

Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

Morning Meltdowns



We've all been there. You get your child into school just as the gates are about to close, you say a quick goodbye and then feel awful because all you've done all morning is shout and nag. Or you just feel relief that you've got a few hours break from them before it starts all over again! Or even worse, you're late for school yet again and experiencing the guilt of feeling like you're a rubbish parent. How can we make that morning routine just a bit more bearable for everyone? Here are some hints and tips ...

First, we need to make sure that we have a routine that works. Make time to sit down together and create a list of all the things that have to happen every morning; having breakfast, getting dressed, cleaning teeth, putting shoes on etc. Once we have a list, then we can decide what order to do things in. Sometimes the novelty of changing things around a bit can break some bad habits and make the morning run more smoothly. (Although be careful if you know your child struggles with changes in routine.)

It is sometimes effective to make the list of jobs into a chart. This is something visual that children can refer to, so they know what has to happen next and learn to take responsibility. Even more effective is if the chart shows photographs of the each child carrying out the task. This triggers pathways in the brain; they see themselves doing the activity and are more likely to follow through and actually do it. Perhaps they can tick things off as they complete each task. We need to give plenty of praise for each job completed. Sometimes it's helpful to have a reward chart or sticker system to encourage children to comply.

I strongly suggest that it's worth thinking about a "no TV or technology" rule before school so you're not trying to prise children off their devices. If this feels too much to ask, then maybe we can say "when you've got dressed and cleaned your teeth, then you can play on your tablet". **BUT**, we need to make sure we consider how we'll get them to stop the exciting computer game/YouTube clip when it's time to leave for school.

I can remember going through a phase with my family, when getting out of the house seemed constantly stressed and rushed. We decided to get up just 15 minutes earlier and it made all the difference. "I can't find my library book", "I've spilt my milk"; have we got enough leeway in our timetable for tantrums and emergencies? Maybe setting the alarm a little earlier might help.

If we've had a successful morning, the journey to school can be a time to chat about what children are looking forward to that day. They'll come into class more prepared to learn and we won't start the day feeling guilty for losing our rag again!

To chat through any of these ideas or for any other parenting-related support, you can email me at parenting@foundrylanprimary.co.uk

