

# TROUBLES AT SCHOOL

Part of the SCHOOLS' series



# Our son's out of control, he's been suspended.

When your child is in trouble at school or truanting, you may feel desperate, with no idea what to do. As a parent you have a legal responsibility to make sure your child attends school regularly but this doesn't mean it is always easy, even though it could make a real difference to your child's future.



**Free Parentline**  
0808 800 2222

**Free Textphone**  
0800 783 6783

**Website**  
[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

**Email**  
[parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk](mailto:parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk)

Parentline<sub>plus</sub>

Because instructions aren't included

Truancy can occur in all families and may begin as early as primary school or when children start secondary school. Whether your child is truanting or has been excluded, it will help if you can find out what might be the reason – your child may be unhappy at school, may be being bullied or may be finding it difficult to keep up with the work.

## WHAT TO DO

- ✔ Listen to your child. There may be many different reasons why they are in trouble at school and it is important to show that you want to understand their problems rather than punishing and blaming them.
- ✔ Let your child know how worried you are. Help your child to understand that you care about their future.
- ✔ Seek help as soon as you realise there is a problem. Children who miss school lose out on future opportunities and run the risk of getting involved in risky behaviour. The sooner the situation is faced, the easier it may be to deal with. You can talk to a teacher, your child's head teacher, an Education Welfare Officer or contact the local education authority (LEA).
- ✔ Arrange a meeting at the school and make sure your child is included. It helps to write down all the questions you have and the points you want to make. Try to keep copies of any letters you send, a diary of where you have gone for help and information, and don't ignore letters or invitations to meetings from the school or local education authority.
- ✔ Talk to the school whenever you need to take your child out of school. Schools can agree up to 10 days holiday during term-time but this is not an automatic entitlement and schools may actively discourage term-time holidays. Always talk to the school before booking a holiday, just in case there is a problem.
- ✔ Seek help if your child is excluded from school. You have the right to take your case to the school's governing body but this may not mean a face to face meeting. If your child is permanently excluded you also have the right to appeal to an independent Appeals' Panel.
- ✔ Allow the school to help too. You may feel overwhelmed but there is support and you aren't alone. Many schools want to build bridges between themselves, parents and children having difficulties and have a range of measures – liaison officers, learning support units and more – to help.

## WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN

If your child continues to truant and/or behave disruptively, the school may ask you to sign up to a Parenting Contract. This is a voluntary agreement between you and the local education authority or the school's governing body.

The contract will mean that you are given practical help and support to make sure your child attends school or improves their behaviour.

In the case of regular truanting or exclusion you may be served with a Parenting Order. This is a court order which will insist you attend a parenting programme and comply with orders about your child's attendance or behaviour. This support is designed to help you tackle your child's behaviour and to gain the skills and confidence to make a real difference. The courts may also impose an Education Supervision Order which means the LEA can tell you what to do to make sure your child is properly educated.

There are also a number of fines and even, in extreme cases, jail sentences, which can be imposed if your child persists in not going to school and it is felt that you have not done enough to get your child back to school or aren't co-operating.

If things are getting serious, it is really important that you find out more about these measures and your rights. To find out more about Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders, possible fines and other penalties you can order a leaflet on school attendance called **'Is your child missing out?'** (Ref: 2097-2005DOC-EN). Available from the Department for Education and Skills at Tel: **0845 60 222 60**. Minicom: **0845 60 555 60**. Email: **dfes@prolog.uk.com**

Remember – children may drop out of education because of things that are happening away from school. If you want help and support in finding the causes of your child's trouble at school and at home, contact Parentline: **0808 800 2222**.

## FURTHER HELP

Parentline Plus provides help and information on parenting issues.

Try our free, confidential, 24-hour Parentline **0808 800 2222**

Or if you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment  
try our free textphone **0800 783 6783**

For online help visit our website **[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)**

Or email us at **[parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk](mailto:parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk)**

### **Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)**

Independent advice and information  
for parents on all matters  
concerning schools.

→ Advice line: **0808 800 5793**

→ School Exclusion line:  
**020 7704 9822**

→ Website: **[www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)**

### **Children's Legal Centre**

Advice and information on legal  
issues affecting a child.

→ Website:

**[www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)**

### **ParentsCentre**

A website with information and advice  
about children's learning and the  
education system.

→ Website:

**[www.parentscentre.gov.uk](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk)**

## OTHER USEFUL PARENTLINE PLUS PUBLICATIONS

'Bullying'

'Exam Pressure'

'Homework'

'Moving onto Secondary School'

'Time to talk: The Real Picture – Parents and Pre-teens'

'Time to talk: The Real Picture – Parents and Teenagers'

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**SCHOOLS' series**

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