SCHOOL ATTENDANCE: TIPS FOR PARENTS

• **Develop good routines.** Very important as children NEED routine. These habits are a great foundation that will help kids throughout their school life and into the future:
  - Get organised for school with uniforms and school bag the night before
  - Go to bed at the SAME, reasonable 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 morning (be on time!)

• **Be positive** about school in front of your child. If you have a concern, talk to the school about the issue rather than create a negative image about school for your child. You will create problems for yourself if you teach your child to be negative about school.

• **Build your child’s problem solving skills.** Rather than solving all their problems for them, help your child solve problems by asking them what they think is the best thing to do, or what do other kids do if this happens. Discuss ideas together rather than just giving them the answer or criticising the school. You are a model for your child.

• **Be firm.** You are the parent and kids need to feel secure in thinking “mum and dad always mean what they say!” Don’t say things if you can’t or won’t do it. Kids have plenty of friends, but they have only one mum/dad. Being a parent is much more important, more special and much harder than trying to be a friend.

• **Develop incentive programs** to encourage and reward the behaviour you want to see. Everyone likes to be rewarded for trying hard and doing their best. Kids respond to small rewards, praise and little treats. Nothing big or expensive, maybe just time with you kicking a ball in the park, a bike ride or fish and chips! You could also use a chart and put a sticker up for each time the child gets ready for school on time – at the end of the week you could agree on a reward for their efforts. Being positive makes everyone happy.

• **Kids need to understand about consequences.** If the child does not do what you agree or they break the rules, then they need to know that there will be consequences for their actions eg. No computer or TV, no pocket money or maybe you ask them how they intend to “make up” for their behaviour. Follow through with the consequence!

• **Don’t get into arguments** with your child. Kids 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 are expert arguers!

• **Be consistent.** You will 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 because you 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!

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