

Children performing at school



Reasons why your child may not be performing well at school

If your child is struggling with their schoolwork, there could be one or more varied reasons. And it certainly does not always have to mean your child is not bright or academic. If you feel something is holding your child back at school, it could be one of the following problems.

They are having vision problems

If your child is having eyesight difficulties, they may not be able to see the blackboard or focus on their books or computer. And if the problem is not picked up, they could easily fall behind with their schoolwork.

There are also signs you can look out for at home that can indicate your child has a problem with their sight. For instance, they may:

- Sit too close to the TV
- Squint or tilt their head a lot
- Hold books close to their face when they are reading
- Rub their eyes a lot
- Blink a lot
- Get frequent headaches or complain of having tired eyes

If you suspect your child is having a problem with their eyesight, take them to an optician to have an eye test (they do not even have to be able to read to have their vision checked).

The test is free for all children under the age of 16 and for those under 19 who are in full-time education.

They may be dyslexic

If your child is having difficulties learning to read and spell, it may be worth finding out if they have dyslexia. 10 per cent of the UK population is affected by dyslexia and if dyslexia runs in your family, their chance may be even higher.

Dyslexia affects people at different ages and in different ways, with its effects ranging from mild to severe. There are different signs to look out for, including the following:

- Reading slowly
- Struggling to learn sequences, such as the alphabet or days of the week
- Poor handwriting
- Spelling the same word in different ways
- Struggling to learn songs or nursery rhymes
- Answering questions verbally with ease but struggling to write the answers down
- Putting letters and numbers the wrong way round
- Struggling with mental arithmetic such as times tables

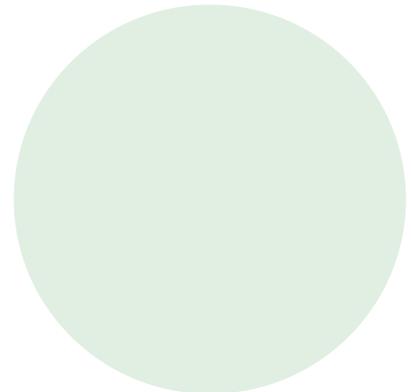
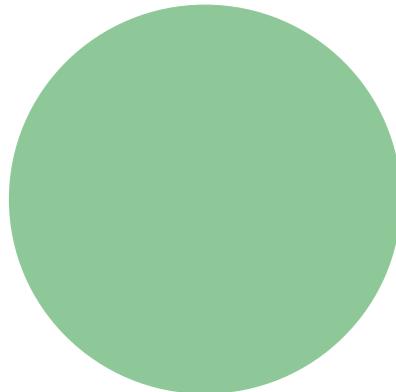
If you think your child may be affected, speak to their teacher or their school's special needs co-ordinator. Once your child is diagnosed, they can get the specialist help they need at school.

They are not getting enough sleep

Not getting a good night's sleep on a regular basis could be affecting your child's performance at school more than you might think.

Children who are poor sleepers may have less energy than those who sleep well, and they may find it more difficult to concentrate on their lessons. Studies also suggest children with sleep disturbances are more likely to be hyperactive and have attention difficulties.

There are several things you could do to make sure your child sleeps better. Find out more about how much sleep your child needs, as well as tips that may help them to get more sleep by reading our Sleeping Tips Helpsheet.



They are eating too much junk food

Children would love to survive on a diet of crisps, chocolate, and chicken nuggets, and it is no secret that many parents struggle to make sure their little ones eat healthily. But there is another good reason to limit your child's intake of junk food.

According to a study of 14,000 children in Bristol, those who ate lots of unhealthy foods from an early age were 10 per cent more likely to fail at school than their classmates. As a result, the experts who wrote the study claimed eating poorly could have a big effect on school performance.

Eating breakfast, for instance, is linked with better behaviour and better grades, with healthy breakfasts such as porridge or boiled egg and soldiers boosting learning more effectively than sugary cereals.

For more information on nutrition, read our nutrition guide.

They are not reading at home

It is common for many children to want to watch TV or play computer games when they come home from school. But there's evidence that those who pick up a book outside of school hours are more likely to do better at school than those who do not read much for pleasure. In fact, reading for pleasure has been found to be more important for a child's education than their family's wealth, level of education or social class.

You can encourage your child to read by setting an example. If your child can see you reading for pleasure in your spare time, they may start to do the same. You can try taking your child to a local library or book shop and notice what type of book gets their attention. Ask yourself what their interests and hobbies are and leave books or magazines that feature these interests around your home. If you need inspiration, try using the Book Trust's online book finder.

They are being bullied

Children who are bullied regularly do not just suffer from lack of confidence and self-esteem, they may do worse in school than other children too.

And these days, bullying does not stop at the school gates. As children have access to smartphones, computers, tablets and other digital devices, cyberbullying is having an impact on many of their lives too.

Your child may not want to tell you they are being bullied. But there are some warning signs you could look out for, including your child becoming withdrawn, worrying about going to school, suddenly doing less well at school, or complaining of headaches or stomach aches.

If you suspect your child is being bullied, talk to them, and try to reassure them that it is not their fault. You may also want to talk with their teacher, so that the school can help to deal with the problem.

Every school has an anti-bullying policy, so find out what steps your child's school has pledged to take to prevent and deal with bullying (you can usually find details of anti-bullying policies on school websites and in the information, you received when your child joined the school).

They are stressed out

For older children especially, the pressure of doing exams can be harmful in many ways. Studies show exam stress can leave young people with mental health problems such as low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. But it can also make them more likely to do badly when compared with those who are not worried about their exam performance.

Effective stress management can help young people to do better in their exams. Some of the things parents can do to help during exam time include making sure their child or teenager eats healthily and gets enough sleep, and to encourage them to be active when they are revising.

However, according to the support group ChildLine, many children say their parents are the greatest source of stress during exam time. So instead of adding to the pressure, try to reassure your child or teenager and be positive, and let them know it would not be the end of the world if they did not do well.

If you feel your child or teen is not coping with the stress of exams, school in general or any other issues, talk to them about it, and let their teacher know you are concerned.

The great news is Licensed Trade Charity can help with a free and confidential **children and young people counselling** with a broad range of issues including:

- Anger
- Coping with loss
- Peer relationships
- Relationships at school including with teacher
- Bullying
- Parents separated/separating
- Sibling relationships

Other sources of information

Citizens Advice

For free practical advice on a wide range of issues, including benefits such as Working Tax Credit.
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

College of Optometrists

Provides information and advice that can help you look after your and your family's eyesight.
www.lookafteryoureyes.org

Bullying UK

Part of family lives. A charity set up to support parents and families.
www.bullying.co.uk

Ditch The Label

Anti-bullying charity based in the UK.
www.ditchthelabel.org



The Licensed Trade Charity are available 24/7, if you'd like to talk about your situation, we can help you. Contact us for confidential, free of charge support. If you are experiencing any of the issues covered in this fact sheet, in the first instance call our helpline on:

0808 801 0550

Our Helpline Team will listen without judging and will work with you as best they can to achieve a positive outcome. If you prefer, you can email: enquiries@ltcharity.org.uk or visit our website at www.licensedtradecharity.org.uk, it's full of useful information about the kind of issues we know people who work in the licensed trade face.

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 licensedtradecharity.org.uk

Note: This guide is not exhaustive. It has been produced by the Licensed Trade Charity to provide you with an overview of the issue in question. We are grateful to all specialist organisations who support our charity and are available to you should you be experiencing this particular issue.
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