don't want to go.

- Is there something happening at school they want to avoid?
- Are they getting on with the other children?
- Are they having trouble with bullying?
- Are they feeling a lot of pressure in their learning?
- Are they interested in what they are learning?
- Do they have a problem with a teacher or other adult in the school?

Once you know what the problem is, you can work with your child’s school to make it better. The chances are that the school has dealt with these issues before. It also helps your school to know early when there is a problem, so you can really help a lot by knowing what is going on for your child.

Things you can talk to your child’s school about

Get to know your child’s teacher or teachers – this makes it easier to talk when anything comes up.

- Learn how to let the school know when your child won’t be there and do this as soon as you know.
- Make sure you know how much school your child has missed – the school will know this and should share it with you, but you can always ask.
- The school wants your child to be happy and succeed too – help them to understand your child and your whānau so they can work with you to make school a great place for your child.

If you’d like to know more, you can look at these links

- [Tips to support your child’s attendance](#)
- [Tips for talking to your child’s teacher](#)
- If you are worried about bullying, [there is support from the Ministry of Education](#)
- If you have serious worries about your child’s attendance, [you can contact your local Ministry of Education office](#)

