## PaWS' Parent Guide



## Difficulties getting your child to school

Many parents will at some point be faced with a child not wanting to go to school. Getting up on time, being punctual and having high attendance is an essential life skill your child will need in order to function successfully in life. If you are having difficulties getting your child to school, consider the suggestions below and be consistent with your approach. Make sure that you give your strategies time to work.



## Have you tried the following?

**Identify any underlying problems.** Is it linked to school work, friendship problems, or your child's way of coping with something they are worried about? Talk about what's worrying them, making sure you listen to what they say. Try to help your child lessen their anxious feelings rather than fight against them.

**Focus on teaching your child problem-solving skills.** Not coming to school creates new problems for a child. Therefore, you need to help your child develop better problem-solving skills so that when problems arise, your child will be able to solve them successfully. As parents, you have to be able to tell your child that it is their responsibility to go to school.

Learning to accept this responsibility is part of the problem-solving process. You need to say:

"You have to go to school even when you don't want to. That's your responsibility. It's not about your wants, it's your responsibility."

Avoid having these discussions at the point of refusal. Instead, have a problem-solving discussion at a different time when both of you are calm.



**Use support from other families**. Arrange to walk or travel to school with one of your children's friends who you know does not struggle to come in. They might act as a role model for your child or simply act as a motivator for your child in joining them on their journey to school.

**Have a clear morning routine.** Ensure that the morning routine stays the same, even if your child isn't going to school. Get them to wake up at the same time and eat breakfast. Where possible, make the mornings feel normal.

**Provide praise and rewards.** If your child doesn't want to go to school, you can work on motivation by using a reward system. Use positive praise and reward with your child, making sure you notice any efforts they are making. You should also stress the inherent positives about a day at school such as seeing friends and learning new things.

**Set limits and hold your child accountable**. Is going to school the only time your child resists your instructions or is this a regular situation? You may need to reassert firm limits and create a culture of accountability at home. Avoid arguments, calmly enforce any consequences and offer to help them learn to solve the problem of getting to school on time.

**Discuss your concerns with the school.** If the suggestions above have not been successful and concerns are ongoing, please contact your child's class teacher. They are likely to talk to your child about any worries they are having in school and support your child in resolving them. They might introduce rewards and consider other strategies such a giving your child a responsibility at the start of the day to provide further motivation.



## Find out more:

Young Minds:

https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/school-anxiety-and-refusal/

**Empowering Parents:** 

https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/my-child-refuses-to-go-to-school/

PaWS' attendance policy and procedures:

https://pevenseyschool.org.uk/parents/attendance https://pevenseyschool.org.uk/statutory-info/policies/