



# READY TO LEARN EVERY DAY!



## Praise and Reward: A short guide for parents



Building  
stronger  
families

# READY TO LEARN EVERY DAY!

This leaflet has been created jointly by NAHT and Family Action to suggest ways parents and carers can encourage children to do their best using praise and reward.

It sounds simple but we all like to be told we are doing well. Everyone's pride and motivation are boosted when someone tells us we are doing a great job. Children and teenagers, hearing this from their parents and carers, will truly want to do better and their self-esteem will increase daily. No matter how blasé and tough some children can appear, it is rare to meet a child or young person who genuinely doesn't care what people think. No matter how indifferently they behave towards you, children do take on board the comments of their parents and carers - a few warm words of encouragement for some positive behaviour or after the completion of a task can go a very long way towards affecting a child's whole outlook for the rest of their day. It might give them the boost they need to do the next thing better or improve on what they've already done.

Here are a few simple things you can do to motivate your child to do their best.

## Praise:



- Praise your child immediately, it is then meaningful
- Make sure you have eye contact with your child and smile
- Be enthusiastic and genuine
- Use positive words - 'wonderful' 'great' 'proud' - and tell your child you are so very pleased with them
- Notice the little things your child either does well or without prompting and praise them for it - eg making their own bed or putting their clothes in the laundry bin. If you praise these efforts, your child is more likely to seek other ways to please you



## Reward:

- The reward of parental attention and approval can mean far more to a child than material goods - an enthusiastic 'well done' and a hug have a very quick brightening effect on a youngster's mood
- Like adults, children have their stresses and worries. Saying 'well done' in passing isn't the same as making a point of focusing on them for a few seconds and making sure they really understand how you have been impressed with their achievements. Make sure your child knows their efforts have been appreciated – even for small things. Busy adults often forget how hard simple things can be when you are learning. No matter how small the task and how clumsily the early efforts might appear, from tying shoe-laces to reading basic phrases for the first time or just showing kindness to someone, give your child plenty of praise for their efforts
- It is really important to praise the effort more than the achievement. The skill or behaviour doesn't have to be perfect, especially if a child has worked really hard at something. Say what it is you liked about your child's attitude, rather than just the level of skill they displayed. Make sure your child knows that it isn't perfection that pleases you but the way they've gone about tackling something that's impressed you
- Again, be enthusiastic. We often think that children just 'know' we are proud of them and don't need to be told. You may be surprised at how your words really will have an effect on a child or adolescent's sense of achievement and motivation, especially if you focus on their hard work and effort
- As busy people we can often get wrapped up in our own duties and worries. Take a little time to notice and remark on those little things that children do to help themselves and others



## Other Sources of Information:

- Department for Education: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education)
- epraise: [www.epraise.co.uk](http://www.epraise.co.uk)
- Carol Dweck, Mindset: <http://mindsetonline.com/>



Family Action is a charity committed to building stronger families by delivering innovative and effective services and support that reaches out to many of the UK's most vulnerable people. We seek to empower people and communities to address their issues and challenges through practical, financial and emotional help.

[www.family-action.org.uk](http://www.family-action.org.uk)



NAHT is a professional association and trades union with members in all phases of education. We represent 28,500 school leaders in their quest to develop great schools and improve the lives of children.

[www.naht.org.uk](http://www.naht.org.uk)