



**PROMOTING POSITIVE
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
IN MAYO**



PROMOTING POSITIVE ATTENDANCE

Consistent school attendance is key to developing a love for learning in your child. When children are in school they have a real sense of belonging. This helps them to learn and succeed.

The aim of this booklet is to help parents and teachers support positive school attendance. We have also highlighted what to look out for when concerns arise and where you can seek help. We in this working group are parents as well as educators, and therefore have a real understanding of the challenges that parents / guardians can experience from time to time.

According to the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, a child should attend school every day that the school is open. There are very few reasons why children should be absent from school.

REASONS YOUR CHILD MAY STAY AT HOME

- **Sickness**
 - Very high fever/vomiting/diarrhoea/difficulty breathing/any illness that prevents the child from functioning normally at home or at school
 - The child may have a contagious illness or rash
 - The child is not well enough to participate in class
- **Critical family circumstances e.g. bereavement**
- **Medical appointments that cannot be held outside of school hours**

REASONS YOUR CHILD SHOULD NOT STAY AT HOME

- **Holidays**
- **Shopping**
- **Birthdays**
- **Babysitting other children in the house**
- **Attending events/shows during school time**
- **Sleeping in – it is better to come to school late than not to come at all**



Please note that classroom based assessments are now part of the final grade for the Junior Certificate.

It is vital your child attends school!

TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Highlight the importance of attendance. Talk to children about why going to school is important for their future. If a child seems reluctant to go to school, find out why (i.e., bullying or academic difficulties) and work with the teacher to find a solution.
- Set a weekday routine. Have regular bedtimes and wake-up times so children develop good habits. Be prepared the night before e.g. lunches made, uniforms ready, PE gear ready.
- Create a backup plan. Find a relative, friend or neighbour who can take children to school if something affects your normal routines (e.g. illness or car troubles).
- Encourage your child to get involved in after school and extra-curricular activities.
- Praise. Keep a record of attendance to encourage and praise good attendance.
- It is strongly encouraged that all children have a balanced lifestyle including good attendance, opportunity to exercise and eat well, family time and extra-curricular activities.



SCHOOL REFUSAL

What can cause school refusal?

Triggers:

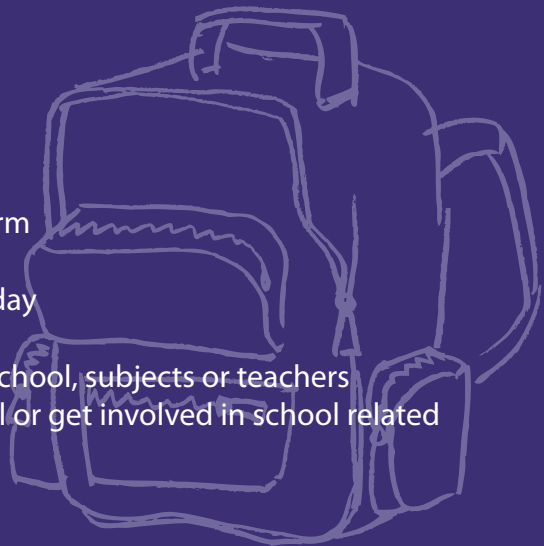
The following factors may cause school refusal:

- Transitions such as moving to a new school, primary to post-primary, returning to school after a long absence or moving house
- Poor organisational skills, being late, not having bag ready, not having homework done etc.
- School issues such as workload, academic pressures or fear of failure
- Poor relationships with peers, school staff, siblings or parents
- Parental separation / marital problems
- Traumatic events within the family
- Anxiety about social situations or activities within school
- Anxiety around being separated from parents or carers
- Attention seeking from a parent or caregiver
- Rewards gained from staying at home: such as spending time with a parent, watching TV or playing video games

WHEN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BECOMES AN ISSUE

Common behaviours that children display when they are not happy in school:

- Feeling sick on a Sunday night
- Phantom pains
- Difficulty sleeping at night
- Frequent tummy aches
- Crying, being anxious or fearful
- Refusing to get up
- Not wanting to put on the uniform
- Delaying tactics in the morning
- Putting off going until the next day
- Bargaining
- Excessively complaining about school, subjects or teachers
- Not wanting to talk about school or get involved in school related activities



WHAT CAN YOU AS A PARENT / GUARDIAN DO TO HELP?

