



Signs your child might be giving up on school and what you can do

There are signs you can watch out for that might mean your child is at risk of disengaging from school.



Key points

- Losing interest in school or refusing to go to school can happen at different ages and in different ways.
- Disengagement from school is most common in the teenage years, but it can also start during primary school.
- There are signs you can watch out for that might mean your child is at risk of disengaging from school.
- Work with the school and share your concerns so the school can help your child get the support they need.
- If you are concerned about your child's mental health and wellbeing, please contact Beyond Blue (1300 22 4636), Lifeline (13 11 14) or KidsHelpline (1800 551 800).

Every child's school journey is unique and we know that for children and young people who become disengaged from school, it can start at different ages and in many different ways. For some children, it can be a one-off incident that leads them to refuse to go to school while for other children, it can start young and slowly build over time due to a number of different events. As a parent, you can play a vital role in observing your child and noticing changes in their behaviour that might indicate they are disengaging from school. Here's some information about signs to look out for and what to do if you notice them in your child.

It can happen at any time

While disengagement from school is most likely to happen in the teenage years, particularly between the ages of 14 and 16, we do know that some younger children can experience disengagement. So, it's important to keep an eye on your child throughout their schooling years so you can notice any signs of disengagement and get the help you need.

Signs your child may be disengaging

As a parent or carer, you are in the ideal position to observe your child and notice any changes in their behaviour. Here are some signs to look at for which might suggest your child is at risk of disengaging from school:

- shows little or no interest in school
- talks about wanting to leave school
- struggles with learning at school to the point where they have lost interest and confidence in their

<https://www.sparktheirfuture.qld.edu.au/signs-your-child-might-be-giving-up-on-school>

ability to learn

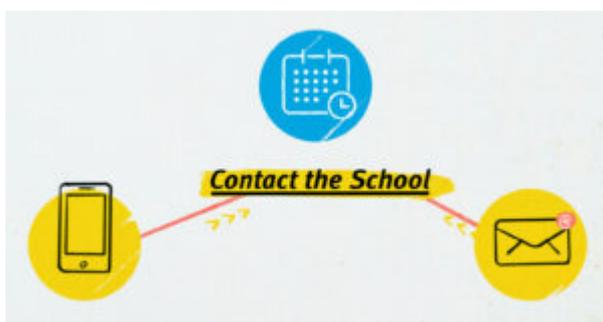
- misses a lot of school or refuses to go to school
- repeated suspensions or other school reports of negative behaviour
- starts behaving in an aggressive way at home or at school
- seems withdrawn and doesn't want to see their friends
- shows significant changes in their behaviour, attitude or performance at school.

How you can help

Your support can make all the difference to your child if they are struggling at school and are at risk of disengaging. As Parenting educator Maggie Dent explains in the video below, it's important to try and find out what's going on for your child. If you can problem-solve with your child, connect with them, and recognise that *they* are not the problem but that there *is* a problem, then you are already going a long way to giving them the help they need.

Speak to the school

Staff at your child's school will be looking out for signs that their students are disengaging so they can give them the support they need to re-connect with their learning. So talk to the school and be open about your concerns so together, you can break down the issues your child is experiencing, understand what is going on for your child, and work out the best way to help your child. With this understanding, you and the school can work together to help your child overcome problems they are experiencing at school. Sometimes it takes a little bit of time and persistence to find the right person to have this kind of conversation with at school, but keep trying.



If you've worked with the school and your child is still not engaged?

If you have worked closely with your child's school and your child is still not engaged at school, then it is time to contact your local regional office to seek support. Each regional office has a team of experts who understand how the education system works, have strong connections with local schools, and who know how to get support for young people who are struggling at school.

And if your child refuses to go to school?

If you and your child's school have tried everything and your child still refuses to go to school, it might be time to call a Regional Youth Engagement Hub. They work with disengaged young people using individualised support and plans to reconnect them with an education, training or employment pathway. This fact sheet provides contact details for each local hub.

Seek professional help if you need it

And remember, if you are concerned about your child's mental health and wellbeing, please contact Beyond Blue (1300 22 4636), Lifeline (13 11 14) or KidsHelpline (1800 551 800).



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