

CHILD DEVELOPMENT & PARENTING > SCHOOL ATTENDANCE > SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES (YEARS 9 TO 13)

School Attendance and Support Services (Years 9 to 13)

Full transcript · 10 video clips · generated 22 September 2026

About this transcript. This transcript was produced automatically from the video audio. It has not been checked by a person, so names, place names, te reo Māori and medical terms may be wrong in places. The video is the record. If something here reads oddly, please check it against the video.

Watch the series: listeningtofamilies.co.nz/school-attendance/school-attendance-and-support-services-years-9-to-13

IN THIS TRANSCRIPT

1. Yrs 9 to 13 - How do I get my child to go to school_
2. Yrs 9 to 13 - Taking a mental health day
3. Yrs 9 to 13 - Talking to the Dean
4. Yrs 9 to 13 - Is there an attendance person in all schools
5. Yrs 9 to 13 - Missing a day – does it matter_
6. Yrs 9 to 13 - Helping neurodiverse children and rewards
7. Yrs 9 to 13 - The importance of routines
8. Yrs 9 to 13 - When parents aren't engaged
9. Yrs 9 to 13 - Are the interventions working_
10. Yrs 9 to 13 - Key messages

1. Yrs 9 to 13 - How do I get my child to go to school_

Hello my name is Charlene I'm mother of four and your eight of us children. Hi I'm Billy Bryce I'm a well-being coordinator at a secondary school in Canterbury and I'm Jo Chapman and I'm an attendance and engagement mentor at a secondary school in Canterbury. So with my four children the biggest thing that I've had problems with is getting them to go to school is this something that other parents are facing or is it just my kids? When it comes to kids not wanting to go to school there are a number of factors and it can be that either forgotten routines or we haven't set up good routines. It could be that they are struggling from just getting to school with transport so there may not be that accessibility for people to get there.

Some other people it could be mental health issues that are underlying and the parents have no idea how to support getting the child to school. and for other kids it could just be they're just not coping with school and so therefore there's a number of parents that are finding they are not sure how to help your child get there so how as a parent do I get my kids to go to school what can I do at home to help this I think initially the most important thing is communicating with your school the number one problem we have in working with attendance and engagement is reaching out to the whānau initially it's always great to have parents that parents or caregivers that are willing to engage with the school when you have that engagement you're able to then move on with plans moving forward for attendance and plans moving forward for their well-being most importantly

2. Yrs 9 to 13 – Taking a mental health day

With my daughter especially I've found that having a mental health day off has been really helpful is that something that you would encourage or talk to your students about or parents about potentially having so sometimes things just do get a bit much and they do just need to to just be for the day is it something that? I think looking at the current strategy from the ministry around attendance and not just mental health days but general sick days and the criteria sort of coming out at the moment is saying if your child has general small bouts of sickness send them to school and I think it's important to look after your child and look after yourself as well and ensure that everyone is in the right frame of mind to go to school everyone has to be in the right frame of mind yeah

3. Yrs 9 to 13 – Talking to the Dean

And what sort of service is available if I was to come to the school and say, look, I'm having a really hard time, I can't get my kid out of bed, they're not coming to school. What sort of things can we put in place to assist the process? Yeah, so there are a number of places. The first is to start with the deans at the school. That is your first call generally in a high school. Most deans are very, very open to chatting and to find out what's going on. They'd rather know than not know because then they can start the process. We're very fortunate to be working within a high school where a lot of those students will be referred on to us so that we can have that conversation if a dean is busy.

If the dean does have the time, then they can start looking at what are the compounding factors. Like, is it a subject that's causing a concern? So they can have a conversation with the child and the teacher. They could go further if they need counselling support. We have the guidance support as well. And then again, that opens up a whole team of services that goes out into the community. You also have your Māori and Pasifika coordinators within the school. So if they feel like they need to reach out and speak to somebody for cultural reasons, we also have that allocated in most schools. And even for our Asian communities, there's lots more coming available as well.

So like I say, the first port of call is a dean's. Always communicate first. Then they know that there's a problem. And then from there, we can start the process of solving it and helping the families. I'm going to say that everybody's situations are different. There's a lot of kids that are having to do adult roles at home due to mum having to leave work early. And it just, again, comes down to communication with the deans. And every school will be slightly different on that too. Would you agree? Yeah. It's a no, isn't it? It's a no. But in terms of if mum suddenly had an operation and no one else is around, then there's going to be, again, it just comes down to that communication.

What about bullies? Can we talk anything about the reason not going to school because of bullying? Bullying? Bullying, yeah. Do you want to talk anything about that? Well, yeah, again, it would just be down to communication and finding the support and the strategies needed. So it's the same.

