



Talking to your child's school about attendance



If your child doesn't want to go to school or feels unable to go, this can be really stressful. But you're not alone – there are many ways your child's school can help. That's why it's really important to get in touch with the school and see how they can help support your child.

Contacting the school

Start by requesting a meeting with your child's teacher, guidance teacher, or head of year. If you had a tough time at school yourself, this may feel daunting, and you might worry about being seen as 'that parent.' Remember, schools are there to support your child and are legally required to involve parents.



What can schools do?

Your child has a right to additional support for learning if they need it. If they're refusing to go to school, there are many ways their school can help them return.

- Schools can start by working with you to understand why your child is avoiding school.
- They may provide a 'safe space' where your child can go when feeling overwhelmed.
- Giving children choices, such as allowing them to leave a class if they feel very anxious, can also help.
- Pairing them with a buddy or mentor can make the school day feel more manageable.
- Adjustments like starting earlier or later to avoid busy periods and making plans for unstructured times, such as lunch breaks, can also be beneficial.
- Teachers can work with you to implement calming strategies both at home and in school.
- Schools may also involve an educational psychologist or other professionals for further support and refer you to local resources.

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Tips for getting the most out of meeting the school

Tip #1: Be prepared

Before the meeting, make notes of everything you want to say. What do you want the school to understand about your child's situation? It's important that your child feels they're part of the process too, so talk to them about how they feel and what they'd like the school to know.

Tip #2: Take notes

It's a good idea to make notes during the meeting, so you can remember everything you discuss. In particular, write down any actions or plans that you agree on. You could also email the school afterwards listing the actions.

Tip #3: Work together

You may feel upset and frustrated by the situation, but try to work with the school to come up with a plan to help your child. You know your child best, but the school are also experts on education.

Tip #4: Keep your child in the loop

Make sure your child doesn't feel that decisions are being made about them behind their back. Explain to them what you and the school have discussed and ask them how they feel about this.

Tip #5: Check back

Arrange a time to check back in with the school, to see how things are progressing.

Looking after yourself

School avoidance can be tough on everyone in the family. So make sure you're looking after yourself too.

Tip #1: Talk to other parents

Chatting to parents in a similar situation will help you feel less alone.

Tip #2: Don't be too hard on yourself

In these kinds of situations, it can be tempting to blame ourselves as parents or feel we're not doing enough. So try to remember that by being there for your child and supporting them you're doing so much to help them.

Tip #3: Keep talking to your partner

Keep communicating to make sure you're agreeing on a course of action. If you're a single parent, try to keep in regular contact with your child's other parent, if that's possible.

Tip #4: Try to have some fun

Try to plan in some fun activities with your child, and for yourself, to give you a chance to unwind.

Help and support

[Parentclub.scot/school-support](https://parentclub.scot/school-support)

has advice on your rights and where to get help and support. You're not alone, there are lots of organisations that can help.