- Talk to your child about school and listen to what they are saying
- Praise them for making an effort to go to school
- Create good routines for bedtime, getting up, breakfast, getting organised i.e. uniform, schoolbag and equipment
- Limit screen time, especially before bed time
- Ensure home life is less enjoyable than school during time of absence
- Encourage relationships outside of school with peers; this builds a sense of belonging with school
- Try not to ask leading questions. Instead of asking “Are you worried?” ask “How are you feeling?”
- Set a good example for your child
- Be consistent and present a united front from a parenting / guardian perspective
- If the situation is not improving seek help from the school or family members

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT OR GUARDIAN TO HELP IF IT GETS TO THE STAGE WHERE A CHILD REFUSES TO GO TO SCHOOL?

- Be firm but calm
- Both parents / guardians give the same messages
- Communicate with the school – year head & Home, School and Community Liaison
- Listen to and reassure your child
- Praise and affirm any little improvement
- Find things they enjoy doing
- Encourage involvement in extracurricular activities
- Restrict access to internet, gaming and social media during school hours
- Don't let them stay in bed, get them up and put uniform on and follow school timetable



WHERE TO GO IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S/TEENAGER'S PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING:

- School staff – Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Teacher, Year Head, HSCL, School Guidance Councillor or Chaplain
- GP – if you have concerns about your child / teenager's mental health / behaviour / wellbeing
- School Completion Programme - if your school is within a cluster area in Mayo
- Your GP or school staff can help you make a referral to
 - TUSLA Family Support Service
 - Educational Welfare Service – statutory agency with responsibility for school attendance
 - Primary Community Care Psychology - mild to moderate mental health issues
 - Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) – moderate to severe mental health concerns
 - MindSpace Mayo



LIST OF LOCAL SERVICES

North & South Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Ballina T: 096 20399 Castlebar T: 094 9042656

North & South Mayo School Completion Programmes (SCP)

North Mayo SCP T: 096 21472 South Mayo SCP: 094 9023060

Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)

www.ispcc.ie T: 094 9025254 E: Mayo@ispcc.ie

The Edge Project

A voluntary Family Support Service that works with a number of young people and their families in Co. Mayo. T: 094 9034776

TUSLA

- Family Support Service 094 9042510
- Educational Welfare Service 094 9250199
- Prevention Partnership & Family Support Programme (Family Support & Meitheal) 094 9042472

Primary Community & Continuing Care Psychology 094 9034776

Mindspace Mayo

A free and confidential support service to promote young people's mental health and wellbeing.

www.mindspacemayo.ie T: 094 9067001 E: info@mindspacemayo.ie

Mayo Traveller Support Group T: 094 90 28400 E: coordinator@mtsg.ie

Foróige

- Ballyhaunis Youth Service 086 7791878
- Creative Communities 086 3862094
- Big Brother Big Sister - North Mayo 086 3845664 / South Mayo 086 3835859
- Neighbourhood Youth Projects (NYP's)
Ballina 096 22012 Westport 098 29218 Castlebar 094 9026760

Involve Youth Service – Ballina T: 087 2379132

Youth Work Ireland North Connaught

- Youth Action Castlebar M: 087 3631462 / 087 6250339
- Youth Action Ballina M: 083 1324742 / 087 1843897
- North Mayo Youth Project T: 096 70615

Maple Youth Centre Ballinrobe T: 0949521645

LGBTI & Support Groups for Young People

- Ballina NYP T: 096 22012 E: mary.glacken@foroige.ie
- Castlebar NYP 094 9060417
- Maple Youth Centre Ballinrobe 094 9521645

Mayo Intercultural Action (MIA) 094 9044511

Community Liaison Worker Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force

M: 087 7400011



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TÚSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency



etb
Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
Mhaigh Eo, Shligigh agus Liatroma
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim
Education and Training Board