4. Yrs 9 to 13 – Is there an attendance person in all schools

Is there an attendance person in every school to deal with attendance? Some schools have attendance mentors or community kaimahis within the school that deals purely with attendance. Some schools do not. However, again, we say to go back to the deans. The deans are always the first port of call anyway, even for us. And then that can then follow on to other supports that they may have within their school. So the guidance then can also go through that one as well.

5. Yrs 9 to 13 – Missing a day – does it matter _

So missing a day at school doesn't seem like too big a deal to me, but then talking to my children, oh mum, I missed out on this, and so, you know, what's, one day is, you know, missing a day, you can potentially miss a lot of things. Yeah, I get this question a lot from parents, what is one day? And particularly when the student does come back, they start worrying because I've missed something that was quite important, and then it comes into the snowball effect where they start worrying that they may start missing a test or missing a critical point for something, and then that starts playing on a bit of anxiety for the child coming back into school. We also notice a lot of parents that go, oh, it's okay that they're late to period one, but if you actually take out every period one of the week, that means I've missed a whole day of school. So when you start looking at the stats of that, it's a significant amount of learning that's gone. So we say we'd prefer them to back to period one. at school every day that is possible. Yeah. And fostering good routines. Yeah, that's right. Really important. Yeah. And I guess if they're missed something at school, and that anxiety builds up, then that leads to more days of school. That's right. And it does, it just escalates. Yeah.

6. Yrs 9 to 13 – Helping neurodiverse children and rewards

My personal experience with my children going to school, being neurodiverse, sometimes it's very difficult to find out why they're not going to school. Sometimes it's just a case of, you know, they're under the covers and there's nothing I can do, and it's just going to be a day. Is there anything different for our neurodiverse children, for our neurotypical children that's in place? Because it is, for me, it's been a very difficult situation because there's no real reason. It might have been that, you know, he's just woken up that morning and there was, I mean, yeah, I often have no idea why.

So, is there anything becoming more available for the neurodiverse community? I can only speak on my school, Olly. Thank you. Talk about your one. But we have what's called like a type of learning hub, and we have a lot of very specialised teacher aides and learning support staff in there. And a lot of the time I will talk to them and say, what do you think we could go forward with this? Is it a matter of the child, five periods a day, five days a week is too much? We need to just, you know, rein back a little bit on their timetable and give them a chance to just slow down and actually have an opportunity to catch up on some work.

It could be that they're just being misunderstood in the classroom. And that we just need to work out what's going on. And the deans can do a lot of that work with them. And sometimes it's a miscommunication or misunderstanding or even a cultural practice that, you know, why aren't you answering in class? Well, I've always been taught I wait till the end of the class to have a conversation. Do you know what I mean? So, like I say, communication is the key. The more that you can talk to people, the more information that you'll find out from what the schools have that can be passed on. Yeah. And another thing that I had.

My daughter is that she's had a bit of a reward system in place at school, which has benefited her greatly. She's been going to school more to get the rewards. Is that another thing that you look at, or is that something that's sort of a wee bit specialised per your child? Do you do anything at the school? I wouldn't necessarily say so. No. Like me. Personally, I'd say the school probably does, but do you do that? Oh, I'm a cookie lady. Yeah. Yeah, we have. I've been known as that. Yeah, so I notice that a lot of the students who aren't attending don't find success very often. So what I try to do is find little things that can try and engage them.

For one girl, recently, it was a passion fruit. Yeah. You know, it was just she had never tried and loved it, so that was all it took, was it? But no, it's more around finding what is it that's going to engage these students, because if they're not going to be the ones who want to be walking across the stage at the end of the year, because they've got so many other things that they're trying to manage just to survive to get through some things, we just try and find those little rewards to go, we acknowledge you, and we want to say how successful you have been this week, and just to feel a little bit of that mana and pride within themselves that they've done really, really well.

We have also been looking at, we have a thing in our school which is a reward system that the parents can see if a teacher's acknowledged something that the child's done. Well, we're starting to see more and more of our lower attendees getting those rewards coming through to their parents. Yeah, really nice notes. Yeah, but sometimes that's all it takes is just to feel valued. Just building some confidence, yeah.

7. Yrs 9 to 13 – The importance of routines

When you were talking about routines, and a lot of people have, you know, different routines, what would you, if I was to come to you and say, look, I'm having a really hard time getting my kid to school, and we were going to talk about routines, what sort of thing would you be suggesting? I would say working with your child is the most important thing. So going down to communication. So communicating with your child, what do you need? How can we work together? And also going to the school and saying, asking for advice from the school, because the school often will have teachers that work with students through routines of classwork.

So just, yeah, working collaborative. Yeah, and I think it's also the setting goals of a bedtime routine is also important. We're finding a lot of students are struggling with their phones till late at night. So we might offer support around, put your phone on the other side of the room, sort of scenario, rather than, keeping it beside your bed, asking questions of your child. Are you okay to say no to your friends at nighttime? Are you worried about a friend? And that's why you're keeping your phone on so you can talk to them. And then they might open up to say things along the lines of, yes, I am having trouble.

I'm really worried about a friend. And then they can offload that and let the adults do that help for them rather than them always having to do it. Then it comes to the bedtime getting up routine, which is every day, same time. And keeping that consistent. Then it's about opening the curtains. It's some of the little things that people have forgotten. That's really, really important. Opening the curtains, you put your feet on the floor, you have your shower, then you have your breakfast, and then you can look at your phone. But we don't go straight to the phone in the morning and having that conversation.

What are you so worried about that you need to check first thing in the morning? So again, around that communication. Then sitting down and working around goals is also very helpful. Like what is it that you want to achieve long term? And then going back to what would you like to achieve short term? And then going back to what would you like to achieve long term? And then going back to what would you like to achieve long term? And then going back to what would you like to achieve long term? And then going back to what would you like to achieve long term? What's working well towards it at the moment, but also what's stopping you.

And a lot of students, once you say what's stopping you, realize it's themselves. And then once you say that, it's like, well, how can you help yourself? How can I help you? How can the school help you? But then also, how are you going to celebrate it if you achieve it? And that's another thing that the kids struggle on because I've never thought about celebrating a little success. And I'm finding that that's very, very helpful with a number of students that we're working with. Finding and putting responsibility onto the child is really important. Working alongside them is important as well. So teaching them the right habits of essentially navigating their teenage years.

You've got to remember in two to three years time, they could be part of the workforce. So making sure that they're ready for that is really important.

8. Yrs 9 to 13 - When parents aren't engaged

What about the parents who aren't too interested in what's going on with their children? It makes it very difficult to connect with the child if you can't also connect with the parent. If the parent's like, look, that's not my problem, you know, you deal with that. I've got to do this or, because there are families out there where the parents aren't overly involved or maybe have other addiction problems or something like that. So the children aren't being, the parents aren't able to advocate for their child. So how does that work? Are you, I guess, are you involving other services to come in to that scenario?

Yeah, attendance services are the main service that I would use. They're able to go into the home support family. And I think with... Parents that are sort of disengaged from school or disengaged from their child and supporting them, we actually like to see school as a safe place for children. Yeah. So that, well, in general, but for students in that home life sort of situation, yeah, we'd like to have support in place at school to help them. Yeah. Yeah. And we're very much the same when it comes to that sort of thing. We would... We want to ensure that the child... If we can support them first to support themselves, that's the number one thing around that responsibility type thing.

But then there are support services that are very, very good at coming in and helping out. And remembering that some parents have been very disengaged from school themselves. And so, you know, trying to... That's a little bit of a cycle that's happened. And what we're trying to do is reconnect with those families and say it's a little bit different now. And there is no judgment. We're here to help you. We're here to help your child. And if you don't want that help, that's fine. But let us help your child get up. We're under way with his education.

9. Yrs 9 to 13 - Are the interventions working_

With all these things put in place at schools, are you seeing results? Do you have better attendance, or are you finding that parents are communicating more about their children's attendance? I suppose awareness from our point of view in our school is really increased, so awareness of what's going on in the community, awareness of what's going on in the home has helped us help them. It's difficult to say, moving forward, whether or not we're having a positive impact because that comes out in statistics. But when it comes down to wellbeing and when it comes down to engagement, we like to think that we're making a positive impact.

And we are seeing an impact now where parents are communicating with us before having to communicate home while children aren't at school. So that's a huge step forward that we're breaking down boundaries. And I think that's a really important point to make. We've got a lot of families who are experiencing some of the same barriers that have been there before. So they don't have to necessarily email if they don't have the technology to do so, or have a phone that they can text to. So if there's an interpretation issue, the parents can use that rather than having to navigate a phone call that they can't understand.

And even recently, we've been bringing in interpreters to help out with some of our families as well. So yeah, that's an important point to realise too, is people see children not attending as those kids that just want to drop out and sit on the doll. And this is not the case of what we're seeing. There are, what we said at the beginning, a huge number of factors why students are at school. It's cross-cut through the population as well. And what we want to do is to identify the fact that if you just communicate with us, open up basically the doors, we can help. And if we can't, we'll find someone that can.

10. Yrs 9 to 13 - Key messages

my key point here is that there's no judgment from workers at your school it's important that you're able to engage with them and they will want to engage with you so the most important thing is don't be scared be brave make that big step I guess the key messages I'm taking away from this is that schools are a lot more open than what I realized and much more available and the routine aspect I appreciate you saying that with COVID you know we all stayed in bed later and we all sort of lost our way a lot so putting those routines back in are important and I think sitting here thinking about what I could do at home just to make things a wee bit easier so thank you the key takeaway points here for me would be the communication is definitely the key the more information we have the more information we have the more information we have and the more we can work together the more team effort we go we put around the students going forward so you reach out again don't be afraid and we are here to help